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Editorial

This issue of the *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, like its three distinguished predecessors, takes as its topic a subject that cuts across traditional disciplinary lines: *Authorship* (vol. I), *Shakespeare and Early Modern Popular Culture* (vol. II), *Letter Writing in Early Modern Culture, 1500-1750* (vol. III), and now, for this volume, *Service and Servants in Early Modern Europe, 1550-1750*. In each case, the topic itself invites scholarly work that combines disparate methodological approaches, as well as multiple geographical areas. While early modern England remains at the center of this volume, important connections are made to France and to Italy as well.

Scholarly work on servants has grown unmistakably in recent decades, as continuing archival work has been made readily available in digital form to a wider community. Post-colonial readings of culture have also offered new ways of looking at how 'service' is represented, and links between 'service' and 'servitude' or slavery have been fruitfully explored. Some literary works, such as Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, have undergone a sea-change rich and strange under such intellectual pressures. And many elements of popular culture, from *Upstairs, Downstairs* to *Downton Abbey*, have deployed a gauzy nostalgia to dramatize the high/low split in social status. Less sentimental works, like the harrowing film *12 Years a Slave*, offer an entirely different view of service and the racial aspects of the master/slave dialectic.

This issue begins, as is customary, with two overviews of the subject, distinguished by their chronological coverage but also by their approaches. Elizabeth Rivlin notes the extremely wide range of possibilities in the term 'service' itself, which occurs not only within the domestic household but also in much wider arenas, and it can encompass subordination and equality, the willingly chosen and the enforced, the human and the nonhuman, the corporeal and the spiritual, the perspective of those who proffer service and those who receive it. Service often carried connotations of performance, either formally in the theater or informally in the ritualized or routinized behaviors, gestures, and modes of speech expected of individuals engaged in particular forms of service.

She notes the growing interest in the subject in literary studies from the 1990s on, beginning with Mark Thornton Burnett's *Masters and Servants in English Renaissance Drama and Culture: Authority and Obedience* (1997), and continuing with three major books published in 2005: Linda Anderson's *A Place in the Story: Servants and Service in Shakespeare's Plays*; David Evert's *Discourses of Service in Shakespeare's England*; and Judith Weil's *Service and Dependency in Shakespeare's Plays*, as well as a special section edited by Michael



Neill in the 2005 *Shakespearean International Yearbook*, entitled ‘Shakespeare and the Bonds of Service’. ‘Distanced from a class-based, antagonistic model’, Rivlin notes, ‘service emerges from these studies as dynamic and interactive; it affects masters as much as it does servants, and it is potentially instrumental for both parties’. A few years later, David Schalkwyk argued, in his *Shakespeare, Love and Service* (2008), that service was essentially performative, while Rivlin’s own *The Aesthetics of Service in Early Modern England* (2012) argues that ‘service is fundamentally a representative practice, in which acting for one’s master shades, often imperceptibly, into acting as one’s master, and that authors drew on this analogy between service and fictional forms to invest both with aesthetic power and social potential’. Rivlin also notes how the category of service overlaps those of gender and race, with reference to the first book-length study to consider women in service – Michelle Dowd’s *Women’s Work in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (2009) – and Susan Amussen’s *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640-1700* (2007), among many other works surveyed.

Jeanne Clegg’s equally wide-ranging review starts from the position that (borrowing from Carolyn Steedman’s 2007 *Master and Servant: Love and Labour in the English Industrial Age*) ‘Domestic servants were used – more than any other social group – to write histories of the social itself’. Clegg surveys works throughout the long eighteenth century, including perspectives on the issue in Italy and France, as well as England, which is her main focus. Her analysis works through some of the recurring tropes of service: the idea of ‘lifecycle service’, and the voices and agency of servants. Clegg analyzes the work of social historians such as Bridget Hill, whose *Servants: English Domesticity in the Eighteenth Century* (1996) opened up modern interest in domestic service, Tim Meldrum’s *Domestic Service and Gender, 1660-1750: Life and Work in the London Household* (2000), which applied more rigorous methods of inquiry, and books which have offered first-hand evidence of female servants’ experiences in middle class households. Archival sources such as the *Old Bailey Online* and its sister archive, *London Lives*, she observes, now ‘make it possible to write short biographies of most of those who spent part of their lives in London between 1672 and 1913 (a large section of the population of England)’ and can offer a powerful analytic purchase both on works such as Defoe’s *Moll Flanders*, *The Unfortunate Mistress* and *The Great Law of Subordination Consider’d ...* (1724). As Clegg shows, the shifts in the methods and practice of social historians have led to important new insights into service and servants; the growth of interest in material culture has likewise been enormously productive in opening up analysis of how early modern households were structured and how they operated. Literary historians, such as Donna Landry, who brought the work of laboring-class women to light in the 1990s, and Kristina Straub, whose recent *Domestic Affairs ...* (2009) explores emotional and erotic tensions in master-servant relations, suggest avenues for new research.

