ABSTRACT

ANDERSON, JENNIFER. Author’s Choice: The Relevance of Author as Casting Director on the Restoration Stage. (Under the direction of Dr. John Morillo.)

During the Restoration playwrights were often able to act as directors when their works reached the stage. Playwrights were also very public about their intentions within their plays: the attitudes they wished the audience to take and the emotions they hoped their works to instill. As a result, we are able to examine the author/director’s choice of cast and determine how those choices were intended to directly affect interpretation.

With the loss of a play’s original cast, much of the author’s intent was lost. John Dryden wrote his story of Antony and Cleopatra, *All For Love*, as a tragedy, with the intent of evoking the pity of the audience. His choice of cast for the play’s premiere in 1677 reflects this intent. Though the play was still highly popular in 1718, the changing cast had counteracted the intended pity. In 1696, Sir John Vanbrugh wrote *The Relapse* in response to Colley Cibber’s move toward sentimental comedy in *Love’s Last Shift*. Vanbrugh’s play immediately met criticism from moralists, and by the time of its performance in 1716 the changing cast indicated the first shift of many that took the play from a reaction against sentimental comedy to a specimen of the same. Dryden’s most extravagant heroic drama, *The Conquest of Granada*, used the personalities of its original cast to add depth to the play. By the play’s final production in 1709, the new cast was unable to sustain the claims and characterizations necessary to the genre. Consistent throughout the major genres of Restoration drama is a move away from author intent over time, which is exemplified in changing cast lists, and amplified by comparisons between the changing casts and the casts of each play’s premiere.
Author’s Choice: The Relevance of Author as Casting Director on the Restoration Stage

By

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Dedication

To Michael, Jordan, and Luke- who put up with me

To those who remind me I can do anything, when I don’t believe it
Biography

Jennifer Smith Anderson teaches high school in Fuquay-Varina, North Carolina. She completed an undergraduate degree in English at North Carolina State University in 1994. She began pursuit of her Master of Arts in English and American Literature after the birth of her daughter, Jordan, and abandoned the goal temporarily after the birth of her son, Luke. Her major interests are anything that does not require too much math, and a few things that do. She hopes to eventually look back without regret.
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Introduction

At one door stands a Roman soldier. He is tall and athletic with a powerful voice, especially for his 52 years. He stands stoically. Around him stand his men. They have weathered many battles at his word.

Across from him, at another door, enters an exotic queen, young enough to be his daughter, but the shy look she gives him implies a different relationship. An elaborate royal train follows this soft-spoken and childish foreigner. As the two meet, she looks up at him and quietly threatens him with eager kisses.

Soon the soldier’s wife will barrage her with different threats. She will stand over the girl, her senior by 18 years. She carries herself with sophistication. Her movements and speech show she is used to having her way.

Forty years later the same scene occurs. This time, the soldier is in his mid-thirties. His men stand by, reflections of himself in age and stature. He is overcome by emotion, and his words are hesitant and faltering at the entrance of the foreign queen.

This queen enters, his equal in age and stature. She carries an aura of power; it is proven in her elegant stance and her strong voice. Her formidable presence threatens him with kisses.

At the entrance of the soldier’s wife, this queen stands more erect. She notes the wife’s youth and beauty, but this woman will have no effect on the intentions or actions of the queen.
Daniel Seltzer said that “performance, while by nature unlike an act of literary criticism, always has one of the same results: *it cannot avoid implying a point of view*” (Milhous 32). The scenarios represented above support his assertion. Simply by changing the cast of a production, the audience experiences a completely different story. The age, voice, gender, mannerisms and charisma of actors influence the character, which alters the story. Imagine Robin Williams playing Christopher Reeve’s role in *Superman*. Or picture Sally Field as Batman’s sidekick. All sorts of new and interesting possibilities are introduced. These possibilities are likely more pronounced on the stage than on film, because there are no second takes, nor are there editors to manipulate action after-the-fact. In the words of Judith Milhous and Robert Hume, “Plays tend to be about people, and audiences react on that basis” (15).

Reading a play gives us the idea of a character. As anyone who reads the book before he or she sees the show can tell you, the audience of a performance has much less left to imagination than the reader. If I have fallen in love with a book, I am loath to view someone else’s interpretation of it; that just ruins it. Someone fills the holes in the text with materials inferior to my own. Production analysis attempts to find and analyze the materials that have filled these holes in the text. Milhous and Hume present two questions that critics analyzing production must answer: “What is the production concept? What response does the production try to elicit?” (22). The pictures of Antony and Cleopatra described above are daguerreotypes from Drury Lane’s Restoration stage. Restoration drama, perhaps more than any other period of English drama, requires the filling of these holes in order to be successful. Montague Summers says, “Without some knowledge, some visualization of Restoration stage conditions the reader of a play by Dryden, Congreve, Otway, or any
contemporary, must often find himself hopelessly puzzled and at sea, whilst a piece of stagecraft which is in itself singularly delicate and adroit will appear consumedly clumsy and awkwardly contrived” (xv).

In order to gain a well-rounded view of the changes in production concept, I have focused on one play within each of the major Restoration genres. All three plays were property of the King’s Company in Drury Lane. This fact, however, does not diminish the universality of the changes within drama during this era. Practices within Drury Lane were common among all Restoration playhouses. Successes and methods on any London stage were attempted and mirrored by its rivals.

John Dryden’s *All For Love* represents the tragedy. Of the chosen plays, *All For Love* survived for the longest period with the most popularity. In an era when revivals were a stopgap, Dryden’s tragedy played an unheard of six consecutive nights 40 years after its original production. In its latter production, Colley Cibber played the subtle Alexas, and he provides an easy transition into the comedy of Vanbrugh, having starred in *The Relapse*. Sir John Vanbrugh wrote *The Relapse* as a sequel to Cibber’s *Love’s Last Shift*, and Cibber kept the lead role in Vanbrugh’s play for decades. *The Relapse* is significant as a reaction against the emerging sentimental comedy, and as the major target of Jeremy Collier’s influential criticisms on the immorality of the stage. The final production investigated, *The Conquest of Granada*, is of the genre specific to the Restoration, the heroic drama. It is also the most short-lived of the three plays. *The Conquest of Granada* is held up as the epitome of Restoration heroic drama, written by John Dryden, who is credited with the perfection of the genre.
In the case of modern film and stage, the director plays the major role in determining the response that a production elicits. In the theatre during the Restoration, directors were as yet unheard of. But the production was hardly a coincidental coming together of unrelated pieces. It was the privilege of the author to control his text by serving similarly to a director in Drury Lane after the 1660 re-opening of the theatres. Writings from Colley Cibber and David Garrick imply that the author distributed parts to the cast with rare interference from the manager (Milhous 48). The author of a play also presided over rehearsals. Milhous and Hume list the duties of the author in this role. Among these duties were illustrating and correcting the manner of delivering lines, approving scenery, directing movement upon the stage, and explaining and directing emotions and their conveyance (61-2). With this much involvement, the author was able to convey his intentions without much dilution.

Changes in production occurred for several reasons. Naturally, actors retired and changed companies. At Drury Lane, the stage of the playhouse was altered, necessitating changes in blocking and voice. The make up of the audience underwent change as the merchant class grew, and companies had to please the audience in order to survive. The political crisis surrounding the Catholic James’s ascent to the throne also required changes within the theatre. Certain messages simply could not be sent on stage.

As a result, the three major genres in the Restoration theatre, tragedy, comedy, and the heroic drama, all shifted in production. Milhous and Hume focus on the production concept and the response that a single production attempts to elicit. In extension, the question becomes, how did the production concept change, and why? Consistently across Restoration genres, when the author’s influence was removed from the casting choices, the play changed into a reflection of more contemporary tastes and patterns, away from the
stated and defended concept of the playwright. While the extent of the change in concept was fairly consistent across genre, the tragedy bore up to the changing trends of the London stage more heartily than the libertine comedy or the heroic tragedy.
Chapter One- the Changing Tragedy of Dryden’s *All For Love*

John Dryden’s Restoration version of the story of Cleopatra and Antony, *All For Love*, was immensely popular. According to George Nettleton and Arthur Case’s introduction to the play, Dryden’s play drove Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra* from the stage during the eighteenth century (72). Just as Shakespeare and Dryden presented the same tale differently, Dryden’s play has been interpreted differently by different audiences. How could Cleopatra describe herself as “A wife, a silly harmless household dove, Fond without art, and kind without deceit,” while a spectator at an eighteenth-century performance described her as “a damn’d insatiable, luxurious monster, a royal strumpet of a name so impious that I want words to describe her” (Nettleton 72). While readers of a play might easily arrive at different interpretations, the audience of a performance has much less left to the imagination. The context in which a play is produced influences the interpretation of the audience. The structure of the playhouse can add or detract from a play’s possibilities for realism. So, too, can the scenery and costume of a performance affect interpretation. Certainly the social diversity of the audience is a key factor in live performance, especially in the nonrealistic theatre of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The look and technique, even the voice and age of the actors can create characters that are more or less sympathetic, or more or less villainous.

*All For Love* is no exception to this complex formula. However, certain variables become less important in a comparison between the premiere performance of *All For Love* in 1677 and a highly celebrated performance of the play in 1718. Both performances took
place in the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. The only significant change in the structure of the playhouse was that accommodations were adjusted to admit more spectators into the audience. In her biography of the life of Colley Cibber, Helene Koon notes that the greatest of these changes was a cutting back of the forestage by ten feet (40). In _The Garrick Stage_, Allardyce Nicoll gives a brief history of the theatre at Drury Lane. In 1674 Drury Lane seated about 700 spectators; by 1740 the playhouse could contain one thousand or more (37-40). This change had a significant impact on acting style. As a result actors were called upon to compete with the audience rather than be a part of the audience.

Set and scenery did not change significantly between 1677 and 1718. However, there was a considerable difference between the quality of the set and scenery used in the 1677 performance and the 1718 performance. Leslie Hotson’s _The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage_ reports that in 1677 Dryden’s play was produced in the midst of financial struggle for Thomas Killigrew and The King’s Company (258-60). The introduction to Kalman Burnim and Phillip Highfill’s collection of John Bell’s theatrical portraits relates that in general “dressing actors was a challenge” and “costumes could not be lightly discarded” (30). In 1677 the costumes for _All For Love_ were items that had been used repeatedly. For the December 1718 production, however, Cibber reports that “the Habits of that Tragedy amounted to an Expence of near Six Hundred Pounds; a Sum unheard of” (Cibber 277), and _The London Stage_ reports “All the Habits being entirely new” (517).

