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Converse with the Audience in Restoration Theatre

Abstract

This article argues that the Restoration theatre audience were partners in an ongoing conversation, using conversation in the way that James Thompson suggests when writing of Wycherley's plays:

We need to understand Restoration concepts of discourse in their terms, not ours, for though we judge characters by their words, the criteria for what can or ought to be done with words are too often those of the twentieth century and not those of the seventeenth.

[1]

He points out that at this time conversation still had the meaning of 'living amongst people' or 'mode of life' and not its more specific modern sense of 'talk'. [2]

The following article explores this idea, and suggests that the dramatists at the time exploited varying styles of dialogue with other signifiers of meaning, particularly social connotations, and thus deliberately changed the aural and spatial dynamics of the total theatrical experience, making the audience as much a part of the performance as the action on stage, and causing the audience to react to, or perceive, the play in ways particular to the period 1660-c 1700.

Key words:

Converse; wit; repartee; aside; soliloquy; perception; confidant; participant

The Restoration Theatre

'Converse' with the audience in the Restoration theatre was governed in part by the design of that theatre. Unlike the pre-interregnum open-air playhouses the two theatres granted licences by Charles II were indoors, lit by candlelight and all the audience were seated. This was similar to the indoor theatre at the Blackfriars, which had been adapted from a hall in the old Blackfriars Monastery and was used for indoor performances by Shakespeare's company of players as well as for special presentations before the

nobility. The auditorium of the Restoration Theatres consisted of a pit with benches and probably two galleries with boxes round the walls. There was a forestage projecting into the auditorium similar to the platform stage in the pre-Commonwealth outdoor theatres. This had various names including 'platform', 'proscenium' and 'scene', I use 'forestage' as a more accurate term of description. Where the outdoor platform stage and the Blackfriars had doors at the rear of the stage in the tiring house façade, the Restoration forestage had entrance doors on either side of the stage in front of what was called the frontispiece and which became the proscenium arch. A curtain was hung at the rear of the forestage which was drawn up at the beginning of a performance and stayed up during the whole performance, so that every scene change took place in the view of the audience. On granting licences to the theatres, the King ordered that the plays should employ painted scenery and there was an area beyond the forestage, and the curtain, in which this could be set. The locations were painted in perspective on sets of side wings which led to a system of sliding shutters which met across the rear stage area. The wings and back shutters could be parted to disclose another location up to a probable total of three or four, and the back shutters could also draw apart to enable a disclosure or discovery, or to close off one scene as the action moved into another.^[3]

This style of presentation meant that the actors (and the actresses whom the King had also insisted that the two companies employ, for the first time on the English public stage) usually entered and exited onto and from the forestage and much of the action took place very near the audience. However, research into stage directions has shown that action also took place in the scenic area, and entrances were often made from between the side wing shutters, for example when it was supposed the characters were walking in the Mall as in Dryden's comedy *The Mall or the Modish Lovers* (1674) or when in Elkanah Settle's tragedy *The Empress of Morocco* (1673) villains dash out of an ambush 'from behind the scenes' (Act 4, Scene 2).^[4] Although, as the theatre was much smaller than the earlier playhouses, all the action was much closer to the audience, which enabled intimate and direct verbal contact, whether on the forestage or within the scenic stage.

The Audience

Academics in the early twentieth century assumed the Restoration audience to consist of a small select coterie based around the court and its hangers-on, with prostitutes and other low-life characters in addition. However later research has found that the audience came from right across the social spectrum. Certainly for the first time in theatrical history the King and his brother the Duke of York frequently attended the public theatre, and, therefore, the courtiers and those who looked for royal favour also made a point of attending. But others like Samuel Pepys, who began as a lowly clerk in the Naval Office, also regularly attended, as did their respectable wives and daughters. Moreover, Pepys records taking the sons of his patron, Lord Sandwich, as well as seeing his clerks there, and he remarks at times on a preponderance of apprentices and 'mean people'.^[5] It

seems that the theatre attracted people of all shades of opinion, status, age or sex and Love argues that the theatre was an image-in-little of the inhabitants of Restoration London, although there must have been those who did not attend because they considered it immoral, and who would become more influential in damning it later in the century.^[6]

The dramatists undoubtedly aimed to please their royal master. Indeed the King is known to have actively influenced the choice of plays at times and to have encouraged Dryden, for example, to write *Mr Limberham* (1678), probably the most bawdy and obscene play of the period. But the playwrights relied to quite a large extent on the approval of the general audience who could 'cry off' any play they did not like, that is, make too much noise for the play to continue. Any one performance might be seen by royalty, by the current royal mistress, by government clerks and other officials, by trades-people, by orange sellers, by apprentices, by family parties, and by whores plying for custom. Although nominally servants of the Crown who were granted liveries, the actors relied for their livelihood on the receipts from the door-keepers and the theatres were run as commercial enterprises. Even the Royal brothers were billed and paid for their seats. Therefore there could not be too wide a divergence between the playwright's intentions and the expectations of the audience. The dedicatory epistles, the prologues and epilogues make this relationship extremely clear, sometimes cajoling the audience, sometimes berating them for their lack of attendance. Many Prologues deliberately set out to insult the audience. As Love suggests:

[The] almost ritualised abuse of such groups as beaux, whores, poets, citizens and countrymen may paradoxically have been welcomed by the targets as a mode of acknowledgement rather than resented as an affront. The Restoration sense of humour may well have been rather different from ours.^[7]

The Prologue to Aphra Behn's *Abdelazer, or the Moor's Revenge*^[8] (1676) for example, begins:

Gallants, you have so long been absent hence,
 That you have almost cool'd your Diligence;
 For while we study or revive a Play,
 You, like good Husbands, in the Country stay;
 There frugally wear out your summer suit,
 And in Frieze Jerkin after Beagle Toot...

(1-6)

The insults continue and include the ladies who spend their days gambling instead of attending the theatre, with a final insult in the last line that suggests the gossip they exchange on such occasions will come back to haunt them.

...Suppose you should have Luck;-

Yet sitting up so late, as I am told,

You'll lose in Beauty what you win in Gold;

And what each Lady of another says,

Will make you new Lampoons and us new Plays.

(35-40)

This was one aspect of the inter-relationship between stage and auditorium. Another is seen in the Prologue written anonymously for Behn's play *The Rover* (1677) where the audience are accused of judging plays capriciously:

...If a young Poet hitt your Humour right,

You judge him then out of Revenge and Spight.

...Why Witt so oft is damn'd, when good Plays take,

Is that you Censure as you love, or hate.

...In short, the only Witt that's now in Fashion,

Is but the gleanings of good Conversation.

(10-11, 15-16, 35-36)

Thomas Shadwell writes, in the Preface to his first play, *The Sullen Lovers* (1668):

But had I been us'd with all the severity imaginable, I should patiently have submitted to my Fate; not like the rejected Authors of our Time, who when their plays are damn'd, will strut and huff it out, and laugh at the Ignorance of the Age.