Most of the developments that Rivlin and Clegg survey can be found illustrated in ‘Part Two’ of this issue, ‘Case Studies’, particularly a focus on the agency of servants in the early modern period. In the first section, ‘Cultural Services’, Emily Buffey examines Richard Robinson’s poem *The Rewarde of Wickednesse ...* (1574); Robinson was a servant in the household of George Talbot and his more famous wife, Elizabeth Cavendish (‘Bess of Harwick’), at the time that Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned in Sheffield Castle. The poem – based on a *de casibus* framework with elements of the dream vision – raises the issues of the literacy of servants, their often ambiguous place in the household, and the kind of ‘voice’ necessarily adopted. Ben Crabstick’s essay similarly examines another poet-‘retainer’, William Basse, and his poetic collection *Polyhymnia*, written nearly a century after Robinson’s. Crabstick shows how Basse ‘both enacted and reflected upon aspects of his service role’ in a variety of ambitious poems – again, the question of the kind of ‘voice’ the poet-servant could adopt, and his place in the household, is prominent. Marcy North takes up the topic of the production of literary manuscripts more broadly, studying the vocation and social place of household scribes, for whom the copying of literature ‘was not their primary occupation’ – that is, they were not antiquarians or amanuenses, but household retainers. Deploying a deep analysis of several manuscripts, North looks more closely at figures such as Thomas Whythorne, a music tutor and composer serving in several noble households. Some of the best evidence of scribal service in households, she notes, comes from manuscripts owned by elite literate women, who made greater use of secretaries. Michelle Miller extends this topic to France through her analysis of the memoirs of a seventeenth-century noble, Maximilien de Béthune, Duc de Sully, who wrote his text ‘as if from the narrative stance of his servants’. In this fascinating instance of Elias’s ‘civilizing process’, Miller argues that Sully created a narrative alter-ego in order to ‘think through personal shortcomings and explore the possibility of improving his manners’.

The second section of ‘Case Studies’ features three essays analyzing ‘Servants on Stage’. Emily Gerstell considers how Helena, the central female figure in *All’s Well That Ends Well*, has been misconstrued in earlier criticism: her relation to the Widow Capilet and Diana has in effect been romanticized, without closely considering how class and economic issues dominate their interactions. The ‘traffic in women’, Gerstell shows, helps explain many of Helena’s actions; in highlighting two of the key economies of the play, service and marriage, Gerstell shows how the idea of ‘service’ illuminates a character not usually thought of in such terms. The play defies the normative expectations of comedy in its exposure of ‘the willingness of women to traffic in women – and in themselves’. In his essay revisiting the infamous Thomas Overbury affair and its reflection in Thomas Middleton and William Rowley’s play *The Changeling*, John Higgins digs into manuscript accounts of the legal proceedings against Frances Howard as well as ballad and pamphlet accounts, with a

particular focus on the purported actions and discursive representations of Howard's servants as they were embroiled in the murder of Overbury, and the trials associated with it. Higgins employs the concept of the 'public transcript' of authority, 'which posits that subordinate members of society use rhetoric and performance to struggle for control over the significance of hierarchical political ideologies'. Higgins shows how the play negotiates its way through the minefield of controversy surrounding Howard's case, identifying how the 'performance of service' raises complex problems. Sonya Brockman also develops at length the idea of service as a performative act in her essay on *The Taming of the Shrew*. The play's famous frame-story of Christopher Sly and the trick played on him by the Lord and his servants has long been a feature of criticism on the play, but Brockman encompasses and goes beyond this concern with a detailed analysis of Lucentio's servant, Tranio, whose arc in the play at times reflects that of his masters but also that of his fellow servants. Impersonating his master Lucentio (and vice versa), Tranio 'performs' the role of lordship even as his master 'performs' service; Tranio's very name – from the Latin preposition *trans*, 'across' – suggests how the play destabilizes notional boundaries of servant and master. Tranio ultimately returns to his status as servant, but much has changed in the course of the play, which suggests in its various plots how both class and gender can be socially-constructed, performed identities.

The third section of 'Case Studies', 'Regulating Service', provides three very different approaches to some of the ways that servant identities and social boundaries were policed in the early modern period. Liam Meyer delves into the records of the London Court of Requests (from 1603-1625) to examine cases where servants, laborers, and apprentices sued their masters for back wages or mistreatment. He analyzes how the parties on either side of legal disputes employed various rhetorical tropes – usually, of submission and deference, but mixed with reminders of reciprocal obligation and social justice, at times turning 'the ideology of paternalism against their masters'. Thus, Meyer also examines, as Higgins did, the 'public transcript' of idealized master-servant conduct, noting that what 'appears to be false consciousness may instead represent tactical victories' for subordinates. Stefania Biscetti's essay approaches master-servant language tropes from a very different point of view, that of contemporary linguistics: politeness theory integrated with speech act theory. Her primary aim is to 'clarify the status of threats and reproaches vis-à-vis impoliteness and aggressiveness', and bases her analysis on twenty-five conduct books addressed to masters, servants, and apprentices (published in English between 1660 and 1750). Between them, Meyer and Biscetti provide a comprehensive account of key strands of master-servant discourse. Sylvia Greenup moves from a focus on legal or prescriptive texts to an anonymous novel, *The Histories of Some of the Penitents in the Magdalen House*, which was published in 1759, coinciding with the opening of the Magdalen Hospital for Penitent Prostitutes. The aim of the Magdalen

Hospital was to re-train fallen women for careers in domestic service. The novel constructs four first-person accounts, three of them by women who had worked as prostitutes. Greenup shows how this particular type of servant-woman's imagined testimony functions, rather like Meyer's mediated legal depositions, to offer another sounding of the servant's voice.