Even though the quality of the costumes was probably drastically different, the costumes contribute little to a different interpretation of the play, because the style of dress was unchanged. For Roman civilians costume was toga, and for military heroes there were “torso-molded, leather breastplates, metal-studded short skirts, greaves, and plumed
helmets” (Burnim 30-31). In his *Source Book in Theatrical History*, A. M. Nagler presents an excerpt from the *Spectator* in which Addison noted, “the ordinary method of making an hero is to clap a huge plume of feathers on his head” (244). In both performances females of any country were apt to wear a version of contemporary European dress. Burnim notes, “the only variations for the exotic royal heroines were ermine-trimmed capes and a profusion of ostrich feathers bursting from the centers of the small coronets surmounting the high-piled coiffures” (31). Thus, in *All For Love*, Cleopatra would have been dressed as an English lady of high rank, with the possible addition of a cape trimmed with fur and feathers in her hair. Addison’s attack on the artificial character of stage costume did not come until 1711, and assuredly the attacks were well-deserved as one imagines both Antony and Cleopatra going about the stage wearing their high plumes. These conventions of costume were still being attacked as late as 1741 by other critics, so change in style of costume was slow to take place (Nagler 392). While all these factors can be important to the interpretation of a play, between the performances of *All For Love* in Drury Lane in 1677 and 1718 many of these factors remained for the most part constant. The greatest change affecting interpretation was the choice of cast and their corresponding styles.

Dryden arranged *All For Love* so that Act III highlights the interplay of the actors. All major roles come to the stage, and a range of emotion takes place in each character. A study of the actors and acting as seen on the stage during Act III in both 1677 and 1718 gives a complete and detailed picture of the differences in the actors and acting styles that affect interpretation.

The opening of Act III of *All For Love* calls for an elaborate musical ceremony,
culminating with Cleopatra crowning Antony. In the 1677 performance, Antony was portrayed by Charles Hart. Hart was a leading actor in Drury Lane at that time. He was referred to by Thomas Killigrew when he verbalized his fear that certain actors might leave the company, and for this reason he “feared the house would be destroyed” (Hotson 259). In Roscius Anglicanus, Downes says that if Hart “acted in any one of these [plays] but once in a fortnight, the house was fill’d as at a new play” (McAfee 224). In Producible Interpretations Milhous and Hume discuss the 1677 cast of the play and consequently describe Hart as “the obvious choice for a soldier-hero” (132). However, they go on to criticize Hart for his lack of “emotional variation” and his “tendency to overinflate the heroic side of the role” (135). Hart would have been in his early fifties, fitting with his characterization of Caesar as “boy” (III. i. 63). Hart’s stature and voice would have been impressive, as was necessary to heroes of the stage. As Hart, Antony would have been an older, seasoned soldier and a less emotional hero.

Opposite this soldier-hero stood Elizabeth Boutell as Cleopatra. Boutell has been described as “low of stature, [with] very agreeable features, a good complexion, but a childish look. Her voice was weak, though very mellow; she generally acted the young innocent lady whom all the heroes are mad in love with” (Nagler 242). An innocent and child-like persona certainly fits with the Cleopatra Dryden intends when she calls herself “a silly harmless household dove”(Netleton 72). The shape of the stage allowed Boutell to succeed with a weak voice, as the ten extra feet of forestage allowed a more intimate conversation. Proximity to the audience added intimacy to the opening exchange of Act III and lent support to the style of acting employed by
the age. Downer says “restraint…was made more possible by the smallness of the theatres and the actor’s habit of playing on the apron of the stage” (333). Although Downer speaks specifically of Thomas Betterton, Cibber compares Betterton to Hart in talent and style (Cibber 56). Proximity to the audience also allowed the technique of the actor to rely heavily on facial expression (Downer 333). Burnim notes of facial expression, that the eyes in particular “turned gravely upward when reverent statements are uttered, or when a deity, the heavens, the moon, or stars are mentioned” (27). The lasting impression in this scene would be that of an aging soldier and a young and innocent queen with upturned eyes as they address each other as “My brighter Venus” and “my greater Mars” (I. i.11-12).

The opening lines of Act III of All For Love would appear very different 41 years later. Antony was then played by Barton Booth. Koon describes Booth as “Not quite as tall as Wilks, he was nevertheless an impressive figure, athletic but graceful, with every muscle under command, and his ‘attitudes’ were striking. His ruddy expressive features were attractive, and his sonorous baritone gave depth to his sensitive characterizations” (71). Attractive and sensitive describe the Antony Dryden created, but a sensitive character is difficult to balance against the great soldier and hero. Booth’s age at the time of the production was 37, much younger than that of Hart. As a result of the stage drawing back from the audience, the action of the stage became more exaggerated. Cibber complained that this loss of stage “added strain on the voice, requiring a change of technique he found distasteful” (Koon 40). Booth’s movements were based on the emotional component, while Hart’s were based more upon the subject matter of the speech. Downer cites a performance by Booth as Othello, in which what Booth did “was
to divide the soliloquy into its emotional components . . . [with] frequent pauses to
indicate mental reaction” (335). Likewise, Booth’s performance as Antony would have
been filled with pause and emotion as he cried “Receive me, goddess! Let Caesar spread
his subtile nets, like Vulcan; In thy embraces I would be beheld By Heav’n and earth at
once” (III.i.16-19). Booth’s Antony was younger and a more sensitive lover than the
soldier-hero of Hart.

The contrast between the two actor/heroes in the lead role highlights the tendency
of early Restoration plays to glorify a new regime over the old. Hart’s tragedy represents
the fall of tradition, but Booth cannot represent the same ideal. The age of the actors cast
in this part determines what they represent.

With Booth stood Anne Oldfield as Cleopatra. Far from Boutell, Oldfield
appeared elevated and easily of high rank. Melville’s collection of biographies includes
Colley Cibber’s note that she could easily have been born to a “higher rank of life” for
her excellent acting of women of “the best rank” (17). Oldfield is described as “tall,
genteel, and well-shaped.” Melville also notes that in “elegance of manner she excelled
all actresses; and was greatly superior in the strength, compass, and harmony of her
voice” (23). Oldfield carried a degree of control and “queenliness” that Boutell lacked.
Oldfield was also older than Boutell; she was 35 years of age (Melville 3). Although
Antony may have had more depth with Booth, Cleopatra would have been more
appropriately passive and true to Dryden’s character as Boutell. In 1718 the opening of
Act III would have an interpretation in which Antony and Cleopatra were better matched
in power and age.
The interplay between Antony and Ventidius is the next action of Act III. Ventidius has planned to sway Antony’s loyalty back to Rome. In 1677 this interplay was performed by Hart as Antony and Michael Mohun as Ventidius. Mohun would have been 52 at the time, an age comparable to that of Hart. Mohun’s appearance fit his role in that “from his inferior Height and muscular Form, [he] generally acted grave, solemn, austere Parts” (Cibber 333). Samuel Pepys notes that Mohun “is said to be the best actor in the world” (McAfee 230). Mohun is hailed by Milhous as an actor of variety (135). The interplay in 1677 highlighted an heroic Antony being led in thought by a Ventidius shorter in stature, austere and crafty. Ventidius notes in aside “He moves as I would wish him” (III. I. 98). As these men discussed the approach of Caesar and the resulting loss of friends, their posture was likely “like that of a man hanged, with his hands before him and his head on one side” (Styan 248).

John Mills portrayed Ventidius in 1718. More is known of his personal character than his appearance. Cibber says of Mills, “He was an honest, quiet, careful Man, of as few Faults as Excellencies, and Wilks rather chose him for his second, in many Plays, than an Actor of perhaps greater Skill, that was not so laboriously diligent” (Cibber 144). Koon notes that Mills “actually appeared more often than the stars, usually in secondary roles” (72). Cibber also refers to Mills as “the elder” when Booth was still “young” (Cibber 304). An older Ventidius would be taking the part of a wise counselor, while Mohun, as a contemporary to Antony is seen as a friend of differing opinion, plotting to change the opinion of his peer. Mills’ greater age opposite Booth’s 37 years was more appropriate for Antony’s referral to him as “father” (I. i. 273), but Mohun was certainly a more celebrated and skilled actor.
In his attempt to bring Antony back to Rome, Ventidius leads Dolabella to the stage. In 1677 Mohun, as Ventidius, led a much younger Thomas Clarke, as Dolabella, to meet with Antony. The best-recorded feature of Clarke in this role is his age. Cibber mentions Clarke as he summarizes the conversion of the two licensed theaters into one. He states, “Mohun and Hart now growing old . . . and the younger Actors, as Goodwin, Clarke, and others [were] impatient to get into their Parts, and growing intractable” (Cibber 58). Milhous notes, though, that Clarke as Dolabella was a “stopgap.” She adds, “Dolabella is the sort of role in which Edward Kynaston specialized, but he seems to have set out the 1677-78 season in a huff”(134). Kynaston’s specializations will be discussed in chapter three. With Clarke, the difference in age is fitting with Antony’s address to Dolabella as “young man” (III. I. 153). Again Dolabella’s youth is addressed when Dolabella explains to Antony, “Mine was an age when love might be excused…Yours---. Ventidius continues the thought: “Yours, he would say, in your declining age ...” (III. i. 188-91). The age difference between Antony and Dolabella is also useful in dramatizing the jealousy of Antony over Dolabella and Cleopatra. Boutell and Clarke would appear better suited in age, and Dolabella is more enticing next to an aging Antony.

In 1718 Robert Wilks as Dolabella was actually older than Booth, who played Antony (Milhous 135). Wilks is also described as handsome and taller than Booth (Koon 71). But again Dolabella is seen as a genuine rival to Antony through his match to Cleopatra. Oldfield’s tall and genteel presence fits more closely with a man who is older and taller than she. The style of Wilks was precise. Cibber says his learning of lines was “perfect to such an Exactitude, that I question if in forty Years he ever five times chang’d or misplac’d an Article in any one of them” (Koon 41). At the same time, Cibber is thought to have been referring
to Wilks when he says “the House has thundered with Applause; tho’ the mis-guided Actor was all the while (as Shakespeare terms it) tearing a Passion into Rags” (Cibber 60). Even if Cibber disapproved of Wilks’ style, the audience obviously did not. In light of the casting of Booth as Antony and Oldfield as Cleopatra, Wilks is a wise choice for Dolabella, but certainly less true to Dryden’s intent for a younger rival.

Once Dolabella has worked to sway Antony from Cleopatra, Ventidius brings on Octavia. Katherine Corey played Octavia in Drury Lane in 1677. Corey was a seasoned actress, often referred to as “the mimic” for her skill at imitation. She was, in fact, jailed in 1669 for her characterization of Sempronia in *Catilene* to imitate Lady Harvey. The Lady took offense and called upon her kinsman, Lord Chamberlain, to imprison the actress (McAfee 239). Corey as Octavia nearly met Hart’s age as Antony; she was 45 in 1677.

Milhous states that Corey had a “propensity for the shrew and the battle-ax” (134). Her age would have reduced the plausibility of Antony actually choosing her over Cleopatra. Corey as Octavia helped to reduce what Dryden called “the greatest error” in the play: the sympathy of the audience for Octavia (Nettleton 73). Boutell stood 27 opposite Corey’s 45, and certainly Corey’s shrewish propensity against Boutell’s childish stature and voice evoked more sympathy for the Egyptian Queen, particularly as Octavia steps closer and stands over Cleopatra to “view nearer that face which has so long usurped my right” (III. i. 434).