Shadwell was certainly concerned that the audience should receive his plays favourably and the prefaces to his later plays show he was very aware of the views of his audience, as, for instance when he writes of blotting out the main design of *The Humourists* (1670) after finding it had given offence.

The audience was, therefore, very directly concerned with the theatres' repertoires, and were closely involved in the presentation, not only because of the design of the auditorium but because the dramatists took account of their reactions in the way in which they encouraged an active, imaginary, involvement with the action on stage. A converse which began with the Prologue setting a certain tone.

Nevertheless many of the dramatists were not professional writers and did not rely on the theatre for their income, and could therefore indulge their own inclinations to a certain extent. Dryden, who considered comedy a debased form even claimed in the Preface to *An Evening's Love* (1671), 'And a true Poet often misses of applause, because he cannot debase himself to write so ill as to please his audience.' However, Dryden never considered comedy as anything other than inferior dramatic literature and he said, rather pompously, in the same Preface, 'Neither, indeed, do I value a reputation gain'd from Comedy ... for I think it, in it's own nature, inferiour to all sorts of Dramatic writing',^[9] But heroic tragedy, Dryden's preferred genre, was not popular and the genre that was probably the most consistently successful was comedy and the broader the better.

There were several kinds of converse in which the audience and the actors (and actresses) on stage engaged and this article discusses the ways in which the dramatists structured them into their texts. I have separated them into three sections: **The Correct Address**, in which the audience is induced to feel they are included in a social conversation run according to the rules of polite behaviour; **Audience as Confidant**, in which the audience is encouraged to become the recipient of confidences by one or other character and thus feel superior to other characters; and **Audience as Participant** in which the audience feels directly involved in two ways. The first is when they are insidiously drawn into theatrical time as events occur on stage. The second when the relationship between the actor as himself and the actor as character affects the audience's perception of aspects of the play, sometimes with deliberate dramatic irony,

The Correct Address

Social converse amongst those in Restoration London who had any pretensions or aspirations to a social life was conducted as a formal game which required knowledge of certain rules. Those who played this game were expected to display breadth and depth of knowledge, and the right conduct in society, as well as nimble use of language. Several books were written giving advice and 'rules' for correct behaviour.^[10]

Adroit use of language counted not only as a social grace but also as a sign of a cultivated mind, and the demonstration of good manners and correct behaviour. Our appreciation is mental rather than aural and because of this scholars have tended to regard the word play in seventeenth century comedies as more intellectually significant than it necessarily warrants, while disregarding the formality of language of the time.

This was a delight in verbal dexterity. We are tickled by the incongruous answer, by the patter of a clever double act, by double entendres of certain modern comedians perhaps; but we no longer play with the English language in deliberate use of similes and metaphors, parody and paradox, epigrams and antitheses in normal conversation and look askance at such as politicians who dress up their message in too much rhetoric. James Thompson warns:

We need to understand Restoration concepts of discourse in their terms, not ours, for though we judge characters by their words, the criteria for what can or ought to be done with words are too often those of the twentieth century and not those of the seventeenth. [\[11\]](#)

At that time conversation still had the meaning of 'living amongst people' or 'mode of life' and not its more specific modern sense of 'talk'. [\[12\]](#)

Such word-play is demonstrated particularly well in the comedies of manners of William Wycherley and George Etherege. Although neither was a professional writer, both were members of fashionable society and known to influential men of the court, and would have been fully aware of the manners of the time which required a gentleman, or a lady, to have the social arts of conversation. Etherege in particular was one of the circle of courtiers around John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, and Sir Charles Sedley, notorious libertines who were in the pit for his first play *The Comical Revenge; or Love in a Tub* (1664) and were said to be the patterns for characters in his third play *The Man of Mode* (1676). Indeed, Wycherley was taken up by Lady Castlemaine, one of the King's mistresses after his first play *Love in a Wood* (1671). Both Wycherley and Etherege provide clear examples of witty, verbal exchanges as an embellishment of a storyline, meant to be enjoyed for itself alone, perhaps adding to characterisation, but without adding appreciably to the plot.

With this background in mind, in *Love in a Wood* (1671) Wycherley describes the characters Vincent, Ranger and Valentine as three 'young gentlemen of the town' whom he sets against Dapperwit 'a brisk, conceited, half-witted fellow of the town,' whose idea of wit is to traduce people behind their backs, as he does about Vincent to Ranger:

DAPPERWIT. He may drink, because he is obliged to the bottle for all the wit and courage he has; 'tis not free and natural like yours.

RANGER. He has more courage than wit, but wants neither.

DAPPERWIT. As a pump gone dry, if you pour no water down it you will get none out, so-

RANGER. Nay, I bar similes too, tonight.

DAPPERWIT. Why is not the thought new? Don't you apprehend it?

RANGER. Yes, yes, but –

DAPPERWIT. Well, well, will you comply with his sottishness too, and hate brisk things in complaisance to the ignorant dull age? I believe shortly 'twill be as hard to find a patient friend to communicate one's wit to, as a faithful friend to communicate one's secret to. Wit has as few true judges as painting I see.

RANGER. All people pretend to be judges of both.

(Act 1, Scene 2)

The scene continues as Ranger leaves and Vincent returns, whereupon Dapperwit defames Ranger in turn:

DAPPERWIT. 'Tis disobliging to tell a man of his faults to his face. If he had your grave parts and manly wit, I should adore him; but a pox! he is a mere buffoon, a jack pudding, let me perish! (scene continues)

Some of the audience would enjoy the word play whilst others would laugh at the scurrilous comments which Dapperwit believes to be witty repartee, and the seventeenth century audience would also see the exchanges as a lesson in 'what not to do' when attempting to engage in polite discourse.

In Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676) a lowly shoemaker exchanges witticisms with the rake-hero Dorimant and his friend Medley:

MEDLEY. I advise you like a friend, reform your life, you have brought the envy of the world upon you, by living above yourself. Whoring and swearing are vices too genteel for a shoemaker.

SHOEMAKER. 'Zud, I think you men of quality will grow as unreasonable as the women; you would engross the sins o' the nation; poor folks can no sooner be wicked, but th'are railed at by their betters.

DORIMANT. Sirrah, I'll have you stand i' the pillory for this libel.

SHOEMAKER. Some of you deserve it, I'm sure, there are so many of 'em, that our journeymen nowadays instead of harmless ballads, sing nothing but your damned lampoons..

DORIMANT. Our lampoons you rogue?

SHOEMAKER. Nay, good master, why should not you write your own commentaries as well as Caesar?

MEDLEY. The rascal's read, I perceive.

(Act 1, Scene1)

Medley's comment meant at the time 'well-read', and 'educated in the classics', an ironic comment on a shoemaker, which would not only amuse the audience with the humour of the exchanges, but the trades-people in the audience who would find it enjoyable to see one of their own getting the better of a gentleman. Witty servants often appear as outwitting their slightly more stolid masters. A lesson to those masters in the audience that they need to learn the right ways to behave if they do not wish themselves to be seen as more foolish than their servants.