In this issue's final section, Raffaella Sarti offers a survey both broad and deep of ideas about servants and how they should be treated that circulated in early modern Europe, particularly Britain and Italy, but with reference to France as well. Of particular interest are early modern travel books, which offer both 'the internal as well as the external gaze' on the countries she examines. She finds, to take one example, that Defoe's well-known complaints about servants – their insubordination was said to affect 'the whole Body of the Nation' – though they were sometimes reflected in foreigners' reports of their travels in England, often they were not. Sarti also reviews a wide swath of scholarship on the frequency of marriage and celibacy among male and female servants. Purported and actual differences between servants and masters in England and Italy had much to do with the relative ratios of male to female, and of marriage within or without the households served. Her analysis offers several ways in which the findings of contemporary historical research might be taken up by future scholars.

We conclude with an Appendix chosen by Jeanne Clegg and Paola Pugliatti of significant and provocative texts dealing with servants and service. These selections go beyond the geographical and temporal boundaries within which this issue's articles fall, including ancient and modern texts, as well as German, Spanish, Russian, and American sources.

I speak for my co-editor, Jeanne Clegg, in thanking all those who submitted their work for consideration, and for the patience of the authors in this issue who responded to our requests and suggestions. We are also grateful to the many readers (who shall remain anonymous) around the world who provided thoughtful and forthright evaluations of the essays submitted. We are particularly grateful to the steady, thoughtful, and wise guidance provided by Paola Pugliatti and the editorial team that, under the expert guidance of Arianna Antonielli, prepared the text for publication.

Finally, we note with sadness the passing – in the summer of 2014 – of a good friend of *JEMS*, Professor Christopher Brooks of the Department of History at Durham University.

William C. Carroll

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PART ONE

General Overview

Service and Servants in Early Modern English Culture to 1660

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Abstract

This review essay surveys the last ten years of literary scholarship on service and servants in early modern England, with a particular focus on Shakespeare, to offer an overview of approaches and a sense of new directions in the field. The essay examines how studies have often pivoted between considering the act ('service') and the person ('servant') who performs it. Definitional ambiguities seem permanently to hover around these key terms. But rather than portending incoherence, the continuing presence of multiple definitions signals that scholarship about service and servants has reached a certain maturity. In the period under review, the field has matured to the point that critics no longer need to prove that service deserves consideration as an object of study, with the result that they can pursue vigorously the ways in which service and servants are imbricated with larger ontological and phenomenological questions. Investigating recent criticism on service takes this essay into critical territory that encompasses not only social class, economics, occupational identity, and subjectivity, but also aesthetics, ethics, affect, gender and sexuality, politics, race and colonialism. One important conclusion is that a growing body of work, some of it tracing the development of inter-Atlantic slavery from paradigms of service, offers a material, historical perspective on the ways in which servants enable freedom for others without being enabled to experience it for themselves. Looking to the future, the author encourages Anglo-American critics to think more expansively and comparatively about service, so that new connections might be drawn between the supposedly vanished world of servants and service and the global service economy in which we all participate today.

Keywords: Capitalism, Ethics, Gender, Service/Servants, Race, Social Class

1. *Introduction*

Servants are a recurrent source of fascination, for proof of which we need look no further than the runaway success of *Downton Abbey* (2011-present) in both the US and the UK. The extraordinary popularity of this television series and its satellite products surely owes a great deal to the fact that we



now live in a world almost devoid of people we call servants and yet replete with service. *Downton Abbey* appeals because it transports its audiences to a time and place in which the connection between identity and service was apparently clear-cut: there were masters and there were servants; masters issued orders and servants followed them; masters were served and servants did the serving. We, who by and large see ourselves as neither masters nor servants, are invited by the show to identify with both groups; we get the thrill of feeling what it might be like to inhabit these vanished subject positions. Yet even as the show romanticizes servants and masters, it also focuses on the waning decades – World War I and the interwar years – of the centuries-long social and occupational system that sustained these categories of identity. This choice on the part of showrunner Julian Fellowes and his collaborators enables us to watch the decline of the servant before our eyes, to get a glimpse, in other words, of how the twentieth century effected an advanced stage in the substitution of service for servants.

Criticism on early modern service and servants, the subject of this special issue, has much to say about this phenomenon.¹ In fact, in the early modern period as today, an essential tension existed between service and servants, that is, between the act and the person. Each of the two terms has multiple referents and, though they are often used interchangeably, they can also point in divergent directions. When we talk about service, to what degree are we necessarily also talking about servants, that is, about the people who perform certain acts? Under what conditions might we be able to divorce the two? To what extent does the identity category of the servant derive from the labor he or she performs? How might the privileging of ‘service’ over the ‘servant’ obscure or evade the basic human questions that the servant invites? Inevitably, writing about service encroaches on questions of freedom, agency, and volition, as well as their seeming opposites: dispossession, disenfranchisement, and constraint. As has become apparent in criticism from the last decade, to reflect on service is necessarily to reflect on the human condition as it negotiates between varying extremes of autonomy and dependence, subject and object.