Mary Porter as Octavia, in stark contrast to Corey, is more of a rival to the 1718 Cleopatra of Oldfield. She was younger than Oldfield and very beautiful (Milhous 134-5). This age difference brings with it a new tone to Octavia’s accusation: “You have long been practiced in that lascivious art” (III. i. 427-8). Porter’s specialty was tragedy, and Koon calls her “the company’s best tragedienne” (129). Cibber laments the loss of Porter to the
company when he says, “Mrs. Porter, then in her highest Reputation for Tragedy, was lost to us, by the Misfortune of a dislocated Limb, from the overturning of a Chaise” (Cibber 320). Mary Porter likely presented Octavia as a tragic figure. By casting an Octavia who is equal to Cleopatra in beauty and age, Antony’s struggle is seen as one more between two women than between love and duty. Porter as Octavia would also have amplified what Dryden called the error of the play, pity for the young wife. The audience naturally has more sympathy for a young and pretty Octavia, abandoned by a husband who is possibly seeking further power through his alliance with Cleopatra.

Perhaps the least important character in Act III, though not to the play in its entirety, Alexas was played in 1677 by Cardell Goodman. Alexas is the villain of Dryden’s play, actively inserting distrust into the relationships between the greater characters. Goodman’s age was similar to that of Clarke: very young (Cibber 58). Although young, Goodman is described by Milhous as “forceful” in his portrayal of Alexas (135). Colley Cibber greatly admired Goodman’s skill as an actor. Cibber says at the first applause he ever received his “Transport was not so high” as when Goodman stated publicly during a rehearsal “If he does not make a good actor, I’ll be d---‘d!” (Cibber 103). A forceful young man does not fit the typical image of the eunuch, but his age highlights Antony’s fall as the fall of the old regime and sheds a “Catoesque” light on the older Antony. Goodman as Alexas is also not totally vilified. A younger man evokes some sympathy as he stands alone and cries, “Gods, is this just, that I, who know no joys, must die because she loves?” (III. i. 391-92).

In 1718 Colley Cibber presented Alexas as a villain without question. Cibber excelled in the role of the villain. He was of average height and slender. His voice was one
that kept him from his early hopes of playing leading roles; he lacked a deep and full voice (Koon 17). Cibber excelled as the fop, to be discussed in the following chapter, and the villain, “particularly a villain with a touch of the grotesque” (Koon 37). In 1718 Alexas was a wiry, conniving character, played by Cibber at 47 years old. Alexas is the advisor to Cleopatra as Ventidius is to Antony, and their characters are cast similarly in age. While an older Ventidius, however, lends wisdom to the role, an older Alexas does not. Rather, his greater age adds bitterness to his lament of never having loved. He is a true villain, conspiring early in the act to make Antony distrust Ventidius as he says, “your general comes! He joins not in your joys, nor minds your triumphs; But, with contracted brows, looks frowning on, as envying your success” (III. i. 29-32). And as the scene ends the crafty Alexas tells Cleopatra he is able “to furnish counsel, To ruin her, who else must ruin you” (III. i. 475-76). This is a more treacherous threat when seen as a conspiracy between an older queen and her wily man against a youthful and mistreated Octavia.

The 1677 production of *All For Love* emphasizes themes common in particular to Restoration drama. Restoration tragedy relied on arousing the pity of the audience. Pity is more easily aroused for the older soldier-hero who is torn between his duty to his shrewish old wife and his love for a doting young and innocent queen, than a graceful, young, strong-voiced Antony who has left his young wife who has true potential for love in order to be with a more powerful and experienced queen. The cast of the 1677 production certainly illustrates the common Restoration theme of youth replacing the old. Through its casting, the 1718 production of Dryden’s play moves away from Restoration patterns as well as Dryden’s intent. Sentimentalism, which had become prominent on the stage by 1718, bears its mark on Dryden’s tragedy as pity for Octavia, the constant yet wronged
wife, is amplified. The difference between the interpretation of Cleopatra as the “harmless household dove” and the “damn’d insatiable, luxurious monster” lies in the casting not only of Cleopatra, but of those around her. The 1677 production took care to present very little sympathy for Octavia, while the 1718 production offered different possibilities and motivations for Antony. The reading of Dryden’s tragedy leaves much interpretation to the reader, and this interpretation is reflected in the performances of 1677 and 1718.
Chapter Two- the Changing Comedy of Vanbrugh’s *The Relapse*

Early in the twentieth century, L.C. Knights published an article in *Scrutiny* entitled “Restoration Comedy: The Reality and the Myth.” Nettleton and Case annotated this article with the following statement: “The myth is that Restoration comedy is important, risqué, and brilliant; the reality is that it is trivial, gross, and dull” (954). Readers of Restoration comedy tend either to agree with Knights or transpose his categories of myth and reality. Viewers of Restoration comedy, however, while they might still debate its importance, would never be able to call the genre “dull” with any degree of honesty.

The excitement of Restoration comedy relies heavily on “in-jokes” and sexual bawdiness. Viewers could, and in modern revivals can, expect farce and sexual licentiousness. But serious issues lie beneath the surface of such “gross” comedy. As Nettleton and Case state, “the plays did have an underlying seriousness of purpose” (149). Susan Owen comments that even though these sex comedies might appear simply to be “diversion from increasing political tensions,” they also tend to “endorse the values of a particular ‘cavalier’ class, upholding the town-based, upper-class wits, at the expense of country dolts, upstart city gentry, tradesmen, the professional classes and other outsiders” (43). Comic playwrights offered dynamic portraits of merchant class gains in wealth. The question of whether money is sufficient to raise social standing was grappled with on the Restoration stage and remains a modern topic of comedy. One need only remember Jim Carrey and Jeff Daniels in 1994’s *Dumb and Dumber* entering a “save the spotted owl” dinner in Denver society wearing matching powder blue and neon orange tuxedoes, complete with top hats and canes, to recognize the comic value of the difference between wealth and “class.” Among the few critics who emphasize the issue of class within Restoration comedy,
there is disagreement as to who functions as the actual target of the satire: the landed gentry or the merchant class. But overall this political dimension of the plays has been largely ignored (Owen 45). Instead, critics tend to focus on the more attractive issue of the Restoration comedy: its “sexiness.” The great reception and repeated performances of what Owen calls the “sex comedies” attest to the relish with which the audience watched women cuckold their husbands and men seduce young virgins. Naturally, the voice of moral disapproval gained vehemence as the profaneness of the stage grew. Yet from the period of the Restoration until the present, there has remained disagreement as to whether the plays ultimately condone libertine attitudes through example or condemn them through ridicule.

Sir John Vanbrugh’s *The Relapse* touches upon both of these serious themes of Restoration comedy. During Vanbrugh’s time, country squires came by the thousands into London to invest and trade their newly acquired assets (Loftis 68). Upon the London stage this collision of the rural and urban was commonplace. One of the dual plots of *The Relapse* centers on Sir Tunbelly Clumsey’s attempt to marry his country daughter to a member of the gentry. Both Clumsey and his daughter are objects of ridicule. Loftis notes that “of the three most prominent dramatists writing at this time” Vanbrugh is the least tolerant of country rusticity (69). Related to this issue is the theme of the social implications of a rising merchant class. Loftis notes that Vanbrugh was a Whig who wrote like a spokesman of the Tories, because he was a Whig “at a time when the party affiliation did not imply sympathy for the business community” (44). He credits Vanbrugh with “antimercantile bias” because “no attractive merchant character appears in any” of his plays (49). The problems associated with upward mobility in Restoration society are central to the comedy of *The Relapse.*
According to John Loftis, political movements and attitudes were connected to trends in Restoration theatre. Before 1710, comedies were largely conservative, but after that date, comedies “openly and unequivocally take the side of the merchants” (77). With this in mind, it would seem that productions by a playwright biased against merchants would begin to lag. However, after 1710 *The Relapse* was shown more times each year than it had been in any year since its opening. The popularity of the play is also evidenced in the fact that the patent owners of the Theatre Royal held on to the play until 1733 (Huseboe 35). Naturally, the popularity of a comedy lies for the most part in its ability to entertain. But as public sentiment shifted and “country-folk” grew in attendance at the theatres, did the produced interpretation of the play on stage change as a result of political change?

The title of *The Relapse* comes from a plot almost entirely separate from that of Tunbelly’s aspirations for his daughter. Vanbrugh’s play is in fact a sequel to Colley Cibber’s first work as a playwright, *Love’s Last Shift*. In Cibber’s play the promiscuous husband, aptly named Loveless, is won over to virtue by his estranged wife, Amanda. *Love’s Last Shift* was the first of what would come to be known as the “sentimental comedy.” These comedies attempted to placate those offended by the licentiousness of the theatre. In Loveless’s reclamation, good defeats evil and virtue is triumphant over vice. Vanbrugh viewed Cibber’s play with a skeptical eye. In *The Relapse*, he brings Loveless back into the company of London ladies and the results are indicated by the play’s title. Loveless falls directly into an affair with his wife’s widowed cousin, Berenthia. Although Vanbrugh sought to contest the convenient moral reformation of Loveless, he proclaimed the innocence of his play: “I believe with a steady Faith, there is not one Woman of a real Reputation in Town, but when she has read it impartially over in her Closet, will find it so innocent, she’ll
think it no Affront to her Prayer-Book, to lay it upon the same Shelf” (Vanbrugh 3).

Moralists, however, felt the play should be kept far from their prayer-books. Jeremy Collier’s influential attack, *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, gave *The Relapse* more attention than any other play. Vanbrugh persisted in defending his play and countered Collier’s criticisms in “A Short Vindication of the *Relapse* and *the Provok’d Wife* from Immorality and Profaneness.” Did Collier’s attack and the birth of the sentimental comedy affect the way *The Relapse* appeared on stage?

The first production of *The Relapse* on November 21, 1696 is a natural choice for comparisons over time. Vanbrugh would have been directly involved in the casting of this production. Writing a sequel, Vanbrugh must have had certain characters and their strengths in mind. He wrote his first play in hopes of having it accepted by the patentees at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, who had accepted Cibber’s first play the year before (Whistler 30). It is likely that Vanbrugh created the characters that did not exist in Cibber’s play for particular actors as well. Writers who hoped to sell a play were aware that writing parts to fit a particular company made their work more marketable. Milhous and Hume say, “roles were assigned by the manager with the advice of the author” (48). Based on the action of *The Rehearsal* and *The Female Wits*, Milhous and Hume also conclude that the author acted as director in rehearsal (59). An excellent point of contrast to the premiere of Vanbrugh’s play is its production on October 16, 1716. This date follows the 1710 election, which gave the Tories, consisting mostly of country squires, a large majority in the House of Commons (Loftis 78). This election led to widespread debate on social, economic, and political assumptions, which might influence the dynamics within the play’s theme of social mobility. In terms of the much-criticized bawdiness of the play, the production of *The Relapse* in
October 1716 is in enough proximity to Collier’s attack that his views would not be obsolete. Also, by 1716 there had been significant turnover in the cast of the play. Typically in Restoration drama, actors held the same roles over several years. Actors were naturally loath to relinquish parts they had already learned, particularly when the play met with success under that cast. But by the season of 1716 a somewhat “fresh” cast inhabited the parts of *The Relapse*. The only exceptions were for the part of Lord Foppington, which Cibber made his own and kept into the 1730’s, and the part of Coupler played by Benjamin Johnson.