All the audience would wish to be seen as being able to make clever jokes and smart ripostes in whatever their walk of life. Pepys was probably a typical member of the audience for Etherege's first play *The Comical Revenge* or *Love in a Tub* in January 1665 when he comments to his diary that the play 'was very merry, but only so by gesture, not wit at all, which methinks is beneath this house.' Pepys often felt guilty about going to the theatre at all, he felt it was self indulgence and would make vows to himself to stop going for a time, and he felt even more guilty when he thought he was enjoying something a little low brow. All through his diary Pepys makes slightly guilty comments that tend to show he feels that clever word play should be superior to straightforward comic business. Indeed Etherege's play is an odd mixture of love scenes in sentimental verse interspersed with the farcical, prose story of a man being treated for syphilis by being sweated in a tub. On 29th June 1668, when he saw Sedley's *The Mulberry Garden* for the second time, Pepys said he 'cannot be reconciled to it, but only do find here and there an independent sentence of wit,' which demonstrates the seventeenth century attitude which distinguishes between the play as such and the language in which it is written. Pepys' approbation of Mrs Clerke as a 'fine, witty lady, though a little conceited and proud' when she had been his guest at home on 13th January 1663, and other remarks he makes throughout the diary on the enjoyment of good talk shows not only the importance he gave to conversation, but also the casual, because implicit, acceptance of that importance. Later in *The Man of Mode* (1676), Etherege gives dazzling exchanges of verbal fireworks between all of his various characters. It was enormously popular, made a lot of money for the company and was often revived. Sadly Pepys had stopped his diary by then so we cannot know what he thought of it.^[13]

The dramatists used the consequences of failing to observe the correct mode of life, or the ways to behave, to create dramatic situations, as did Pinero in *Trelawney of the Wells* or, does Ayckbourn in his observations of suburban mores today; presenting for admiration and possible emulation those characters who know the rules while contrasting

them with characters who aspire to but fall short of such social success.^[14] Dapperwit provides a useful example of the wrong kind of behaviour. More often those who have the art of fluent and apposite language and correct address are contrasted with the fops like Sir Fopling Flutter in Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676), who takes fashionable behaviour to an extreme by aping grotesque French fashions, boasting of his French connections, and dropping pretentious French expressions into every sentence. The play has the additional title of *or Sir Fopling Flutter* to show that Sir Fopling was an important character and not simply a make weight comic, despite the fact that he does not appear until the play's third act. However, of all the fools who fail to meet the social norms, one of the most notorious was Sir Martin in Dryden's *Sir Martin Mar-all* (1667).

Audience as Confidant

As well as presenting a character who behaves outrageously, *Sir Martin Mar-all* provides a very good example of the audience being used as a confidant. Sir Martin is a simpleton who always puts his foot in things and totally disorganises every plan made by his manservant, Warner, to find him a wife. Warner uses the audience as his confidant, keeps them completely aware of his plotting, and primes them to anticipate Sir Martin's downfall each time it happens. The play opens with a speech by Warner which prepares the audience immediately for the relationship between himself and Sir Martin:

WARNER. Where the devil is this Master of mine? He is ever out of the way when he should be doing himself good! This 'tis to serve a coxcomb, one that has no more brains than just those I carry for him. Well! Of all fops commend me to him for the greatest; he's so opinion'd of his own abilities, that he is ever designing somewhat, and yet he sows his stratagems so shallow, that every daw can pick 'em up. From a plotting fool, the Lord deliver me. Here he comes.

(Act 1,
Scene1)

As the play continues the audience see and hear Sir Martin blurting out the wrong thing at quite the wrong time. For example, he tells his rival, Sir John, that he intends to marry the girl Sir John believes to be his own mistress, despite desperate attempts by Warner to 'warn' him not to do so:

SIR JOHN. Her name, sir, I beseech you.

WARNER. For heav'n's sake, sir. Have a care.

SIR MARTIN. Thou art such a coxcomb - Her name's Millicent.

WARNER. Now, the pox take you, sir, what do you mean ?

SIR JOHN. Millicent say you? That's the name of my mistress.

(Act 1, scene 1)

However, Warner's plotting comes right in the end and, as he says to the audience in the last act:

WARNER. Was there ever such a lucky rogue as I? I had always a good opinion of my wit, but could never think. I had so much as now I find. I have now gain'd an opportunity to carry away Mistress Millicent, for my master to get his mistress by means of his rival, to receive all his happiness, whereas he could expect nothing but misery. After this exploit I will have Lilly draw me in the habit of a hero, with a laurel on my temples and an inscription below it. 'This is Warner the Flower of Serving-men.'

(Act 4, scene 1)

The audience will realise, and laugh, to think that Warner is suggesting he should be painted by the prolific and popular court painter Sir Peter Lely (1618-1680). But the laugh is on them for Warner turns out to be a gentleman down on his luck and not a common servant at all, and the audience see him win Millicent's hand while Sir Martin has to be satisfied with her maid.

Sir Martin Mar-all apparently made Pepys laugh so much his head ached when he first saw it on 16th August 1667. He said,

It is a most entire piece of Mirth, a complete Farce from one end to the other, that certainly was ever writ. I never laughed so much in my life; I laughed until my head [ached] all the evening and night with my laughter, and at very good wit therein, not fooling.

He returned to see it some seven times. Its popularity meant that it was revived many times, including a showing at court, and was even chosen to open the new Dorset Gardens theatre on 9th November 1671.

Bernard Beckerman, in an article on theatrical perception, analyses the complex interchanges between stage and audience, and suggests that 'To stir the audience's imagination, the dramatic object must be defined to give impetus and direction to its

perception, yet open enough to encourage 'guesses' about the inner action of the scene.^[15]

Beckerman writes mainly from the viewpoint of the stage and the signifiers found in an actor's presentation but it is clear that the audience is not a passive receptor and accepts, by going to the theatre, the current conventions, and enters into a complicity with author and actors. The playwright uses the very fact of this un-stated complicity to affect the perception and reception of the play, to encourage the necessary 'guessing' about motives and future actions in various ways.

An important way of defining the dramatic object, and altering the seventeenth century audience perception, while seeming to inform them, was in the use of soliloquies and asides, and some interesting deductions can be made from the ways in which Aphra Behn structures them into her plays. In the following selections I use examples from the works of Behn, not because I believe her plays have any especial literary merit, but because she was a professional dramatist, writing for her living and therefore had to be particularly attuned to her audience's requirements. She wrote a larger number of plays than any of her contemporaries (except Dryden) which were consistently popular and successful in her time. They must therefore have matched the expectations of the Restoration audience in most respects, and throw light on what criteria the audience was unconsciously setting for a successful theatrical play. More than this, she also had a sense of staging and her texts include detailed stage directions on how she wants the actors to perform their parts. Many of the other dramatists appear to have left the staging of their plays to the theatre management, after writing the dialogue and giving the location for the scene. But Behn clearly had a very clear ear and keen eye as to how the plays should appear to the audience, and how she wanted, or expected, the audience to perceive them.