Before turning to the criticism, let me outline some of the possibilities that adhere to service and servants. ‘Service’ has a wide array of referents in the early modern period. Labor may or may not be implied; being in service might suggest a ceremonial status or even a disposition rather than the performance of specific tasks, and then there is the point made by Tom

¹ As my own area of specialization is English literature and the role of service and servants therein, I have chosen pragmatically to restrict my review of the field to criticism on Anglo-American literature and, to a much smaller extent, history. Much of what I discuss is relevant to other early modern cultures in Europe, but a survey of European or global service is beyond the scope of this essay. A good starting point for readers interested in comparative European histories of the servant is Sarti 2007 and Sarti 2014.

Rutter that work itself is a socially conditioned and contingent concept; what counts as service work in early modern England and in modern contexts is not always the same (2008, 6). The most obvious kind of early modern service work was that performed by a servant on behalf of a master, but service also increasingly included various commercial activities which supplied the needs or wants of a customer or client. Such labor could include everything from prostitution to shopkeeping, from serving as an ostler to acting on the stage. To be in service could mean, in addition to being a servant to a master, that one was a servant of the Crown, a courtier devoted to a particular woman, or simply one who worshipped God. Service could connote voluntary or unpaid assistance lent to another person; from the perspective of the person served, it also conveyed the work done on one's behalf 'by an animal or thing (or by a person as involuntary agent)' (*OED* IV.21.a) or at a further extreme of depersonalization, 'the purpose or use to which a thing is put' (*OED* IV.22.a). Service has rhetorical and figurative uses as well as more literal ones. In *The Comedy of Errors*, Dromio of Ephesus says of his master 'I have served him from the hour of my nativity to this instant, and have nothing at his hands for my service but blows' (4.4.28-30).² Compare this domestic version of service to Coriolanus' coloring of service as a military and patriotic action, as in his promise of how he will recompense Aufidius' favor: 'if he give me way, / I'll do his country service' (4.4.25-26). And that example differs in turn from Sicinius' description in the same play of the instrumentality of a body part, which he uses as a metaphor for the State's rejection of Coriolanus: 'The service of the foot / Being once gangrened, is not then respected / For what before it was' (3.1.7-9) and even more from Laertes' words about Hamlet's maturation: 'as his temple waxes, / The inward service of the mind and soul / Grows wide withal' (1.3.12-14), lines which play on service as religious devotion even as they suggest that mind and soul, the most important constituents of Hamlet's self, primarily serve themselves. For service as performed by inanimate objects we can turn to Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*; the author's induction prescribes to readers what they may do with the pages of the book (with a pun on pages of the Court): 'To any vse about meat & drinke put them to and spare not, for they cannot doe theyr countrie better seruice' (1958, 207).

Even this brief catalogue demonstrates that service has an extremely broad and flexible purview. It occurs not only within the domestic household but also in much wider arenas, and it can encompass subordination and equality, the willingly chosen and the enforced, the human and the nonhuman, the corporeal and the spiritual, the perspective of those who proffer service and

² All Shakespeare citations are to *The Norton Shakespeare* (2008). Hereafter all references appear in the text.

those who receive it. Service often carried connotations of performance, either formally in the theater or informally in the ritualized or routinized behaviors, gestures, and modes of speech expected of individuals engaged in particular forms of service. The performance might conceal the intent of that individual, a fact which meant that practitioners of service were open to charges of duplicity and inauthenticity. If a performative version of service could both hide and reveal individual agency, service could also function as an utterly routinized, mechanical process, in which an object, or a person acting as an object, iterates a useful function. In its emphasis on action and act, service can index personal agency and will while at the same time gesturing toward abjection and even negation of the subject.

The 'servant', by contrast, is discrete and concrete; the term most often refers to an occupational and subjective category. To be a servant implies that one is subordinate to another, whether this someone is a master, a courtly lover, the sovereign, or God. Implicit also is a specific relation between the individual who occupies the position of servant and the one who takes the position of the master, though it is possible for the master to be an abstraction, a collective, or an entity like the State. To give one prominent early modern example, early modern playing companies were designated as servants to their noble or royal patrons. There is an important link between 'servant' and another identity category: 'slave'. 'Servant' was used as the translation for the Latin *servus*, which literally means 'slave' ('servant' translated as well for the Hebrew and Greek words for 'slave'), while African slaves in the Americas were often euphemistically referred to as servants.³ The servant-master bond translates, albeit irregularly and unevenly, into the bondage of the slave, in ways that I will discuss later. Like service, the servant has a wide social range, but the servant necessarily depends on and emphasizes vertical hierarchy to a much greater degree than service does. Above all, a servant is a human being who exists in inferior hierarchical relation to other humans, though as criticism has shown, frequent opportunities exist for servants to invert this hierarchy.

Definitional ambiguities seem permanently to hover around service and servants. But rather than portending incoherence, the continuing presence of multiple definitions signals that scholarship about service and servants has reached a certain maturity. In some of the criticism I discuss in this essay, service emerges as a secondary protagonist, which suggests that the extent to which service flows integrally and constitutively through early modern literature and the degree to which it informs that literature's concerns are now widely acknowledged. Because critics no longer need to prove that service

³ *OED*, s.v. 'servant, n.', 3.a., 3.b. (<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/176648?rskey=IvnS7V&result=1&isAdvanced=false>>, accessed 23 January 2015). Weil (2005b, 41) comments on the descent of 'servant' and 'serve' from the Latin *servus*.

deserves consideration as an object of study, they can pursue vigorously the ways in which service and servants are imbricated with larger ontological and phenomenological questions. Investigating recent criticism on service takes us into fields of inquiry that encompass not only social class, economics, occupational identity, and subjectivity, but also aesthetics, ethics, affect, gender and sexuality, politics, race and colonialism. Thus, the difficulty we may have in pinning down what we mean by service and servants is also a source of its strength and richness as an avenue of inquiry.