In contrast to *All For Love*, there is no single scene or act that can serve to highlight all the main characters. In fact, Vanbrugh has consciously neglected a unity of plot. A recurrent criticism of the play is its “unmeeting” plots, held together only by Lord Foppington’s participation in both. Rather than view a particular scene in contrast between the two productions, I will focus on showing the characters that serve as a basis for the critical issues of the play in their most telling forms. This emphasis on character over structure parallels what Vanbrugh himself said about *The Relapse* in his “Vindication” of the play: “I believe I cou’d shew that the chief entertainment, as well as the Moral, lies much more in the Characters and the Dialogue, than in the Business and the Event” (Vanbrugh, *Vindication* 57).

To address the question of shifts in attitude on issues of town vs. country and gentry vs. merchant it is most useful to examine the characters and how they were portrayed in the plot concerning Lord Foppington and his younger brother, Fashion. This plot involves the bumbling country squire, Sir Tunbelly Clumsey. In 1696 Tunbelly was played by William Bullock. Bullock was only 29 when he came into the role of the over-zealous father, but his large girth likely masked his age. In his afterward to his edition of Cibber’s *Apology*,
“Memoirs of the Actors and Actresses Mentioned by Cibber,” Fone describes Bullock as a large person with a “lively countenance,” full of “great glee and much vivacity.” Aston also names Bullock as one of the best comedians of the time (388). In his *Apology*, Cibber notes that Bullock helped to establish Drury Lane’s reputation (109). Bullock’s favorite roles were “fops, country bumpkins, hotheads, coarse fathers, and old ladies.” He was well known for his skirt roles and his great talent for acting the fool. In the *Tatler*, April 25, 1709, it was written that Bullock’s “most shining circumstance” was when he and Penkethman were giving each other a beating on stage. The *Tatler* also noted that Bullock was often given a small, short coat to cover his abundant self, while the undersized Penkethman was dressed in a long coat (Highfill 2:409-10). The hilarious pairing of these two may have been responsible for Penkethman replacing Doggett in the role of Lory, Young Fashion’s servant, on the second night of the play.

Bullock as Tunbelly does not enter the stage until Act III, and then with servants armed with pitchforks, clubs, and guns against whoever might be knocking at his door. Once Tunbelly is duped by Young Fashion’s claim to be Lord Foppington, he changes his tone from exclaiming, “till I know your name, I shall not ask you to come into my house; and when I know your name – ‘tis six to four I don’t ask you neither” (III. iii.51-54), to commanding his daughter’s nurse, “let Miss Hoyden loose again, and if it was not shifting day let her put on a clean tucker, quick” (III.iii.63-64). Vanbrugh’s country squire is hardly respectable, and Bullock’s portrayal would be sure to add exponentially to his ridiculous nature.

However, Vanbrugh can hardly be said to praise the town dandy through the extraordinary character of Lord Foppington. Colley Cibber played this role he created in
Love’s Last Shift, and it is this character and this role that is credited with much of the success of Vanbrugh’s play. Vanbrugh took the city fop and elevated him with a title. In one of the most memorable scenes in all of Restoration comedy, Foppington arrives upon the stage in Act I in his nightgown, accompanied by a tailor, seamstress, shoemaker, hosier, periwig-maker, page, and other servants who have been commissioned to dress him. Alexander Pope recorded that this periwig “made its entrance upon the stage in a sedan, brought by two chairmen (Huseboe34). Foppington complains that the periwig-maker has included “only nine hairs of a side” and notes that “a periwig to a man should be like a mask to a woman, nothing should be seen but his eyes” (I. iii. 127, 138-39). Vanbrugh may be biased against the country rustic, but he also satirizes the excesses of town society in the character of Lord Foppington. When Foppington meets Tunbelly, the country squire believes him to be an imposter, because Young Fashion has arrived first to claim the bride under his brother’s identity. However, the city hardly gets the most of the country-dweller. In Tunbelly’s own words he tells of his triumph over Foppington: “I comes up to him boldly at the head of his guards, takes him by the throat, strikes up his heels, binds him hand and foot, dispatches a warrant, and commits him prisoner to the dog-kennel” (IV. vi. 165-69). Though the “dog-kennel scene” takes place offstage, it would have been wonderful to see Foppington in his grand costume and periwig stooped in a dog’s cage.

By 1716 Bullock had left Drury Lane due to the dogmatic nature of Robert Wilks, who was acting as one of the heads of the theatre (Fone 388). Tunbelly was transformed, not for the better, into the likes of Francis Leigh. Little is known of Leigh’s appearance or age in 1716. He could have been no older than 30; it is recorded that he was still a minor in 1704. Cibber says in his Apology that Leigh was not capable of supporting a play on his own (274).
Throughout his career Leigh played nothing but secondary and minor roles (Highfill 9:231). He came by a career in theatre most likely through his father, Anthony Leigh, who was a distinguished actor (Fone 370). If we imagine the effect of this replacement on stage, the results are ironic. When the country bumpkin is de-emphasized, he is elevated. Cibber as Foppington would have remained as ridiculous as ever, while Leigh as Tunbelly would have commanded less laughter than Bullock. The probable result of casting Leigh as Tunbelly would have been in line with the elevation of the country squire. The fact that Wilks drove Bullock from the role could be problematic in assessing interpretation through choice of casts; if he hadn’t left the role in 1714, Bullock would likely have still played Tunbelly. However, the casting of Leigh is still significant. Other, better, comedians were available for the role: Doggett among the number. The choice of casting a “B-actor” in the role of Sir Tunbelly Clumsey downplayed the part of the laughable country intellect.

In Foppington we have a ridiculous and hilarious city coxcomb, but there is still his brother to represent the city folk in a flattering light. City manners in excess are ridiculed, but what of city manners in moderation? As Huseboe notes, “Young Fashion possesses a moral nature rare among Restoration stage types” (85). In spite of his status as the younger, financially broken brother, by the end of the play he has duped Tunbelly, obtained the girl, and just as importantly, her fortune. Though Tom Fashion commits “identity theft” in order to pull off his scheme, he refuses to do so until his older brother coldly denies him any financial help.

The 1696 production of The Relapse featured Mary Kent as the honorable Tom. Elizabeth Howe calls Kent a “minor actress” in her book The First English Actresses, and as such, little is recorded of Kent’s style or appearance (57). She was likely chosen for the role
because of the great popularity for women in breeches parts during that time. As Howe says, “The breeches role titillated both by the mere fact of a woman’s being boldly and indecorously dressed in male costume and, of course, by the costume suggestively outlining the actress’s hips, buttocks and legs” (56). As a breeches role, Tom Fashion would not be a believable character. Howe points out that it was important for the character to clearly be a woman in pants to achieve the sensual effect intended. Kent was not chosen because of her skill in playing a sympathetic and moral city character, but because she was pleasing to the eye.

Young Fashion was not raised in honor when a male donned his pants. In 1716 Thomas Walker appeared in the role. Walker was a heavy drinker known for carrying his intemperance onto the stage (Highfill 15:220). It may have been this disposition to drink that caused John Hill to note in The Actor, “vehemence of feeling took away his utterance, and he could not speak articulately” (Highfill 15:221). In Dramatic Miscellanies, Davies also noted that Walker spoiled his strong stage voice with drinking (Highfill 15:220). Although Huseboe credits Vanbrugh with being “the first to explore sympathetically the predicament of the younger brother at the end of the century when changes in custom and in law had, in general, resulted in the disinheriting of younger sons,” on stage Tom Fashion could not have been taken seriously. He would have been at first an object of desire, and later, a reeling inarticulate drunk. Perhaps the cross-dressed Tom could still maintain a semblance to honor in speech and action, but that honor would not be possible when acted by Walker. Though the character of Young Fashion held the potential to elevate the “man-about-town” above the country squire, his portrayal on stage kept him from making the rural persons any more ridiculous than they had to be.
One major role remains in the rural/urban plot of *The Relapse*, but that role is not relevant in assessing the theme of town vs. country in the play for two reasons. The first of these reasons is the fact that the role is female. While Miss Hoyden is quite taken by the city likes of both Young Fashion and Foppington, she seems to have no allegiance to either gentry or merchant-class: “It’s well I have a husband a-coming, or, i’cod, I’d marry the baker, I would so” (III.iv.3-4). The acting styles of the actresses portraying her were very similar in 1696 and in 1716. The major difference in those two “hoydens” is their ages. While this has little bearing on the city/country theme of the play, it has much to do with its perceived immorality.

The premiere performance of *The Relapse* featured Letitia Cross as Tunbelly’s daughter. This type of role was her specialty, and Vanbrugh likely tailored the role specifically for the actress (Highfill 4:63). Cross played the incarnation of Love in the masque scene in Cibber’s play, *Love’s Last Shift*. J.L. Styan reports that in that role, only a year before she played Hoyden, that Miss Cross was twelve years old (174). *The Biographical Dictionary of Actors and Actresses* disputes this young age, but adds only six years. Milhous and Hume appear to disagree with Styan also, calling Cross a “senior actress” at Drury Lane in 1696 (43). Though her actual years are in question, her appearance as a child is not. She was cast in the role of Isabella in *The Female Wits* in 1696, for which she was described as a “little cherubim” and a “little inconsiderable creature.” In the same year, she spoke in the prologue to Mary Pix’s *Ibrahim: the 13th Emporer of the Turks*, stating she was not yet fifteen (Highfill 4:63). Laurence Whistler’s account of *The Relapse*’s opening tells of “the diminutive figure of Miss Cross” who “coyly” spoke the prologue of the play “in childish tones” (Whistler 30).
“In childish tones,” from the mouth of this “little cherubim,” Vanbrugh placed such lines as, “I’m as ripe as you, though not so mellow” (III.iv.17), “I’ll go put on my laced smock, though I am whipped till the blood run down my heels for’t” (III.iv.30-31) and “Never fear. I’ll show him my parts, I’ll warrant him” (IV.i.20). When Jeremy Collier attacked the stage and Vanbrugh in particular, he chastised writers who would mar women by giving them such lines: “he that treats the ladies with such discourse must conclude either that they like it, or they do not. To suppose the first, is a gross reflection upon their virtue. And as for the latter case, it entertains them with their own aversion” (8). Though Restoration sensibilities about age may differ from modern views, youth was still associated with innocence and the need for protection. Huseboe notes that “taking away an unmarried woman under sixteen without the consent of her parents” was cause for imprisonment. Collier says, “young people, particularly, should not entertain themselves with a lewd picture” (5). He continues, saying that modesty should be “strongest in youth when passion is so too.” With Miss Cross as Hoyden upon the stage, passion exists in youth, while modesty does not. Hoyden is blatantly sexual, jealous of “the greyhound bitch [that] can run loose about the house all day long” (III.iv.5-6).

In 1716 Hoyden was played by Margaret Bicknell, who was cast as such in her first acting role in 1703, at the age of 23. By the time of the performance in 1716, Bicknell may have been as much as 23 years older than little Letitia in the same role. Their acting styles were similar; both seem to have been type-cast for the role. Bicknell was said to have “a certain grace in her rusticity” in a 1709 edition of the *Tatler*, and was credited with performing best in “comic, sprightly” parts (Highfill 2:114). Though the way in which Hoyden was acted changed little in the first twenty years of performance, the heroine aged
drastically. Naturally, a licentious woman in her late 20’s and 30’s is easier for the moralist to stomach than a child in her early teens just as eager to lose her innocence to the first man who comes along. The immorality added to this plot by Vanbrugh’s choice of casting Hoyden as a child also furthers Loftis’ assertion that Vanbrugh disfavored the merchant class. In general, London was considered the breeding ground of immorality. But Vanbrugh creates a rural world where the immorality matches or exceeds that of the city.