Raymond Williams remarks on the unspoken, understood conventions of the technique of asides:

We accept that an actor can speak to us and that we can hear him at the back of the farthest gallery and yet accept at the same time that what he says is unheard by anyone on stage he indicates as not hearing him. Yet the technique of using the aside can be a problem for actors. Whether the actor is to direct the asides at the audience and acknowledge their presence with his eye contact or whether he is to act as if merely speaking his thoughts aloud is rarely differentiated by a playwright unless in a phrase such as 'to the audience'.^[16]

Donald Sinden wrote about the problem from an actor's point of view when he was preparing to play Lord Foppington in 1967, in Vanbrugh's *The Relapse* (1696)^[17] Sinden was advised by Baliol Holloway that:

An aside must be directed to a given seat in the theatre - a different seat for each aside, some in the stalls, some in the circle. Never to the same seat twice - the rest of the audience will think you have a friend sitting there. If you are facing to the right immediately before the aside, then direct it to the left of the theatre, and vice versa. Your head must crack round in one clean movement, look straight at the occupant of the seat, deliver the line and crack your head back to exactly where it was before. The voice you use must be different from the one you are using in the play. If loud then soft; if soft then loud; if high then low; if low, then high; if fast, then slow; if slow, then fast. During an aside, no other characters must move at all - the time you take does not exist for them.^[18]

Holloway's purely technical advice on the delivery of the line is based on a tradition that stretches back over the years to the less than subtle usage of the Victorian theatre which made no differentiation in kinds of aside.

Yet the way an aside is pointed affects and alters the relationship with the audience. Holloway refers to unrealistic behaviour: the direction of a remark by one character about another or about his own actions, feelings or thoughts, at the audience in acknowledgement of their presence, while retaining the fiction of his characterisation. This kind of aside seems to have been in general use by all seventeenth century playwrights, but is now only used in particular styles of production, such as pantomime or revue, to create an especial intimacy with the audience. However, also in use then and still sometimes in use today, there is the overheard thought, spoken aloud by the actor but with no acknowledgement of any audience either on or off stage; and there is the remark passed in character to another character supposedly not to be heard by a third character but meant to be overheard by the audience. These two examples can be accepted as within an illusion of realistic behaviour as acting behind the fourth wall. They do not need excessive physical gesture but often still require a change in tone.

The following account of ways in which speeches could be spoken is not meant as any kind of definitive interpretation, it is merely to show the infinite variety of response and reaction contained in these few speeches.

A particularly clear use of asides in a Restoration comedy, which can serve as an illustration of many similar scenes, is found in the second bedroom scene of Behn's *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678) in which the asides are carefully structured into the integral movement. In Act Four, Scene Four, the scene opens onto Lady Fancy's Bed-Chamber where 'she's discover'd with Wittmore in disorder. A Table, Sword and Hat'. A sword and a hat together anywhere on stage was usually a visual clue to infidelity.

Maundy, the maid, enters as the scene opens to announce that Sir Patient, the Lady's husband, is on his way and Wittmore, her lover, 'runs behind the bed.' As the scene unfolds, there is a great deal of comic business with Maundy fetching bottles of 'Mirabilis'

as Sir Patient becomes gradually more and more drunk until he becomes amorous, turfs out Maundy, locks the door and starts chasing Lady Fancy around the bed until he falls on it and seems to be asleep. Lady Fancy calls Wittmore out and the rest of the stage directions chart the moves and tell the story:

He coming out falls; pulls the Chair down, Sir Patient flings open the Curtain ... Wittmore runs under the Bed; she runs to Sir Patient and holds him in his Bed ... Lies down, she covers him ... Wittmore peeps from under the Bed; she goes softly to the Door to open it ... [Wittmore's watch alarm goes off] ... Sir Patient rises, and flings open the Curtains ... She runs to Sir Patient, and leaves the Door still fast ... Strives to get up, she holds him down ... Offers to look, she holds him ... Lays himself down ... Covers him, draws the curtains ... She makes signs to Wittmore, he peeps ... Makes signs to her to open the Door; whilst he creeps softly from under the Bed to the Table, by which going to raise himself, he pulls down all the Dressing-things: at the same instant Sir Patient leaps from the Bed, and she returns from the Door, and sits on Wittmore's Back as he lies on his Hands and Knees, and makes as if she swooned ... Runs to his Lady ... Cries and bauls ... He opens the Door, and calls help, help ... From under her, peeping ... Sir Patient returns with Maundy ... She takes him about the Neck, and raises herself up, gives Wittmore a little kick behind ... Goes out.

(Act 4, Scene 4)

One can follow the intended movement and the actions and reactions of the trio which would present a very comic scene of near disaster averted in the nick of time. The humour is increased by the structuring of the dialogue as Sir Patient, Lady Fancy and Wittmore talk at cross purposes and Lady Fancy and Wittmore then make asides to the audience in a totally different tone. Here the butt of the scene, Sir Patient, does not acknowledge the audience nor does he give utterance to his private thoughts through the use of asides. However, both Lady Fancy and Wittmore tell the audience their regrets, hopes and fears as they skirt the edges of discovery. Apart from an irritated curse from Lady Fancy when Sir Patient enquires about the sword and hat on the table, the asides begin with Lady Fancy's reaction to Sir Patient's amorous behaviour:

LADY FANCY. I will indeed,- death, there's no getting from him, - pray lie down - and I'll cover thee close enough I'll warrant thee. -[Aside. [He lies down, she covers him.]

Had ever Lovers such spiteful luck ! hah -surely he sleeps, - whilst, Wittmore - [He coming out; pulls the Chair down, Sir Patient flings open the Curtain.]

WITTMORE. Plague of my over-care, what shall I do ?

(Scene continues)

The first part of Lady Fancy's speech is addressed to Sir Patient, but a glance acknowledging the audience for the two phrases 'death, there's no getting from him' and 'I'll warrant thee', would point to the underlying meaning of Sir Patient's intentions and 'had ever lovers such spiteful luck' could be spoken directly to invoke sympathy, whereas Wittmore's curse is more rhetorical. He runs under the bed as Lady Fancy keeps Sir Patient on top of it. Having made him lie down again she continues:

LADY FANCY. Oh how I tremble at the dismal apprehension of being discover'd!
 Had I secur'd myself of the eight thousand Pound I wou'd not value
 Wittmore being seen. But now to be found out, wou'd call my Wit in
 question, for 'tis the Fortunate alone are
 wise. (Scene continues)

This seems to be a direct conversational remark to the audience. As she goes to open the door Wittmore says:

WITTMORE. Was ever Man so plagu'd ? - hah - what's this ? - confound my tell-
 tale Watch, the Larum goes, and there's no getting to't to silence it. -
 Damn'd misfortune. (Scene
 continues)

The first part of Wittmore's speech appears to be seeking the sympathy of the audience but the comment on the alarm going off only indicates why he cannot stop the noise. It is not a pointed explanation and could be thrown away, while the curse could be either played as another bid for sympathy requiring eye contact with the audience or it could be muttered to himself.