2. *Coming of Age: Class, Economics, and Aesthetics*

My focus in this essay is on scholarship on Shakespeare and his contemporaries from the past decade, when criticism on service has flowered. Although I will make the point that scholars ought to expand their reach beyond Shakespeare, Anglo-American critics have tended to use Shakespeare's suggestiveness to explore themes which are not exclusive to his works. This essay, too, uses Shakespeare along with a few other authors as a starting point – certainly not a terminus – for far-reaching questions and problems which the study of early modern service raises.

In order to understand the development of the field, it is necessary to look first at a few pioneering studies that predated 2005. Mark Burnett and Michael Neill each made the case that service was far more central to reading Shakespeare's canon than had been recognized up to that point. The first book – and it remains one of the best – to be published on service was Burnett's *Masters and Servants in English Renaissance Drama and Culture: Authority and Obedience* (1997).⁴ Burnett canvassed a broad range of texts, juxtaposing Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean drama with service treatises and prose fiction, and dedicating one chapter each to the figure of the apprentice, the craftsman and tradesman, the male domestic servant, the female servant, and the noble household. The book's organization was in keeping with his thesis that servant-master relations in the early modern period were primarily conflictual and that they tapped into profound anxieties about rapidly changing socioeconomic conditions and the loss of hierarchical certainty.⁵ Burnett's mode of materialist analysis found a complement in Neill's writings on service. Although Neill did not publish a book-length study devoted to service, he asserted across several essays that a wholesale transformation was occurring in early modern England, from a neo-feudal

⁴ The late twentieth-century and early twenty-first century surge of interest in the servant revived some of the interests of Barish and Waingrow (1958).

⁵ On the servant as a figure, often female, associated with disorder and monstrosity, see also Dolan 1994 and Wall 2002.

economy in which service entailed permanent, non-monetary obligations for both servant and master to an economy which increasingly revolved around capitalist wage labor, 'a world of competitive individuals, organized by the ruthless and alienating power of money into something that is beginning to resemble a society of classes' (Neill 2000, 45). Unmoored and endangered in this epochal shift were the many servants who could no longer count on a stable situation or a dependable livelihood.

Burnett and Neill also set the terms for subsequent scholarship in positing that, through this socioeconomic transformation, service became desacralized. Underpinning ideologies of service was the premise that service to a master both mimicked and was a subset of the service all human beings owed to God. As Neill put it, 'By invoking God and Christ as the patterns not merely of paternal authority and filial obedience, but of mastery and service, the official voice of early modern culture could present all domestic relationships as profoundly sacralized' (2004, 162). Yet both Neill and Burnett identified in early modern literature – particularly Shakespeare's plays, and more particularly still *King Lear* – a profound interrogation of the sacred nature of service which enacted the unsettling of socioeconomic structures. In this light, Neill reads Kent's initial refusal of his King's unjust commands as an act that unglues the bonds of service and unleashes a slew of chaotic and subversive modes of service that the play never completely recontains.⁶ In a later essay, Burnett argues that *King Lear* establishes dichotomies of 'good' and 'bad' service only to explode them by putting them into constant conversation. The resulting commentary on service is that 'what is commended in Protestant polemic is cancelled out even as it [*sic*] being articulated' (2005, 82). One of the farthest reaching consequences of early capitalism was the dissolution of a firm religious authority for service. It was not so much that commentaries on service ceased to invoke religious justification (indeed, such invocations can be found into the twentieth century) as that they increasingly competed with and were undercut by alternate models of service, many of which openly privileged commercial and commodified relations.⁷

The study of service came of age in 2005, with the publication of three monographs about service and servants: Linda Anderson's *A Place in the*

⁶ Neill thus qualifies Strier's seminal 1995 contribution on the interplay between early modern service and religion. Where Strier had argued that Shakespearean servants such as Kent and *The Winter's Tale's* Paulina embodied a radical strain of Protestant ideology which advocated disobedience to immoral commands, Neill suggests that Shakespeare is more ambivalent and cautionary about the effects of such servant rebellions; he also protests that Strier misses the extent to which worries over the morality of masters infuses even mainstream Protestant ideologies.

⁷ Lethbridge describes the rationale for traditional servant-master bonds offered by commentators: 'the hierarchy of the estate, the patrimony of land, was divinely ordained' (2013, 126).