Vanbrugh considered all the characters already mentioned as “the Inferior Persons of the Play” (Huseboe 82). Between these persons and those of the “superior” plot, Foppington alone serves as a connection. But in the plot concerning Cibber’s revived characters, Foppington’s involvement is marginal. When Amanda and her reclaimed husband, Loveless, go to London for business, Foppington makes a misguided attempt to court the virtuous Amanda and succeeds only in humiliating himself. Amanda slaps him in the face, and Loveless challenges him. In the ensuing scuffle, Foppington is wounded by his own sword and concludes, “I’m a dead man” (II.331). Loveless later says, “I saw his wound, ‘tis nothing; he may go to the play tonight if he pleases” (II.404-05). Loveless, however, is far more wounded by Amanda’s cousin, Berenthia, with whom he begins an affair. Berenthia conspires with Worthy to match him with Amanda, to no avail. A criticism of this plot is its lack of conclusion. Worthy is defeated by Amanda’s constancy, but the audience is left to wonder what will become of the triangle created by Berenthia, Loveless, and Amanda.

Amanda provides a possible support for Vanbrugh’s assertions that the play is indeed a moral one. In his “Vindication,” he says her virtue “looks so Sacred, on wou’d think no Mortal durst approach it; and seems so fix’d one woud believe no Engine cou’d shake it” (69). Amanda is aware of the weakness and promiscuity of her husband, yet she remains
faithful. She says of Worthy’s advances, “I can spare him nothing but my friendship; my love already’s disposed of. Though, I confess, to one ungrateful to my bounty” (V.ii.74-76).

And it is not for lack of opportunity and ability that Amanda holds onto her morals: “I still have darts, and I can shoot ‘em too. They’re not so blunt but they can enter still, The want’s not in my power, but in my will” (V.iv.37-39). Jane Rogers was a perfect instrument for the portrayal of such virtue on the stage, though not so much offstage. The date of her birth is left a mystery, but her stage career began in 1692 (Highfill 13:69). She had an affair with Robert Wilks, which produced her first child. Their relationship was hardly smooth. Colley Cibber notes in his Apology that Wilks spurned her at one point for another lover before their child was conceived (79). The Memoirs of Robert Wilks says that after the birth, Wilks again spurned Rogers for another woman, and at a performance she “gave his Cheek so handsom a Bite, that the Mark of her Teeth remain’d, and the Blood followed very plentifully.” The same Memoirs tell us that “her face was not extremely beautiful” but she was “tall, finely shaped, and exceedingly genteel.” (Highfill 13:69). Her propensity for stage-virtue was so great that Cibber said her “Theatrical Prudery… was solely responsible for keeping her in the company of honorable ladies (Cibber, Apology 79). Many critics suggest Amanda is a prude. Huseboe says, “Although her name means ‘loving’ or ‘affectionate,’ she clearly embodies the ‘Natural Coldness,’ … that the era accepted as characteristic of womankind” (77). Zimansky says Amanda “hardly attracts and hardly convinces” (xix). Ironically, Collier responded to watching Rogers on stage with the question, “Do the women leave all the regards to decency and conscience behind them when they come to the play-house?” (7). Jane Rogers was a convincing “prude,” so much so that Cibber noted, “she was very near keeping herself chaste by it” (Cibber, Apology 79).
In 1716 Mary Porter brought her own strength to the role, the same strength and manner she gave to Octavia in 1718. The *Biographical Dictionary of Actors and Actresses* says, “By 1720 Mrs. Porter was established as the foremost tragedienne in London,” and that by 1730 “there were few new plays worthy of Mary Porter’s tragic talent.” In a letter mentioned in Davies *Dramatic Miscellanies*, the writer says, “when Grief and tenderness possessed her, she subsided into the most affecting Softness” (Highfill 12:94). Grief and tenderness are hardly traits associated with the prude. If we compare a prudish Amanda with a tragic one, the 1716 performance of *The Relapse* leaves us with more sympathy for the virtuous heroine wronged by her husband, yet constant in her vows. The criticisms that dismiss Amanda’s virtue to prudery cannot stand up to the role as played by Mary Porter.

George Powell as Worthy in 1696 was so vulgar that Vanbrugh felt a need to apologize for him in the preface to the printed text of *The Relapse*: “The fine gentleman of the play, drinking his mistress’s health in Nantes brandy from six in the morning to the time he waddled on upon the stage in the evening, had toasted himself up to such a pitch of vigor, I confess I once gave Amanda for gone” (4). In Act V Worthy forces Amanda onto a couch, crying, “death or victory, I am determined” (V.iv.138-39). This drunken performance was not an exception for Powell. His habits were so well-known that in the *Female Wits* he played himself, drinking in the tavern before morning rehearsal. Cibber was very critical of Powell and his habits. He criticized Powell’s tendency to drink and his neglect of learning his parts. In his *Apology* Cibber wrote of Powell, “Concern for what he had to *say*, made him lose the Look of what he was to *be*” (133). Unlike Rogers, Powell’s nature was not hidden upon the stage, and Cibber lamented that the true Powell could not be concealed by his roles (Cibber, *Apology* 134).
A common argument among critics is whether Worthy’s conversion at the end of the play is credible. After Amanda explains that fleshly desires are conquerable: “ragic gnty is in the mind, whene’er it pleases to exert its Force” (V.iv.160-61), Worthy stands alone on stage and ponders her virtue:

Sure there’s divinity about her,  
And sh’as dispensed some portion on’t to me… 
The coarser appetite of nature’s gone,  
And ‘tis, methinks, the food of angels I require. 
How long this influence may last, heaven knows,  
But in this moment of my purity 
I could on her own terms accept her heart  (V.iv.168-178).

In stark contrast to Powell’s Worthy was that of John Mills, Ventidius of All For Love. Cibber praised Mills’ skill and precision in his parts, though he was criticized by Steele in the Tatler for “want of ‘sentiment’” and “making gesture too much his study” (Fone 389). An actor such as Mills, known for his diligence and ethic above his skill, would not have needed an apology from the author. Powell’s demeanor would likely have highlighted the ephemeral nature of his repentance, “How long this influence may last, heaven knows,” while the unexpressive Mills could effectively convince the audience that his “coarser appetite of nature” was indeed “gone.”

Like Worthy, the character of Loveless was also tamed by the time it reached the stage in 1716. Jack Verbruggen took the role in 1696, following up his performance as the same character in Love’s Last Shift. The supplement to Cibber’s Apology called Verbruggen a “rough diamond… wild and untaught” (Fone 319). Verbruggen played each part with a natural sense of perfection, such that he never corrected his first impression of what a character ought to be. As Wilmore in The Rover, he flirted with the character of Helena in such a way that “the audience were afraid they were going off the stage every moment”
Verbruggen must have been equally convincing as Loveless when he coaxes Berenthia, “Come into the closet, madam; there’s moonshine upon the couch” (IV.iii.75). Robert Wilks may not have been so convincing in the role in 1716. Cibber holds Wilks up as a sort of “anti-Powell,” contrasting the two actors in their manners. While Powell had a natural talent ruined by his inconsistency, Wilks was a perfectionist who tended to overrate his own merit. Wilks was known for the care, constancy, and decency both on and off the stage (Cibber, *Apology* 133-39). Though Loveless suffers a relapse, Verbruggen is less passionate and lewd than Wilks.

Berenthia is the character who changes least in interpretation between 1696 and 1716. Susanna Verbruggen took the role first. She is described by Cibber as a beautiful, talented, and natural actress (Fone 321). She was a comedian solely; she never did tragedy. Anne Oldfield took the role in 1716. Cibber tells us she borrowed her style from Verbruggen (Fone 322). She was also a talented and experienced comedian, though she was much appreciated in tragedy as well (Fone 397). The major difference between these two actresses was in their ages: 19 and 33, respectively. This difference in age was uniform through all the actors involved in this plot. Generally, in 1696 the actors were in their late teens, while in 1716 their ages ranged from early thirties to early fifties. The youth of the 1696 cast is easily explained. In 1682, Christopher Rich, one of two Patentees of the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, began sole management of the theatre. Whistler tells us “he spent most of his time there fitting [the stage] up with rows of curious little cupboards and other contraptions for which the actors could never discover any use” (28). The profits of the company eventually began to fall, and Rich’s solution was to take the large parts away from the older, more established actors and give them to the younger ones at half the salary (Whistler 28-9).
In the fall of 1694 many of the older regime had had enough, and left the company to begin performing in Lincoln’s Inn Fields (Van Lennup 439). The Drury Lane Company had little choice in 1696 but to cast the remaining younger actors. However, in 1716 the choice of actors is more indicative of a change in the presentations of lewdness and politics on the London stage.

A comparison between the 1716 cast of the “rural” and “urban” plots is telling in light of the criticisms of Collier and the rebuttal of Vanbrugh. Collier focused on the Fashion/Foppington plot as the foremost in the play. Vanbrugh, in his “Vindication,” insisted that the function of this plot was “more to divert the Audience, by something particular and whimsical in their Humours, than to instruct ‘em in any thing that may be drawn from their Morals.” The author went on to say that if he had intended this plot as primary, he might have named the play the “Younger Brother” or the “Fortunate Cheat” (Huseboe 73). The cast list of 1716 seems to have taken care to emphasize the role of the plot involving Loveless, which supports Vanbrugh’s assertion that of the two plots, this one is the major. Mills, Wilks, Porter, and Oldfield are “A-list” actors, while Leigh, Walker, and Bicknell are less popular and less of a draw to the theatre. Loftis notes that the “hostile treatment of merchants in comedies…became more and more the province of second-rate dramatists” (81), and the trend began with moving the roles within established comedies to second-rate actors. Huseboe notes that “readers have disagreed as to which is the main and which the subplot” (73), but the audience of the 1716 production would have had no doubt that the actions and characters of Berenthia, Loveless, and Worthy were superior. Yet it seems unnatural for the plot that remains unresolved to live on rather than the plot that concludes the play and actually contains a resolution.
This move to emphasize the Loveless plot was the first shift in massive changes to the play that de-emphasized the “inferior” plot. Later versions of *The Relapse* moved the Foppington/Fashion plot to an afterpiece or dropped the plot altogether (Zimansky xxii). The reasons for the changes to Vanbrugh’s play are two-fold. First, the merchant class was rapidly becoming a large part of the Restoration audience. The history of *The Relapse* follows suit, first lessening the role of the country rustics by allocating them to lesser actors, and later, doing away with the plot altogether. But the removal of the plot is not solely motivated by the negative light it sheds on the rural; it also serves to remove much of the bawdiness from the play. If Vanbrugh truly was worried as he claims in his “Vindication” that “I was afraid he Rigor of the Moral woul’d have damn’d the Play,” he certainly would have had no faith that the play could have existed with much of the licentiousness purged (77).