The scene continues with Lady Fancy telling Sir Patient that the noise of the watch signals his death. At which he says he will 'settle my House at Hogsdowne with the land about it, which is £500 a year upon thee, live or die - do not grieve.' And lies down on the bed ready to die. She answers him:

LADY FANCY. Oh, I never had more Cause; come try to sleep; your Fate may be
 diverted - whilst I'll to prayers for your dear Health - [Covers him, draws
 the Curtains.] I've almost run out of my stock of Hypocrisy, and that
 hated Art now fails me. - Oh all ye Powers that favour distrest Lovers'
 assist us now, and I'll provide against your future Malice. [She makes
 signs to Wittmore, he peeps.]

WITTMORE. I'm impatient of Freedom, yet so much Happiness as I but now
 enjoy'd without this part of Suffering has made me too blest. - Death and
 Damnation! What curst luck have I.
 (Scene continues)

Here Lady Fancy's exclamation of 'running out of hypocrisy' takes the audience into her confidence. They are beginning to suspect, which is confirmed at the end of the play, that she only married him for his money. But the following phrase, 'O ye Powers', implies a less intimate appeal to the world in general, and maybe even accompanied a mock prayerful as she looks upwards, before she turns to bring Wittmore out yet again. His first sentence starts as a sententious statement but degenerates into his infuriated cursing. It is ludicrous to imagine that the actors would move forward to the forestage for such asides. The tone, intonation, inflexions and timing would need great care to keep up the pace of the action. Such asides are typical of Restoration comedy: wry, ironical comments delivered by the witty characters larded with ambivalent remarks like Lady Fancy's 'I'll cover thee close enough.' The actress could point such a remark to suggest a double entendre and assume the same level of witty repartee in the conversational understanding of the audience. This would make for an ambivalent response between those who took it at face value and those who apprehended the subtext and added bawdy connotations (such connotations were probably assisted through the audience's knowledge of the lively personal lives of the actors' or certain topical religious, political or social comments of the day). Whereas Sir Timothy's more colloquial style in *The Town Fop* (1676) shares his thoughts in character and his intention to kiss Celinda with the audience and would be admirably placed on the forestage to give the intimate nudge and wink implied in his words:

SIR TIM.-- Hey day, here's wooing indeed -- Will she never begin trow ? This
 some would call an excellent quality in her sex -- But a pox on't, I do not like it --
 Well, I see I must break silence at last -- Madam -- not answer me -- pshaw, this
 is mere ill breeding -- by Fortune -- it can be nothing else -- O' my conscience, if I
 should kiss her, she would bid me stand off -- I'll try --

(Act 1, Scene 2)

Asides, therefore, could have several layers of meaning which would elicit differing shades of perception and comprehension from any one member of the audience.

The spatial relationship with the audience would or could reinforce a particular aspect or a particular layer of meaning at that moment in the play. That is, an aside from the forestage would appear more intimate than one delivered, as Wittmore's, from under the bed set further back within the scenery. Remarks made on entrances or exits through the forestage doors would appear more casual or offhand than those at exits between the

side or back shutters where more studied projection would be required. In *The City Heiress* Behn has Sir Timothy Treat-All exit after refusing to fight Sir Anthony with, 'Draw quoth-a! Pox upon him for an old Tory-rory.' (Act 1, Scene1)

This is said as Sir Timothy leaves Sir Anthony on the stage and is immediately followed by the entrance of a crowd 'as from Church' to give the impression of a busy street with people coming and going. Sir Timothy's insult would be lost in the chaotic bustle of the entrances if he exited other than through a forestage door, unless it was said with an unwarranted flourish. At the door he would then be able to deliver the lines fairly casually but with great disgust and make the audience laugh at his reaction as much as at his remark. His derogatory remarks towards the Tories would need some care since many of the audience would undoubtedly be Tory sympathisers, the majority so if the King himself was present. Behn was known herself to be a committed Tory, thus adding a further layer to the bantering allusion.

Such witty exchanges of dialogue appeared most often in comedies, but 'wit' had such a wide ranging definition it would be applied as a term of approbation for what was seen as the appropriate higher style of language in the heroic plays.

In Behn's only tragedy *Abdelazer*, (1676) in which the asides made by Abdelazer, the Moor, inform the audience of his duplicity and his ambition to overthrow the king and gain the throne for himself. His very first remark to the audience when told of the king's death makes this clear, 'The King dead! - 'Twas time then to dissemble.[Aside.]' (Act1, scene 1)

The audience is kept aware of the thoughts and feelings of this villainous hero who engages their sympathies if not their approval. This makes for a less straightforward audience response than the melodramatic plot might otherwise arouse. Especially since the opening encounter of the Moor and the Queen makes it clear that it was the Queen who seduced Abdelazer and he is, in many ways, the victim of the piece. When he calls for vengeance in his soliloquy at the end of the first scene many of the audience will have been manipulated into reluctant sympathy. The audience are gradually drawn into his planning and by the third act there is a horrid fascination in watching to see whether he will be successful in ridding himself of Florella, the wife whom he really loves, but whom he is willing to sacrifice to his ambition. They overhear him deliberating and arguing with himself as she asks him what the matter is:

FLORELLA. My Abdelazer - why in that fierce posture,

As if thy Thoughts were always bent on Death?

Why is that Dagger out ?- against whom drawn?

ABDELAZER. Or stay, - suppose I let him see Florella,

And when he's high with the expected Bliss,

Then take him thus - Oh, 'twere a fine surprise!

FLORELLA. My Lord - dear Abdelazer.

ABDELAZER. Or say - I made her kill him - that were yet

An Action much more worthy of my Vengeance.

FLORELLA. Will you not speak to me? What have I done?

ABDELAZER. By Heaven, it shall be so.

FLORELLA. What shall be so?

ABDELAZER Hah –

FLORELLA. Why dost thou dress thy Eyes in such unusual wonder?

There's nothing here that is a stranger to thee,

Or what is not intirely thine own.

ABDELAZER. Mine!

(Act 3, scene 1)

Abdelazer then urges Florella to murder the King but she discloses in a soliloquy that she cannot do this and thus sets in train the rest of the tragedy. The tragedy has several soliloquies from both Abdelazer and the Queen leaving the audience in no doubt of the motivation underlying the actions taken. The interest is in seeing how the inevitable outcome is contrived and in enjoying the flamboyant language. The play is patterned around two scenes, both stylised scenes of formal royal court audiences with a canopied throne, in the second and fifth acts, which would be set behind the back shutter line, whilst almost all of the fourth act takes place against battle scenes set in 'The Grove.' There are, therefore many scenes set within the scenic stage.