Story: Servants and Service in Shakespeare's Plays; David Evett's *Discourses of Service in Shakespeare's England*; and Judith Weil's *Service and Dependency in Shakespeare's Plays*.⁸ The monographs published in 2005 absorbed Burnett's and Neill's respective visions of service as a mirror of a society undergoing transformation but to varying extents rejected or qualified their diagnoses of service as an institution in crisis. Each of the newer studies embraced the social flexibility of service, suggesting in Evett's words 'the ways in which ideals and attitudes of service apply to the behavior of social superiors as well as social inferiors, so that almost any Shakespearean character may act at some point in a service role, just as did the upper-class men and women of his time' (2005, 21), or in Anderson's words, the notion that 'the correspondence between class and service is only approximate, since a character can only be a member of one class at any one time, whereas the kinds of service required of a character may be multiple and conflicting' (2005, 19). Moreover, these works all made the case that service allowed or even elicited forms of agency belied by servants' subordinate and submissive postures. The dramatic interventions that Shakespeare's characters in service roles perform help articulate the 'network of dependencies' (Weil 2005b, 9) that Weil says structured early modern social norms and at the same time destabilizes an easy correspondence between social class or rank, on the one hand, and ethical or moral standing, and even social influence, on the other. Distanced from a class-based, antagonistic model, service emerges from these studies as dynamic and interactive; it affects masters as much as it does servants, and it is potentially instrumental for both parties.⁹

Along with paying more attention to the agency afforded servants, Anderson, Evett, and Weil modulated the new historicist and cultural materialist paradigms of the earlier works to develop a greater emphasis on formalism. In narrowing their focus to Shakespeare, each intimated that the ultimate point was to reveal the complexities of Shakespeare's representation of service rather than to uncover or dissect societal tensions. The literary and in some cases philosophical stakes became more prominent as the historical developments receded to a set of shared presuppositions. One textually oriented question that several studies entertained was how representations of service articulate early modern authors' ambivalent identities. Advancing

⁸ To this list can be added a special section edited by Michael Neill in the 2005 *Shakespearean International Yearbook*, titled *Shakespeare and the Bonds of Service*. Most essays in this volume were written by authors of book-length studies which I survey at more length.

⁹ What changed in the later monographs was perhaps more a matter of degree than of kind, for in some respects, Burnett and Neill had already noticed the flip side of the loosening of the traditional bonds of service: the opportunities for servants' 'histrionic "self-fashioning"' (Neill 2000, 19) or the possibility that 'subordinated groups could be empowered and even contest existing hierarchical arrangements' (Burnett 1997, 8).

the first of these points, Anderson observed that Shakespeare's servant characters 'like Shakespeare himself, are frequently artists and thorough-going professionals' (2005, 87).¹⁰ David Schalkwyk (2008) argued, further, that service has an essentially performative dimension, evoked in the early modern theater when a player performs a service role onstage. The figure of the imitative servant hollows out the master's authority by highlighting the servant's adeptness at mimicking, rather than embodying, an ideal of faithful service. In this theatrical scenario, service grants agency not only to the servant, and not only to the player, but also to the author. Building on the point that service helps authors make claims for their work, my *The Aesthetics of Service in Early Modern England* (2012) claimed that 'service is fundamentally a representative practice, in which acting *for* one's master shades, often imperceptibly, into acting *as* one's master' (3) and that authors drew on this analogy between service and fictional forms to invest both with aesthetic power and social potential.

In the turn a decade ago toward a more textually based approach to early modern service, we also begin to see disagreement on the issue of whether service mobilized social unrest and disenfranchisement, as Neill and Burnett would have it, or whether it was, as Evett in particular contended, a vehicle for a spiritual, even existential, exercise of freedom. It is worth pausing at this juncture to reflect on how critics have shaped the semantic versatility of service and servants in response to the pressure of different methodologies. Critical work such as Burnett's and Neill's which attends closely to material structures and which sees economic forces as constitutive of these structures is more likely to understand literary service as reflecting oppressive and marginalizing conditions, while work including Anderson's, Evett's, and Weil's, which is more interested in individual representations of service, tends to construct it as a willed behavior or set of actions. Such differences have opened up a split between materialist and idealist modes of criticism, roughly speaking, and have created an ideological divide which replays larger debates in literary studies.

The idealist response as voiced by Evett to materialist interpretations of service was that while a change did occur in the governing socioeconomic models of service, it would be a mistake to conceive of service primarily as a material designation. Objecting to the notion that service was desacralized, he insisted to the contrary that service had to be read theologically and that at its center was a volitional act, which created 'the paradox of freedom and service, with the fundamental notion that when service is freely offered, the

¹⁰ More recently, Rutter (2008, 24, 36) has pointed out that servants also play an important part in the theater as playgoers whose right to recreate in the theater was constantly contested in the civic arena and accordingly thematized in early modern drama.

freedom spreads all through the service relationship, and fundamentally alters its nature, in just the way, in Christian theology, that the free choice to love and serve God produces a brand new man or woman' (Evelt 2005, 79). Where Burnett and Neill each interpreted the performative qualities of early modern service as evidence of subjects' increasing alienation from roles previously understood as innate and essential, Evelt construed such performances as a normalizing behavior which conforms the servant's affect to his social value. What materialist writers on service might dub false consciousness Evelt said allowed servants 'to lead a life emotionally if not materially satisfying' (2005, 157); he concluded that volitional service provides the 'cornerstone of [Shakespeare's] ethical vision' (15). Evelt's argument raised serious questions: What types of justice, equality, and equity are included in or excluded from this definition of freedom in service? Is the logic of the 'spread' of freedom through the servant-master relationship akin to that of 'trickle-down economics', in which benefits are supposed to flow downhill? How does a focus on Shakespeare shape or restrict the questions scholars have posed about service? And even if we accept Shakespeare as the premise for this research, how convincing is the evidence that Shakespeare endorses a conventional Christian doctrine for service when for every Adam testifying to faithful longevity in service we find a Viola/Cesario who utterly intertwines fidelity and self-interest? Are such servants portrayed as ethically inferior because they hold back something of their selves in service? Aren't the ethics of mastery just as or more urgent to contemplate than the ethics of service, given the asymmetrical social dynamics of these two positions?