The changing cast lists of *The Relapse* reflect political and social changes during the Restoration through the de-emphasis of the plot most criticized by Jeremy Collier. It is only natural that Collier would see this plot as foremost: it was the most titillating and hilarious as acted in 1696. But as the roles changed hands, the rustic country folk became less interesting. Tunbelly lost his belly and his slapstick vivacity; Hoyden lost her less-than-innocent childishness; Young Fashion changed from pleasing eye-candy to an inarticulate drunk; and Foppington remained his vain, ridiculous self. The result of these changes was that the eyes of the audience were drawn away from country rusticity and the spectacle of lost innocence, toward silly city manners. In the surviving plot, the abused Amanda was raised from prude to tragic heroine; the repentant Worthy gained dignity; and Loveless lost his untaught passion. The choices made in the casting of *The Relapse* once it passed from
Vanbrugh’s hands attempted to reshape this vestige of the sex comedy into a comedy of manners.
Chapter Three- the Changing Heroic Drama: Dryden’s Conquest of Granada

John Dryden’s Conquest of Granada is an interesting case within an interesting case. As an example of the heroic drama, the play exists in a genre that has no simple definition. Dryden said that a heroic play ought to be “an imitation in little of an heroic poem” (Nettleton 4). Having established himself as a leader among heroic dramatists, Dryden’s definition allows a convenient starting point. Dryden’s “little epic” is an oxymoron symbolic of the multiple paradoxes of the heroic drama.

The heroic drama centered on grandeur: in speech, setting, action and character. Every aspect of the play was grandiose. Dryden suggested that the heroic poet should not be “tied to a bare representation of what is true or exceeding probable” (Nettleton 4). The settings of the plays were distant in time and place; the sets were spectacular. The action of these plays involves military conflict between full armies. The characters of the play speak in heroic couplets. The hero of the play is an object of admiration, able to overcome vice and passion because of his super-human capacity for honor and reason. Dryden’s lack of allegiance to probability taxed some critics’ suspension of disbelief. Heroic drama danced across the fine line between awesome and absurd.

The heroic drama is a type of another oxymoron: tragic-comedy (Owen 9). Tragic-comedy is a struggle between two genres. Sometimes tragic events alternate with comic events; other times, it is impossible to define the line or event as belonging to one genre without considering the other. The genre of tragic-comedy has often met with varied responses from critics. Even Dryden wrote, “For Mirth and Gravity destroy each other, and are no more to be allow’d for decent, than a gay Widow laughing in a mourning Habit” (Maguire, Tragicomedy 103). The true motivations for his allegiance to the genre are
probably most honestly laid out in a letter he wrote in 1693: “I will never defend that practice: for I know it distracts the Hearers. But I know, withal, that it has hitherto pleased them, for the sake of variety; & for the particular tast, which they have to low Comedy” (Maguire, *Tragicomedy* 100). Though Dryden thought the genre a form of “low Comedy,” he compared his play to classic epic poetry. On the title page to the epigraph of *The Conquest of Granada* he boldly asserts a line from the *Aeneid*: “a greater series of events spring from me; I begin a greater task.” In 1628 French critic Francois Ogier defended the genre: “to say that it is indecorous to mix in the same piece people discussing serious, important, and tragic affairs, and the forthwith, to discuss common, vain, and comic things, that is to ignore the human condition” (Maguire, *Tragicomedy* 91). George Bernard Shaw said, “Life does not cease to be funny when people die anymore than it ceases to be serious when people laugh” (Maguire, *Tragicomedy* 91). Another paradox asserts itself here. Those who defend the tragic-comedy do so on the basis of its “realistic” representation of life. However, the heroic drama is not concerned with a realistic appearance in any form. With all these paradoxes in the underpinning, the heroic drama is an idea difficult to sustain.

At the outset of the play, Granada, the last European stronghold of Islam, is threatened by the warring factions of the Abencerrages and Zegrys from within, and by the Christian Spain from without. The stranger, Almanzor, enters the scene and fights alternately against both of the warring internal factions, according to whom has last offended his personal honor, for as Almanzor says, “I alone am King of me” (I.i.206). The side for whom Almanzor fights always wins. In the midst of this military maneuvering, Almanzor falls in love with Almahide, and she with him. However, she is betrothed to the King of Granada. Dryden manages to kill off King Boabdelin by the tenth act, and the two lovers can be
together and still maintain their honor. By the end of the second part, Almanzor discovers his parentage is by the Spanish Duke of Arcos, and he leads the Moors in submission to Spain. Almanzor descends from royalty on more than one level. Dryden dedicated this play to the Duke of York, who would soon become James I. In the dedication to the play, Dryden says of Almanzor’s “noble openness,” “easiness to forgive his conquer’d enemies,” and “inviolable faith in his affection,” that they are modeled “to your royal Highness” (Dryden, *Conquest* 6). Dryden’s heroic play is a celebration of military power as well as religious sovereignty.

Alan S. Fisher said of *The Conquest of Granada*, “It was not the first heroic play, nor was it the last, but it was the longest and most ambitious…the most complicated, the most extravagant, the most unreal, and the most incomprehensible single instance of a [n]…incomprehensible dramatic mode” (414). The play stands as a perfect example of the paradox of its genre. And because it stands out, it was singled out for example and parody. Owen credits the play as the model for plays by “young dramatists at the start of their careers who were to become the major serious dramatists of the mid-Restoration period” and a significant influence on the opera (35). The attacks on the play are emblematized by George Villiers’ *The Rehearsal*, in which a hardly-disguised Dryden oversees the rehearsal of a nonsensical heroic play. D. W. Jefferson asserts that Dryden, however, was not ignorant of the comic aspect of the genre. As a playwright, Dryden was familiar with the ludicrous, and his intent was both grandiose and comic. But Dryden was more than a playwright. He was an artist of the theatre, as *The Rehearsal* reminds us by showing the playwright’s role in choice of casting and directing. Dryden not only created the text, but created the context in which his words would be presented, at least in the play’s earliest productions.
Jocelyn Powell writes, “Dryden has laid the foundations of his great play with a care for both its intellectual content and its general ambiguity of tone” (110). She attributes much of the play’s success to the cast chosen and written for by Dryden: “Dryden has employed the personalities of his actors to embody this paradox” (111). The actors within this “paradox” concur. George Powell played Almanzor in 1709. In his preface to The Fatal Discovery, Powell writes, “In relation to our reviving his Almanzor … very hard crutching up what Hart and Mohun could not prop” (Van Lennup 177). Dryden placed his text in good hands, but even these hands could barely keep afloat the barge of paradox. The play could not be sustained under a changing cast.

The first production of The Conquest of Granada was in late 1670 or early 1671. The London Stage dates the premiere on the basis of a letter written by Mrs. John Evelyn. In the letter Mrs. Evelyn says she recently saw “The Seige of Granada,” and expects to view part II of the drama on “Tuestay.” The Tuesday in question is either January 3rd or 10th, placing the first performance of Part I either in late December or early January (178). The final performance of the play took place on Saturday, March 5th, 1709, nine years after Dryden’s death. Unlike Restoration comedy, the heroic drama was not long-lived, and doesn’t stand well in revival. This short lifespan can be attributed to the tenuous, paradoxical existence of the genre, which required careful protection by playwright/directors who understood the balancing act necessary to pull it off. Dryden was such a director.

Jocelyn Powell does a wonderful job of examining the effect of The Conquest of Granada’s original cast on the tone of the entire play. Her method is primarily to examine the interaction of character and personality onstage in particular scenes. Based on her
analysis of character interaction, it becomes evident that much is lost with the changing of the theatrical guard.

Dryden’s hero, Almanzor, was originally played by Charles Hart. Hart was quite adept in the role of the “soldier-hero,” as evidenced by Dryden’s choosing him for Antony in *All For Love*. Almanzor is a powerful warrior, praised in the first scene of the play for his amazing performance in a bullfight by the king of Granada and others before they are aware of his identity: “what the stranger did was more than man” (I.i.48). His action and speech throughout the play support this early assessment of Almanzor. His character, like so much of Dryden’s play, also presents a paradox. Anyone who is “super-human” can also be seen as *not* human. Charles Hart is the most capable choice for embodying this contradiction. Powell calls Hart, “the most glamorous of the Restoration actors” (111). The audience would also have known of his experiences as lieutenant of horse during the recent civil war (Fone 333). At the time he played Almanzor, Hart was tall, agile, and “genteelly shaped” according to Fone (335). Powell describes the character of Almanzor as “unruly, charming, and absurd” (112). But Hart could lend credibility to any role. In *The Tragedies of the Last Age* (1678), Rymer wrote, “what he delivers every one takes upon content; their eyes are prepossess’d and charm’d by his action before ought of the Poets can approach their ears, and to the most wretched of Characters he gives a luster and brilliant which dazzles the sight, that the deformities in the Poetry cannot be perceiv’d” (Highfill 7:153). Hart made credible the character of Almanzor. He defined the role, as he did many others. One Restoration critic wrote of Hart “he has left such an Impression behind him, that no less than the Interval of an Age can make [the plays] appear agen with half their Majesty from any second Hand” (Highfill 7:152). Davies repeated an anecdote that speaks similarly of Hart. During a
rehearsal for *The Rival Queens* after Hart's death, Thomas Betterton attempted to remedy his own faultiness within his part by asking if any member of the cast could recollect the way Hart had spoken the lines. This was the manner that Betterton then employed for his part (Highfill 7:153).

Almanzor’s first important confrontation comes from Boabdelin, the last King of Granada, played by Edward Kynaston in 1670. Kynaston began his career before the Restoration as a boy who acted primarily female parts (Highfill 9: 80). On the Restoration stage, Kynaston continued in female roles until the tradition fell out of fashion. Pepys noted in his *Diary* that Kynaston once played three different gender roles in one play: “first, as a poor woman in ordinary clothes…then in fine clothes, as a gallant, and in them was clearly the prettiest woman in the whole house, and lastly, as a man; and then likewise did appear the handsomest man in the house” (McAfee 225). Kynaston definitely had a feminine appearance, but his voice was not as pleasing in either gender. Fone tells us that on an occasion Kynaston inquired of George Powell, who was vomiting the remains of his last drunken fit, if he had taken sick. Powell replied, “How is it possible to be otherwise when I hear you speak?” (358). Powell’s comment was more than a sarcastic response induced by a hangover. Pepys echoed Powell’s opinion, reporting on Kynaston’s appearance in a female role, he “made the loveliest lady that ever I saw in my life, only her voice not very good” (McAffée 225). Kynaston and Hart added plausibility to their respective roles when presented against each other. Boabdelin is king in name, but Almanzor is kingly by nature. As a result, the “kingliness” of James, Duke of York, is amplified by the contrasts between Hart and Kynaston.
Coming into the midst of a skirmish between the Zegrys and Abencerrages, Almanzor literally draws a line in the sand with his sword, and dispatches the unfortunate soul who dares to cross. The King of Granada has Almanzor seized for this duel. As a result, Hart and Kynaston become involved in a battle of words.

Boabdelin:  …If he be brave, he’s ready for the stroke.
Almanzor:  No man has more contempt, than I, of breath,
   But whence hast thou the right to give me death?
Obeyed as sovereign by thy subjects be,
   But know, that I alone am king of me.
I am as free as nature first made man,
Ere the base laws of servitude began,
When wild in woods the noble savage ran.