Nevertheless, the soliloquies come at the end of scenes where it would be possible for the character to come forward and be on more intimate terms with the audience and there are only the occasional one line asides which might require pointed projection from further back stage, if, indeed, the actors concerned could not contrive to be in a position nearer the audience. The style of the tragedy is so much more formal than that of the comedies and the artificiality of some actions would not be remarkable, but part of that style. What this play seems to suggest is that remarks of whatever kind meant for the audience would be carefully pointed to them, drawing them into the characters' mind and thoughts, where in the comedies the actor has more choice about the style to adopt.

While it is laughable to compare Behn, or the other restoration dramatists, directly with Shakespeare as a writer, it is entirely credible that they should use conventions and

strategies in their plays that had devolved from the Elizabethan and Jacobean stages; that their audience expected and accepted this. Audience perception had always been manipulated by asides and soliloquies but with the use of scenery, shutters and practical forestage doors, the manner of projecting and pointing the aside could be more carefully controlled and positioned in relation to the audience and to the other actors on stage. From this discussion of asides and soliloquies it is apparent that the visual effect(s) of the placement of the actors is sometimes deliberately structured into the dialogue in order to affect the relationship with the audience in a similar way to that found by Mooney in *King Lear* where he suggests a character may shift from realism to representative ness^[19] One can deduce therefore, that a careful manipulation of the asides in most plays is combined with the positioning of the actors on stage in order to provoke particular reactions from the audience, sometimes of mirth in comedies, or of shocked attention in tragedies.

Audience as Participant

In *Love in a Wood*, Wycherley uses the habits of many in the audience of strolling in St James Park in the evening. It is a social rendezvous where the young men and women go to pass the time. The men hope to encounter a whore, the women hope to be taken for a whore without actually becoming one. In the play the characters behave as if the light is dim enough not to be immediately identifiable, but the real point of the scene is that the characters are wearing face masks, which enables a great deal of flirtatious word play, as they pretend not to know each other and can thus remain anonymous. Dapperwit, the character in Wycherley's *Love in a Wood* discussed above, continually tries to show what a wit he is as he banters with Lydia, who has recognised him although he does not recognise her. He comments in an aside when he makes what he sees as a good witticism:

DAPPERWIT. It will not be morning, dear madam, till you pull off your mask
[Aside] That I think was brisk.

LYDIA. Indeed, my dear sir, my face would frighten back the sun

DAPPERWIT. With glories more radiant than his own – [Aside] I keep up with her, I think.

LYDIA But why would you put me to the trouble of lighting the world, when I thought to have gone to sleep?

DAPPERWIT. You only can do it, dear madam, let me perish!

LYDIA. But why would you (of all men) practise treason against your friend Phoebus, and depose him for a mere stranger?

DAPPERWIT. I think she knows me

LYDIA. But he does not do you justice, I believe; and you are so cock-sure of your wit, you would refer to a mere stranger your plea to the bay-tree.

DAPPERWIT. She jeers me, let me perish.

(Act 2, Scene1)

Dapperwit's use of 'brisk' is in the sense of 'sharp-witted', which the audience would enjoy as a sign of his foolish conceit, as they see him being fooled by Lydia, and anticipate what will happen when he realises he has been recognised. They would also recognise the connotations of the context better than a modern audience, for many of them were used to participating in these kinds of social games in St James Park in the evenings themselves, or in watching others take part. Perhaps this would be best understood today in Italy where the *passeggiata* still happens in many cities in the evening.

Some of the audience would have been to Italy, many more would have heard about the experience, and would recognise the setting in Behn's play *The Feign'd Curtezans* (1679) where she uses a similar idea, of characters walking as social occasion out of doors in a public place. But in this play she extends the audience's perception of time passing with an unusual, if not unique, example of acting directions and dialogue which present a lapse of time, as day moves into night, during the action of the third act of play. This directly involves the audience in stage time as opposed to real time. By implication they participate in the passing of time suggested in the dialogue. They watch the actors pretend, by entering with lanterns as they continue the scene, that the characters they are playing are unable to see each other, and that the stage is becoming darker as they stroll around the park, while all the time it remains fully lit.

Implicit in these dark scenes is the comfortable superiority of the audience over the characters and also over the actors playing those characters. They are not only watching actors pretend they are in the dark, but they are also aware of the misunderstandings the actors as the characters in the plays are building and entangling, in the plot of the play, but they also recognise the ludicrousness of the actors who can see pretending to be in the dark. This makes for an odd ambivalence in the audience's response, there is the direct response to the humour of the situation of the characters in the play, but there is also the sight of the actors as known individuals making fools of themselves in pretending it is too dark to see each other, when anyone can see them playing the fool. Pepys makes this ambivalence clear when he remarks to his neighbour on the incongruity of the actor Beeston having to read his part when the scene was supposed to be in the dark on 2nd February 1669. The audience do not forget that the actor is playing a part nor can the actors forget they have two faces for the audience, both of which are important to

their success. This would have been particularly apparent in the sometimes very explicit bawdy of the comedies.

While most audiences are aware to some extent that the actor is separate from the character he or she is playing, peculiar to the seventeenth century is the occasional direction of remarks to the audience by an actor stepping out of character and speaking virtually as himself, an acknowledgement of the theatrical illusion in which they are all participating. Killigrew has a particularly clear example of this in *The Parson's Wedding* (1664). At the end of the play the Captain asks the Parson to give the Epilogue to the play. When he refuses the Captain prepares to give it himself and enters into a highly ambivalent conversation with the two women, Lady Love-all and Faithfull. [20]

Lady Love-all addresses him as his character, '...now I mark him better, I should know that false face too; see Faithfull. There are those treacherous eyes still.' (p.153) The Captain answers both in character and as himself, saying 'Alas you mistake me Madam, I am Epilogue now; the Captain's within'. (p.154) They continue with an ambiguous conversation that acknowledges the audience yet without any direct speech to them until the end when the Captain asks them to applaud otherwise there will not be the happy ending to the play that there should be. There is total acceptance from all the actors that they are playing parts, and yet an impression that the lives of their characters will continue off-stage after the end of the play. This kind of ambivalence rarely takes place in the body of the play. The actor or actress normally only steps out of character when giving the Prologue or as Nell Gwynn did when she appeared in Dryden's *Tyrannic Love* (1679) and when her character died at the end of the play she refused to be taken off-stage because she had to speak the Epilogue.

The knowledge the audience have of their, and the other actors', previous parts, their own characters, as well as their private lives, all add to their appreciation and enjoyment of the play, and incline them to feel they are participating in a social occasion amongst their friends and acquaintances.

Playwrights could exploit this knowledge of the actors' off-stage life. As well as Dryden dedicating *Tyrannic Love* to Nell Gwyn, Behn wrote the Prologue to *The Feign'd Curtezans* especially for the actress Betty Currer who had played the unfaithful Lady Fancy in *Sir Patient Fancy* the year before. Currer asks why all her lovers have turned saints:[21]

Who says this this Age a Reformation wants ?