3. *Affect and Ethics*

Notwithstanding this list of questions, many of which remain unanswered, Evelt's work has created a good deal of interest in the affective and ethical dimensions of service. The fullest study in this vein is Schalkwyk's *Shakespeare, Love and Service*, which offers the insight that service has 'two faces', one 'structural' in that service can act as a mode of relational identity formation, as embodied by the player servant, the other 'personal' in that service conjures 'a state of personal devotion that is close to love' (2008, 236). For Schalkwyk, there is an ongoing dialectic between these sides of service which, though it may be informed by historical particulars, ultimately transcends periodization and turns service into a phenomenological category rather than an occupational or social object of analysis. Schalkwyk's main complaint against the now standard materialist narrative that early modern service migrated in response to the change from a neo-feudal economy to a capitalist one is not that the critics had it wrong but rather that they gave short shrift to 'local nuances and the complicated interrelation and coexistence of residual, dominant, and emergent forces by which service continued to be practiced and

experienced in differentiated and attenuated forms' (29). In attending to these coexisting and often contradictory possibilities, Schalkwyk identifies love and more ambivalent emotions (ambition, hatred) as crosscurrents in Shakespeare's representation of service.¹¹ He argues that these affective properties of service persist even as it responds to new social and economic imperatives, that, for example, *contra* Burnett and Neill, the traditional reciprocity between servant and master adapts rather than yields to impersonal monetary transaction.

In his most recent essay on the subject (2011), Schalkwyk has sharpened the distinction between the two sides of service to the point that its personal aspect is opposed to its structural aspect and threatens to overcome the boundaries of service altogether. He proposes that heterosexual love in *Romeo and Juliet* cordons itself off from service as the only site where the singularity and finality of the 'I' and 'you' can be achieved. In this argument, service is limited to homosocial and homoerotic 'retainer bonds', within which all individuals are fungible because it is the cohesion and unity of the group which take precedence. Companionate heterosexual love is the occasion for the selfless devotion which he argued in *Shakespeare, Love and Service* could flourish in the service relationship. Having in that book made a case for service's wide affective range, in his newer work he enforces a more limited sense of a homosocial bond against which heterosexual love asserts itself as the only guarantor of the individual and apparently as a relationship which forbids service. For Schalkwyk as for Evett, service is most valuable in conditions where it upholds a concept of personal freedom as achieved through other-directed love, but interestingly those conditions threaten to become so restrictive as actually to exclude service.

If *King Lear* has been a touchstone for materialist studies on early modern service, *Timon of Athens* seems to have become the play of choice for critics interested in affect and ethics. The play is amenable to such readings in no small part because of Flavius, Timon's steward, who exhibits total loyalty to his master in the face of the utter penury to which Timon is reduced. In lines invariably quoted, Flavius proclaims the principles behind his steadfast service:

That which I show, heaven knows, is merely love,
 Duty and zeal to your unmatched mind,
 Care of your food and living; and, believe it,
 My most honoured lord,
 For any benefit that points to me,
 Either in hope or present, I'd exchange
 For this one wish: that you had power and wealth
 To requite me by making rich yourself. (4.3.507-514)

¹¹ See also Schalkwyk 2005 and Weil 2005a on the close relationship between service and friendship in the sonnets. For Weil, the poetic speaker's advocacy of a freely given, reciprocal service cuts against 'inequality in friendship' (2005a, 87).

Interpreting these lines, Evett surmises that Flavius's 'free choice is to continue to act in all ways a servant' (2005, 150) and Schalkwyk similarly says that 'Shakespeare shows us the greatest degree of agency (and all that it implies ethically) in the servant when he has been excluded from his master's service and is therefore free to rededicate himself to it out of love' (2008, 227). *Timon* and Flavius have become the examples *par excellence* of volitional service or love in service, which in these critics' reading is service at its most ethically commendable.

It is also possible, though, to show that *Timon's* ethics of service have political and economic ramifications, as two recent essays have sought to do. Ellorashree Maitra (2013) at first appears to hew closely to Schalkwyk's line in arguing that the ethics of service entail a Levinasian responsiveness to the other; the servants' 'heteronomous subjectivity' is counterpoised to Timon's deluded belief in the autonomous subject. What is new in Maitra's approach is that she asks if service's creation of, and reliance on, fellowship (decidedly not Schalkwyk's destructive 'retainer bonds') 'can constitute the ethical foundation of political life?' (177). She decides that by the end of the play, tentative and fragile though these communal bonds are, they do indeed offer the best entrée into civic life and a way out of the cycle of unending war and strife. While Maitra delves into the political yield of ethical service, Laurie McKee (2013) plumbs its economic contradictions. McKee, too, is interested in the idea extolled by early modern commentators that service should be freely given, but her question is about what it means to conceive of service as a gift when at one and the same time the servant is expected to earn his livelihood from the performance of service. By this means, McKee restages the disjunction between idealist and materialist critics as one inherent to early modern service. As she shows, it is not only a matter of the servant confronting ideology with the hard facts of lived reality: statutes, treatises, and manuals all stress how important it is for servants to become economically self-sustaining rather than serving as a drain on precious societal resources.¹² The failure to seek remuneration and reward from one's master is not only a pragmatic failure but a moral one as well. Where is the line, asks McKee, between the servant giving freely to his master and giving too much? How and where does the servant's gift shade into the contract? McKee's essay reads Flavius as embodying this deeply entrenched set of ethical and socioeconomic conflicts, and she astutely interprets the passage quoted above as exploiting the unresolved question of how exactly Flavius would wish Timon to 'requite' him if he, Timon, were rich once more. McKee's argument reminds us that