Boabdelin: Since, then, no pow’r above your own you know,
   Mankind should use you like a common foe;
You should be hunted like a beast of prey;
By your own law I take your life away.
Almanzor:  My laws are made but only for my sake;
   No king against himself a law can make.
If thou pretend’st to be a prince like me,
Blame not an act which should thy pattern be…

Boabdelin:  I do not want your counsel to direct,
   Or aid to help me punish or protect.
Almanzor:  Thou want’st ‘em both, or better thou would’st know,
   Than to let factions in thy kingdom grow…
Boabdelin:  Away, and execute him instantly!
Almanzor:  Stand off; I have not leisure yet to die. (I.i.202-233)

Dryden’s contemporaries called Almanzor’s mode of speech “huffing.” Huffing is speaking with swollen pride and arrogance. As Fisher says, “The chief mark of huffing is absurdity” (425). As one man, a “stranger,” against the army of Granada, Almanzor is in no position to make his own laws, or to reject death because he doesn’t have the time, or “leisure” for it. But picture Hart and Kynaston pitted against each other in this repartee. Hart stands over Kynaston in height, speaking in perfect, role-defining tones, while the
feminine Kynaston whines out his lines. The actors lend credibility to Almanzor’s huff. The audience is prepared to accept the absurdity of Almanzor’s authority.

By 1709 this dynamic between kingly nature and name is diminished, if not gone altogether. George Powell replaced Hart as Almanzor. This is the same often-inebriated George Powell who made the name “Worthy” truly ironic in *The Relapse*. Powell likely took the role for his potential skill. In the *Spectator* he was noted as being “excellently formed for a tragedian, and, when he pleases, deserves the admiration of the best judges” (Aston 376). However, Powell rarely “pleased” to gain such admiration, and it was difficult for actors to perform outside of expectation. Cibber gives an excellent example of the strength of audience expectation in his *Apology*. He notes that Samuel Sandford was known for playing the villain. The choice to cast him as an “honest Man” was the ruin of a play because the audience felt “as if the Author had impos’d upon them the most frontless or incredible Absurdity” (78). Powell’s reputation for drunkenness would have done little to reduce the absurdity of Almanzor’s huff. As Cibber said, “Even when he did well, that natural Prejudice pursu’d him; neither the Heroe, nor the Gentleman…could conceal…the true George Powel” (*Apology* 134).

Benjamin Husband played the part of Boabdelin in 1709. Husband made not much of a name for himself on the stage. Cibber never once mentioned him. In fact, the only records on the life of Benjamin Husband are found in *The London Stage*, which notes only the parts he played and his salary. From this information, we know that Husband performed mostly in tragic plays, and his salary was in a middling range. Though as Boabdelin, Husband was unremarkable, the overall effect of employing Powell as Almanzor and a lesser star for
Boabdilin would have added to the absurdity of the barely credible play, and lessened audience interest in *The Conquest of Granada*.

Almanzor and Boabdilin are rivals not only politically, but also romantically. Almahide is betrothed to Boabdilin before Almanzor wins her heart. Almahide’s attraction to Almanzor as Hart over Boabdilin as Kynaston is certainly believable. The choice of Nell Gwyn as Almahide in 1670 adds even more credibility to the attraction between the two. Gwyn is often known by Pepys’ description of her as “pretty, witty Nell,” and indeed, she was pretty. She was petite, with red-brown hair, straight white teeth, and blue eyes (Parker 63). She was 20 years old when she played Almahide, but she had already led a life of rich experience. As early as 1663 she was involved in affairs with Charles Hart of the Almanzor role, and John Lacy. Other lovers included Lord Buckhurst and Sir Charles Sedley, before Nell’s affair with Charles II led to the birth of their first son. Later that year she returned to the stage as Almahide, but that was her last role before retiring (Parker). Pepys was a great admirer of Gwyn. Pepys praised Gwyn’s first performance, Florimel in *The Maiden Queen*, with “I never can hope ever to see the like done again,” and of her third performance in the role, “cannot be better done in nature I think” (McAfee 244-45). However pleased he was with her comic roles, Pepys was greatly disappointed with her tragic parts. Among his comments are, “a great and serious part which she do most basely,” “Above all things Nell’s ill speaking of a great part made me mad,” and “The actors not pleasing me; and especially Nell’s acting of a serious part, which she spoils” (McAfee 246-247).

Why choose an actor whose line was clearly in comedy for this serious role? In one respect, Gwyn did fit the part. Who better to play the wife of a king than the lover of the King?
The choice of Nell Gwyn, the comedian, also supports Jefferson’s claim that Dryden was intentionally playing with the line between awe and absurdity. Parker notes that “the sight of the noble hero, played by Nell’s former lover, apparently struck dumb and incapable of action at the mere sight of her, gave rise to some unfortunate giggling” (101). But Dryden also knew how to capitalize on an audience draw, which he often did by placing Hart and Gwyn in the position of lovers. Parker refers to the two as “the first ‘gay couple’ of the Restoration theatre” (51). Dryden paired them together as often as possible, and “she and Hart made the play successful enough to draw the town” (Parker 55). Surely the audience was eager to see the new mother of the King’s latest illegitimate son paired against her former lover. What new dynamic would this bring to the famous and glamorous couple?

Powell adds a twist of interesting irony to the picture of Almahide’s first encounter with Almanzor. Almahide “falls at his feet, being veiled” and declares, ‘Turn, mighty Conqu’ror, turn your face this way./ Do not refuse to hear the wretched pray!’” Almanzor’s retort, spoken by Hart, had significance for the audience: “What business can this Woman have with me?” Almahide returns, “That of th’ afflicted to the Diety” (III.i.308-311). The standard expression in Restoration drama for supplication was a lifting of the hands, in almost a style of worship (Parker 115). So Gwyn covers her face before the lover whose public reaction to their parting was less than civil (Parker 115). She lifts her hands to him and refers to herself as the “afflicted” before the “Diety.” Parker says bluntly, “It is the Magdelen at the feet of Christ” (114). The entire action had significant meaning and draw for the Restoration audience. In many ways, the personal story behind the relationship of hero and heroine made this scene more believable.
In 1709 this personal credibility was lost. Jane Rogers took over the role of Almahide. It would be seven more years before her “Almanzor,” Powell, almost ravished her onstage in *The Relapse*, but the styles of Powell and Rogers were consistent enough to imagine that her kneeling before him to beg protection lacked credulity. Almahide begs of Almanzor, “As you are noble, protect me then/ From the rude outrage of insulting men” (III.i.370-71). Rogers was 41 in her role as Almahide, about the same age as Powell. While Powell was neglectful of his lines and known for his drinking, Rogers was a prude on the stage to the point that it actually covered her extreme licentiousness in her personal life, a feat of acting hardly possible by Restoration actors. It simply does not work to have Magdelen, the prude, at the feet of Christ, the drunken. Perhaps it was due to the reorganization of the management of the Theater Royal at Drury Lane that Wilks was overlooked as the obvious choice for Almanzor. From 1707 – 1710 Drury Lane moved from management under Rich to a system in which actor-mangers came into position (Avery lxxxi). Wilks and Rogers could have filled the places of Hart and Gwyn more efficiently, having been well-known lovers themselves. *The Memoirs of the Life of Robert Wilks* says “some Gentlemen of Distinction” had earlier obliged Rich to “let Mrs. Rogers always act the Heroine in every Play where Mr. Wilks was the Hero” (Highfill13:70). But as it turned out, Rogers, an emblem (within the theatre, at least) of virtue and modesty knelt before Powell, the figure of potential lost to ale. The image could not support the play. It merely added to the absurd and detracted from the awe of spectacle.

In *The Conquest of Granada*, Almahide’s contrast with the villainess of the play, Lyndaraxa, is also important. In the 1670 production, Rebecca Marshall slid perfectly into the role of Lyndaraxa. Marshall was another favorite of Pepys. He noted her in various roles
more than six times during the period from 1665 – 1668, in each instance praising her more (McAfee 253-54). Marshall had long black hair, dark eyes, and was known as a woman of “high spirit” (Highfill 10:108). Marshall shone brightly when contrasted against other female leads. Most commonly, she was paired with Elizabeth Boutell, Dryden’s choice for a “pitiable” Cleopatra. Howe says, “During the 1670s Marshall and Boutell popularized a type of tragedy with two female leads…wholly dissimilar in attitude and behaviour” (147).

Within the Conquest of Granada Marshall and Boutell play their contrasting roles; while Lyndaraxa is a conniving, licentious, and power-hungry, Boutell played Benzayda, a virtuous woman whose constant love thrives even though its object is an enemy to her father, resulting in a diminishment in her power through Part I. Soft-spoken, sweet Boutell declares her love in spite of her loss of position: “I’ll fly to you, and you shall fly to me:/ Our flight but to each other’s arms shall be./ To providence and chance permit the rest;/ Let us but love enough, and we are blest” (V.ii.96-100). The dark passion of Marshall says, “O could I read the dark decrees of fate,/ That I might once know whom to love, or hate!…I will be constant ye, if fortune can;/ I love the king: - let her but name the man” (IV.ii.1-2,7-8). The part of Benzayda is of little use in comparing the nature of the Conquest of Granada in 1670 and 1709; there is no record of who played Benzayda in 1709. But Boutell’s role opposite Marshall helps to establish the effectiveness of placing Marshall in the role of Lyndaraxa. So popular were these two women paired in contrast, that Howe credits their alliance with creating “the two most popular kinds of female character in new plays” (148).

Rebecca Marshall was perfect in her role not only because she was an excellent contrast to Boutell as Benzayda, but she also offered contrast to Gwyn as Almahide. During Act III, Almahide and Lyndaraxa are left onstage as the palace fall under siege. Almahide’s
reaction is “What dismal planet did my triumphs light!/ Discord the day, and death does rule the night:/ The noise my soul does through my senses wound” (III.i.249-51). Lyndaraxa finishes her couplet: “Methinks it is a noble, sprightly sound,/ The trumpet’s clangor, and the clash of arms!/ This noise may chill your blood, but mine it warms” (III.ii.252-54). Near to each other and the audience, the tall, dark Marshall stood over the pert, blue-eyed Gwyn and gloried in the bloodshed. Marshall came off as all the more compelling because she existed between two fair and virtuous heroines. The 1709 production sought to continue the tradition of paired female leads.

Francis Maria Knight was a natural choice for Lyndaraxa in 1709. Knight was to Rogers as Marshall was to Boutell. They were the female leads in contrast at Drury Lane. Knight was a leading tragedienne; she played the “hard” role opposite Rogers’ virtue (Howe 161). Examining the pairings of these actresses offers us a couple of clear differences in the productions of 1670 and 1709. First, with time the emphasis on different plots within the play changed. In 1670 the paired actresses were cast in the roles of Lyndaraxa and Benzayda. In 1709, Lyndaraxa was more directly contrasted with Almahide. Benzayda’s plot has fallen by the wayside; she is no longer important enough to make the published cast list. The effect of this plot’s minimization is a reduction in the overall melodramatic effect of the play. More directly affecting the success of the play, however, are the changes in the balance of tragedy and comedy involved in the changing of the cast. Lyndaraxa is one character in particular who straddles the line between the tragic and the comic.