When Betty Currer's Lovers all turn Saints ?

In vain alas I flatter, swear, and vow;

You'll scarce do anything for Charity now:

Yet I am handsome still, still young and mad.

Can wheadle, lie, dissemble, jilt – egad,

As well and artfully as ere I did,

Yet not one Conquest can I gain or hope,

No Prentice, not a Forman of a shop,

So that I want extremely New Supplies; (*The Feign'd Curtezans*, 29-38)

The audience's knowledge of her infamous real-life relationships would add spice to the words she spoke. More than this, Currer played Marcella, and was paired with Cornelia, who was played by Mrs Barry the mistress of Rochester. They are the 'feign'd courtesans' of the title and the audience would see the irony of them pretending to be the courtesans on stage when they were known as such in real life. It is possible to find other examples of such conscious ambiguity in the dialogue and in the asides, in which both the character and the actor as himself added connotations to what was said, as, for example in Cardell Goodman's portrayal of Alexander in Nathaniel Lee's play *The Rival Queens*, at the time of his notorious involvement with the Duchess of Cleveland in 1684.

Undoubtedly there are many allusions in the plays, now lost to us, where the actors' personal relationships made their casting more piquant for the contemporary audience and loaded their asides with double or triple meanings.

Any actress or actor would almost automatically select the version of a character which best suited their view of the inter-relationship of themselves as character and themselves as actor with the audience. This seems to be what the actor Edward Angel did with the character Haunce, the Dutch Lover of the title, in Behn's play *The Dutch Lover* (1673). Behn complained about the lack of success of the play in her Epistle, published with the play:

My Dutch Lover spoke but little of what I intended for him, but suppl'd it with a great deal of idle stuff, which I was wholly unacquainted with, till I heard it first from him, so that Jack-pudding ever us'd to do, which though I knew before, I gave him yet the part, because I knew him so acceptable to most o'th' lighter periwigs about the town,...

Angel had begun his career playing female parts before women appeared on the English stage. His best-known role was that of the low comedian, often engaging in slapstick humour. He played Don Diego in Wycherley's play *The Gentleman Dancing Master* (1672) where the dialogue includes a direct reference to him when Hippolita says 'Angel is a very good fool.' (Act 3, scene1) Behn's character, the Dutchman Haunce, is an unlikeable, vulgar, drunken coward. It was not at all the same image for Angel's public, and it is not surprising that he altered the part to suit himself and what he thought his

audience would expect. Especially as he already had a reputation for improvisation and adding topical innuendo to the scripted words. This was only Behn's third play and, although she has clearly cast Angel because he would attract the young men about town, she had not yet learnt to suit the actor's own persona to the fictional one she has written. She does not seem to have made that mistake again.

Angel was often paired with James Nokes (c1642-1696) another popular comic actor. Behn, when castigating the audience for their poor taste in her prologue to her second play *The Amorous Prince*, (1671) describes those -

Who swear they'd rather hear a smutty jest

Spoken by Nokes or Angel, than a scene

Of the admir'd and well-penn'd *Cataline*. (Lines 22-24)

Nokes also began as a boy actor playing women's parts. But his career as a comic actor lasted nearly thirty years. His first comic part was as Sir Nicholas Cully in Etherege's *The Comical Revenge* (1662) which 'got the Company more Reputation and Profit than any preceding Comedy',^[22] despite Pepys' lack of enthusiasm. It was Nokes who played Sir Martin in *Sir Martin Mar-all*, again one of the most popular and profitable plays of the time. In *The False Count* (1681), Behn cast him as Francisco, an old, rich, and outrageously jealous and possessive husband to his new, young wife Julia. Betty Curren played his daughter Isabella, who despises any man who is not Quality. An ironic casting the audience would appreciate.

This play is structured around two scenes which depend on the asides for their full effect, and would rely to a great extent on the talent of the actors to use these to affect the audiences' perceptions of the characters' behaviour. Perceptions which will be coloured by what the audience already know about the actors and actresses. They will expect certain behaviour from Nokes whom they have seen many times in particular characterisations. He played Sir Signal Buffoon in *The Feign'd Curtezans* in which Sir Signal rarely makes an aside, and then only to tell the audience in a soliloquy what he will do next. He played Sir Timothy Treat-All, in *The City Heiress* where Sir Timothy's asides are always directly concerned with his own thoughts, his reactions to the story of Charlot's wealth or to another's opinions of his nephew. What this all seems to show is that Nokes played parts in which the character is self-obsessed, and in which the actor could choose whether or not to relate directly to the audience. It would be the same with the two other comic actors, whose timing of their words and actions would be critical, who were also in the cast. Cave Underhill (1634-?1710) played a conniving servant and Anthony Lee (or Leigh) (d.1692) a chimney sweep who pretends to be a count and tricks Isabella/Betty Curren into marriage, an outcome the audience would relish.

In the Epilogue to *The False Count*, made by a 'Person of Quality' the audience is scolded that

No Buffoonry can miss your Approbation,
 You love it as you do a new French Fashion:
 Thus in true hate of Sense, and Wit's despite,
 Bantring and Shamming is your dear delight.
 Thus among all the Folly's here abounding,
 None took like the new Ape-trick of Dumfounding.
 If to make People laugh the business be,
 You Sparks better Comedians are than we;
 You every day out-fool ev'n Nokes and Lee. (Lines 8-17)

The allusion to 'Bantring and Shamming' echoes the fashionable pastime where insulting people was seen as socially acceptable. In the play the audience have watched Francisco/Nokes and Isabella/Currer become the victims of bantering and buffoonery after themselves insulting and reviling other characters. The knowledge the audience have of their, and the other actors', previous parts, their own characters, as well as their private lives, all add to their appreciation and enjoyment of the play, and incline them to feel they are participating in a social occasion amongst their friends and acquaintances.

Conclusion

What this discussion has tried to show is that, in the Restoration theatre, there was an expectation of certain types of language and behaviour but no expectation of realistic characterisation; that the dramatists deliberately involved the audience by invoking certain responses especially, but not exclusively, in the structuring of soliloquies and asides. For in an aside a character may speak to the audience as the character relating the thoughts and reactions of that character; or may speak as choric commentator on human nature, its frailties and strengths; or as the actor himself; or change from one to the other in a single speech. Those asides, the glances at the audience, the catching of an eye, the nudge, nudge, wink, wink, would alter the whole perspective on a scene, both in terms of the visual perspective and the psychological perspective.

Any scene could be placed near the forestage doors by making these particular doors signify specific dramatic locations (and thus bringing the scenic action closer to the

audience), or it could be placed as a specified location behind one, or even two, sets of shutters and thus be the depth of the stage away. The effect would either increase or decrease the audience involvement in the stage action, or change the quality of their intimacy within any one scene. The audience, for instance, could be treated as confidants for one scene, spectators for the next, and then a mixture of voyeurs and confidants in the next, as the action advanced or retreated to and from their vicinity.

This relationship made the audience at once a partaker in the conversation on stage, a component part of the theatrical event and at the same time completely aware of the artificial theatricality of that event. This means more than an interesting theatrical curiosity. It shows the attitude towards the relationship between stage and audience was nearer the attitudes of the platform stage than to those of the picture frame. This in turn means that the characters the writers drew are both more complex and more simple than some scholars have allowed for: more complex because they have the latent capability of relating to the audience in more than one continuum, simpler because they are not psychologically realistic and therefore can be rendered somewhat ambiguous. All this made for a paradoxical relationship between stage and audience unlike any before and, once the action retreated behind the proscenium arch, unlike any again until the twentieth century.

For this relationship changed towards the end of the seventeenth century when the composition of the audience itself changed. When William and Mary came to the throne in 1689, they were not so interested in the theatre. Although they made occasional formal visits there was no longer the necessity for their courtiers to show their faces at the theatre. The audience became more middle class with more bourgeois tastes and preoccupations. There was no longer the interest in conversational witticisms, or in salacious plots. Certainly clergy like Jeremy Collier^[23] fulminated against the stage, and those connected with it, and were answered by Congreve and others. Vanbrugh notoriously changed *The Provoked Wife* (1697) so as not to vilify a clergyman. But the moralists were only articulating, if rather vehemently, an underlying moralistic attitude which the royal interest in the theatre had kept in check until now. The audience at the end of the seventeenth century showed it preferred characters more like themselves, engaged in activities to which they could relate, and set outside London, as in Farquhar's plays. Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700) is often said to epitomise the best of the Restoration comedies of manners. Yet when it appeared it was not very successful, manners and tastes had changed, and its lack of success is said to have discouraged Congreve from writing any more full length plays.

The physical relationship of the theatre and its social dynamics also began to change. Through the eighteenth century there continued to be a forestage on which much of the action occurred but, as Colley Cibber^[24] commented, it was cut back to increase the number of seats available in the pit, and was therefore narrower than had been the case for the Restoration plays. In the late eighteenth century the auditoria of the London theatres were enlarged to accommodate larger audiences, and there was no longer that

sense of a communal, social occasion in which everyone could see and recognise everyone else. Moreover, the audience at times were seated on the forestage itself or in adjacent boxes, as is seen in Hogarth's picture of *The Beggar's Opera* (1727). All of which pushed the playing area back into the scenic stage, until, by the end of the nineteenth century, it was behind the line of the proscenium arch with a curtain that was dropped between acts, and sometimes even between scenes. The audience were beginning to be simply spectators, not participants in an ongoing conversation. Although the twentieth century brought thrust stages and theatre in the round, and allowed for many different styles of presentation and performance, which made for differing kinds of relationship between actor and audience, there has never again been quite the same intimacy engendered as Pepys enjoyed in his theatre going.

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NOTES

[1] Thompson, James, *Language in Wycherley's Plays*, p.2.

[2] *Ibid.*, p.1

[3] Southern, Richard, *Changeable Scenery*

[4] Lewcock, Dawn, 'Computer Analysis of Restoration Staging,' *Theatre Notebook*, part 1, 1661-1672, part 2, 1671-1682, part 3, 1682-1694. References to restoration plays are mainly taken from this work which was based on first editions of the plays none of which are line numbered. Other editions of dramatists discussed are given in the bibliography for ease of reference.

[5] All comments by Pepys are taken from his diaries and are referenced by date, Latham, R.C., and Mathews, W., *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*.

[6] Love, Harold, 'Who were the Restoration Audience ?' *Yearbook of English Studies*, 10, 1980, pp. 21-44, p. 25.

[7] *Ibid.* p. 25.

[8] References from Behn's work are taken from *Plays Written by the late Ingenious Mrs Behn*, London, Mary Poulson, 1724 or from earlier first editions, in none of which are the plays line numbered.

[9] Pages are un-numbered in the 18th century edition from which these and subsequent quotations are drawn.

[10] For example CBEL lists among other books on etiquette: A.D. Gent, *The Whole Art of Converse: Containing Necessary Instructions for all Persons of what Quality and Condition Whatever*, 1683. and [C.S.] *The Art of Complaisance: or the means to oblige in conversation*, 1673.

[11] Thompson, James, *Language in Wycherley's Plays*, p. 2. See also p.114 where he argues that words like 'honour' and 'trust' embodied real standards of conduct at the time.

[12] Thompson, p.1.

[13] See note 5 above.

[14] Pinero, Arthur Wing, *Trelawney of the Wells*, 1898. Ayckbourn, Alan, for example, *How the*

Other Half Loves, 1972.

[15] Beckerman, Bernard, 'Theatrical Perception', p. 156.

[16] Williams, Raymond, *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*, p.16

[17] Sinden, Donald, *Laughter in the Second Act*, p.164

[18] Ibid.

[19] Mooney, Michael, 'Edgar I nothing am,' p. 153 *Shakespeare Survey*, 38, in which he quotes Maynard Mack when discussing the Figurenposition of Edgar in *King Lear* as saying that a character may shift along a spectrum between complete realism and almost pure representativeness. It is beginning to be accepted that Shakespearean characters can shift along a spectrum of different interpretations which may be inconsistent with each other and which may only occasionally touch realism, and I suggest this continues into the Restoration drama and beyond.

[20] Killigrew, Thomas, *The Parson's Wedding*, 1664, pp.153-154

[21] Highfill, Burnim and Langhans, (eds), *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and other Stage Personnel in London 1660-1800*, 1973 - has varied spelling of the name.

[22] Downes, John. *Roscus Anglicanus a New Edition*, p.57

[23] Collier, Jeremy, *Short View of the Immorality of the Stage*, London. 1698.

[24] Cibber, Colley, *Apology for his Life*, p.212.

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Biographical Note

Dr Lewcock (BEd, ADB, LGSM, PhD) is a tutor and lecturer for the Cambridge University Institute of Continuing Education, Madingley Hall, Cambridge CB3 8AQ, and currently teaches a Diploma programme in the history of theatre and drama. She was an Associate by examination of the Drama Board (1973) (now amalgamated with the Royal Society of Arts), and has a teaching Diploma in Speech and Drama from the London Guildhall School of Music and Drama (1976). She gained a BEd (Hons Cantab) in 1982 as a mature student followed by a PhD in 1987. She has published in several journals, contributed to *Aphra Behn Studies* (CUP 1996) edited by Janet Todd, acted as an adviser and provided six entries for the *Continuum Encyclopaedia of Literature* (2003) edited by Grosvenor Meyer and Serafin and wrote a chapter on the English Pantomime Audience for *Audience Participation* (2003) edited by Kattwinkel. She continues to research theatre history, is completing a book on the context of the plays of Aphra Behn and another on the influence of Sir William Davenant.