As powerful as the great Almanzor, Lyndaraxa causes political upheaval with her own charms. She calculates to raise herself to the highest possible position by seducing Abdalla, the king’s brother, and leading him to challenge Boabdelin’s kingship. She also
keeps another lover, Abdemelech, chief of the Abencerrages, in case Abdalla’s rise in power doesn’t work out. Like situations are the sources of laughter in Restoration comedy.

Another feature of the comedy is chopped logic in argument and witty repartee. Lyndaraxa is a master of these arts, just as Marshall was master over both tragedy and comedy. Paired with Michael Mohun as Abdemelech, the scenes were a hit. Scene ii of Act IV features these two attempting to reason each other out of their will. Their argument is reminiscent of a scene between Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck. Abdemelech comes in to Lyndaraxa disguised. Lyndaraxa urges him to leave. He, in turn, asks her to leave with him. She refuses. He starts to go. She begs him to stay. He refuses. She accuses him of not loving her, and commands him to go. He refuses. She offers to go. He begs her not to go. She begs him to go. He leaves. Lyndaraxa has won. She ends the action by voicing her calculation:

Go! – How I love thee, heav’n can only tell:
   And yet I love thee, for a subject, well.-
   Yet, whatsoever charms a crown can bring,
   A subject’s greater than a little king.
   I will attend till time this throne secure;
   And, when I climb, my footing shall be secure. (IV.ii.115-20).

Powell asserts that with Mohun as Abdemelech, “Dryden was able to deepen the audience’s response to his comic presentation in a highly original way” (118). Mohun was an excellent actor, short and austere (Highfill 10:273). Pepys reflected that Mohun was “said to be the best actor in the world” (McAfee 230). Not only was he an excellent actor, but Mohun fought in the civil war. He combined the dignity of military presence with emotional variance (Powell 118). As the dark, witty Lyndaraxa gets the best of him, Abdemelech is reduced to tears. Powell refers to their encounters as “tragicomedy of a most complex kind…a man is unmanned by love, and it is both true and funny” (119).
The comedy of the same scene in 1709 may have been of a very different nature. Although Francis Knight was the natural successor to Rogers in the role of Lyndaraxa, the strengths of the two actresses were different. Knight was more strictly a tragedienne than Marshall, and her penchant for comedy always lay in the vein of satire. Moreover, her method of satire is said to have involved “much ranting and stomping” (Highfill 9:59). In contrast to Mohun, Mills appeared athletic and manly, with a deep voice. Mills, however, “lacked sentiment” and was “too studied in gesture,” according to Steele in the *Tatler* (Fone 389-90). Mills generally stuck to second parts and not leads. As *Dramatic Miscellanies* tells the story of Mills’ attempt at playing Macbeth. The role was so without “feeling and effect” that upon seeing Powell come upon the stage, an audience member called out loudly, “For God’s sake, George, give us a speech, and let me go home” (Fone 390). The general consensus on Mills’ acting style was similar to that of Steele. In 1755 *Reflections Upon Theatrical Expression* noted, “Whoever remembers old Mr. Mills will recollect that he had a Stamp with his Foot.” Some 20 years before, Aaron Hill wrote a letter that indicated “instead of raging in real agony, Mills was full of nods, flings, and jerks” (Highfill 10:249). It may be an exaggeration to picture Knight upon the stage stomping about while Mills “flings” and “jerks.” But it is certain that Mills would not have been able to bring off the same emotion that Mohun did in the part. And Knight’s role would have taken on a bit of the brashness of satire in its comedic effect.

In his dedication of *The Spanish Fryar*, Rymer wrote, “in a Playhouse every thing contributes to impose upon the judgment” (Hume 226). The playhouse itself is a part of the complex interpretation of the play. The changes in the theatre at Drury Lane had their effect on *The Conquest of Granada* just as they did on *All For Love*. Not only did the loss of the
forestage lead to a different style of acting, but the changes led to a different interpretation of
the actors. Part of the draw for the audience of Restoration theatre was the excitement of
proximity to celebrity. As Hume says, “To the attractions of visual spectacle and aural
charm must be added the special pleasures of observing favourite actors in role after role.
With the lead actors of a company involved in almost every production, the audience could
get to know them very well” (226). With the loss of the forestage at Drury Lane, the actors
became a part of the scene rather than part of the audience. Langhans describes the result:
“the actor seems to playgoers to belong to the world of illusion that the scenery creates and
not to the world of actuality that they inhabit in the house” (35). In 1670, Gwyn was
Nell/Almahide; Marshall was “Becke”/Lyndaraxa. In 1709, Rogers was Almahide; Knight
was Lyndaraxa. As the personalities of the actresses were dissociated from the characters,
the play lost an irony that helped its success.

The change within the playhouse worked against the heroic play in another way.
Christopher Rich altered the Drury Lane theatre in 1696 in order to seat more spectators.
The stage was shortened and boxes for seating were set between the actors and the main
audience. Cibber preferred the original formation of the theatre to the revisions. He said of
the theatre’s original state: “every painted Scene was stronger, every grand Scene and Dance
more extended; every rich, or fine-coloured Habit had a more lively Lustre: Nor was the
minutest Motion of a Feature (properly changing with the Passion, or Humour it suited) ever
lost, as they frequently must be in the Obscurity of too great a distance” (Cibber, Apology
225). Langhans credits the change within the playhouse as part of the reason for the change
in Restoration comedic tastes. The intimacy of the early stage was conducive to comedies of
wit, while the separation of audience and actor moved the genre toward situational comedy
The comedy portion of the *Conquest of Granada*’s status as tragic-comedy is a comedy of wit, relying on argument and repartee. The comedic effect of the play was affected by changes in playhouse structure. The delicate balancing act orchestrated by Dryden was further deteriorated.

According to Susan Owen, “Heroic drama, then, is a genre in which harmony is established despite discordant notes; and ‘greatness’ is both asserted and qualified” (34). The discord and harmony could both be heard since the first production of *The Conquest of Granada*. The harmony is reflected in Mrs. John Evelyn’s letter concerning the premiere performance of *The Conquest of Granada*. She described the play as “so full of ideas that the most refined romance I ever read is not to compare with it; love is made so pure, and valour so nice, that one would image it designed for an Utopia rather that our stage” (Van Lennup 177). The discordant notes of tragedy and comedy, love and valour, serious huffing, unnatural language, and heroines who are at once licentious and virtuous, come together harmoniously in the eyes of Mrs. Evelyn. The discord of these concepts is amplified in *The Rehearsal*. Villiers’ play mocked Dryden’s improbable plot, unnatural speech, and puffed up hero. Ironically, scholars base much of their information on the involvement of the author in the workings of productions on the action of *The Rehearsal*. From Villiers we learn that Dryden took great care to create harmony from discordant notes, and rather than making him out to be Bayes, the clown, Villiers proves Dryden’s skill. Dryden was the writer, director, casting agent, and acting coach for a play full of irony and paradox. That he pulled this off at all is amazing. Mrs. Evelyn’s letter and the volumes of criticism on the play and the genre of heroic drama prove he actually got some people to take the play seriously. But changes
within cast and playhouse led the house of cards to crumble. Without each delicate balance,

*The Conquest of Granada* could not sustain itself.
Conclusion

Many published writers know the agony of sending their works off, like children from the nest, and receiving them back with the lament, “What have you done with my child?” The Restoration dramatist, at least in the case of Dryden and Vanbrugh, never felt this agony when their plays premiered. The author was able to dress his child and control his movements and speech to a large degree.

Perhaps the reader of Restoration drama needs “some knowledge, some visualization” of the Restoration stage because the author was so intimately aware of the available playhouse, cast, and theatre workings. In 1668 John Dryden was under contract to the King’s Men in Drury Lane to provide three new plays per year in exchange for a share and ¼ of the company’s profits (Milhous 41). It was within this contract that he produced *The Conquest of Granada* and *All For Love*. Sir John Vanbrugh was an amateur dramatist; he wrote *The Relapse* with the intention of selling it to the King’s Company. Both authors wrote for a particular theatre and a particular cast. If, as Seltzer says, a performance necessarily implies a point of view, it was the author’s point of view that Restoration drama asserted.

When the author was no longer available, Restoration companies strove to represent plays consistently, for reasons of convenience and necessity. Restoration actors were called upon to learn and perform several different parts each week. As long as an actor continued within the same company, his parts were his own, permanently. Audiences came to associate actors with certain roles. Only successful plays were kept in the repertoire, and often when original actors became unavailable, the newer actors were called on to imitate the style of the original. But even with all this conscious effort toward consistency, the productions changed when removed from the hands of the author.
This removal of the author’s hand was particularly destructive to the heroic drama. Such a mixture of irony and paradox required the balance that was fully conceived by Dryden alone in the case of *The Conquest of Granada*. Even in his hands, some spectators saw the scales tipped in the direction of the absurd, away from the awe-inspiring. The King’s Company’s attempts to keep the play alive with its original sense were futile. The awe-inspiring succumbed to the ridiculous because the actors strove to imitate the individual styles of their predecessors, without considering the complex relationships between the original cast which Dryden made good use of.

In the case of tragedy, it may have been the release from the grasp of the author that kept the play alive. Robert Hume suggests that at the time of *All For Love*’s production in 1718, newly-written tragedy had “collapsed” due to audience demand for “poetic or providential justice” (491). This development within tragedy is reflected in Dryden’s play. The character of Cleopatra moves from dove to monster, and her downfall no longer produces a sense of pity, but a sense of justice. The change in cast also tends to deny Antony the pity he may have earned earlier. His affair seems less an example of “all for love” and more an example of “all for power.” Dryden’s intent for the play was the arousal of pity, but according to Hume the audience was in no mood for “easy pathos” (491).

*The Relapse* was written just on the cusp of the advent of the “genteel” comedy. Cibber’s *Love’s Last Shift* is often defined as the first of the sentimental comedies, functioning to placate the moralists offended by the licentious nature of the first twenty years of Restoration comedy. As David Womersly writes, “the ostensible purpose of *The Relapse* is to contest and reverse the apparent moral reformation of the stage embodied in *Love’s Last Shift*” (596). It did not bear for long Vanbrugh’s message of the absurdity of a moral
comedy. Beginning with recasting, the play was restructured as an interesting and sanitary caricature.

To modern sensibilities, asking an actor to play a particular part in the voice and style of his predecessor in the role is illogical. Imagine a director asking Jerry Seinfeld to play any role popularized by Jim Carrey in the same manner that the role was originally played, simply because they are both comedians. This conservative tendency, an attempt to recreate the successes of an earlier era for a new audience, may explain why Hume found the theatre of the late Restoration “stodgy and careful” (493). Plays became only part of the theatre’s entertainment, supplemented by acrobatics and spectacle. Cibber admits in the preface to Ximena that the play Love Makes a Man “only held up its Head by the Heels of the French Tumblers” (Hume 491). The changes in Restoration drama represent a lesson in the bastardization of art. Attempts by the King’s Company to produce the flavor of the day for a buying audience resulted in the diluted remains of vibrant and brilliant drama.
Works Cited


Appendix
### All For Love

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### The Relapse

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