¹² The historian R.C. Richardson makes a complementary point, noting that 'Though appeals were constantly made to the better nature of employees to remember rather than discard faithful old servants, the principle of self-help was also underlined as well; thrift was held up not simply as a virtue in servants but as a necessity' (2010, 79).

any freedom found in or through service was necessarily attached to the servant's achievement of material sufficiency and not purely a product of her or his affective disposition.

Servants' livery, which signified that they were in service and sometimes identified their possession by a particular master, has also proven fertile ground for investigating versions of servant freedom and agency that challenge narrow definitions of the ethics of service. As Urvashi Chakravarty notes, "livery" is derived from the Latin "liberare", so that this apparent signifier of servitude could paradoxically suggest "liberty" (2012, 367). Building on work by Amanda Bailey (2004) on the disruptive effects of servants' sartorial 'braving', Chakravarty argues that the servant's qualified liberty takes on new connotations as livery shifts from a gift a master gives his servant to a form of payment.¹³ Her essay thus works through the servant's livery similar issues to those that preoccupy McKee: how does the understanding of service as a gift 'freely' given or received collide with the increasingly prominent expectation that service is an economic livelihood which requires just compensation? In the first paradigm, freedom lies in the servant's volitional stance; in the second, it resides with the servant's economic and social agency.

4. *Gender and Sexuality*

Questions about the materiality of freedom have been inescapable for the few critics who have looked substantively at service in relation to early modern gender and sexuality. If the history of analysis of servants and service in literature is a short one, the study of gender, sexuality, and service in early modern literature is still briefer. Some of the monographs discussed above (Burnett 1997, Evett 2005, Weil 2005b) dedicate a single chapter to women or issues of gender, while others (Anderson 2005, Schalkwyk 2008) include in their discussions examples of women servants. The first book-length study to consider women in service was Michelle Dowd's *Women's Work in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (2009). As its title indicates, Dowd's monograph takes women's work as its purview. Yet much of what counted as women's work in early modern England fell under the rubric of service, and Dowd's approach accordingly highlights the intersections for women between service and labor more generally. Dowd points out that although women's work was usually thought to occur within the domestic household, their involvement in service often took them out of the home. She suggests that portrayals of women's service register spatial and social transgressions and articulate broader instabilities. As she says in a related essay, the threatening

¹³ Bailey argues that 'the dutiful servant' becomes 'a site of rupture' within the household (2004, 100) as he performs too flamboyantly and artificially the position of the servant.

potential of women's service is often resolved, however, through a strategic deployment of the marriage narrative, so that in *Twelfth Night*, for example, Maria's literacy and wit render her fit to marry Sir Toby rather than to achieve 'economic independence or occupational promotion' (2005, 118).

In Dowd's view, the precarious, yet also sometimes empowering relation of women to service helps 'make cultural sense of the role of women writers within the dynamic economy of early modern England' (2009, 6).¹⁴ This issue comes to the fore in her discussion of Isabella Whitney, the maidservant turned writer, whose poetic anthology *A Sweet Nosegay or Pleasant Posy: Containing a Hundred and Ten Philosophical Flowers* conjures and mimics the domestic work of a servant. The shape of service in her text compensates for Whitney's own loss of a service position, teaching us that much mobility was involuntary, a product of an unstable climate for service employment in the later sixteenth century and the rise of more temporary service situations, and that this compulsory 'liberty' hit women especially hard.¹⁵

In *Labor and Writing in Early Modern England, 1567-1667* (2008), Laurie Ellinghausen similarly explores the possibilities for authorial vocation that emerge around non-aristocratic laboring identities. She, too, takes Whitney as a case study. But where Dowd reads Whitney's masterlessness as a disadvantage for which the poetry tries to compensate, Ellinghausen sees it as a strategic pose which allows Whitney unprecedented autonomy and inwardness: 'When Whitney presents herself as a subject who must write to live, she participates in a shifting notion of what it means to have an occupation – from fulfilling a social role to sustaining oneself by producing a useful product' (2008, 19). To serve is for Ellinghausen above all to be in a relational social position vis-à-vis one's master, and thus when Whitney represents herself as out of service she gains a subjective and poetic self-possession that she could never have had as a servant. The writings of Isabella Whitney in particular and gender relations in general have thus served as another site for conversation about whether and in what ways early modern service should be thought of as a limiting or enabling condition for those who performed it.

¹⁴ For an alternate approach connecting women's service to authorship, see Korda 2011. Korda looks at women's work in and around the theater, much of it service-oriented (though service is not one of her defining terms), and finds extensive evidence both of women's integral involvement and of their excision from 'the visible workplace of the stage itself in an effort to define "playing" as legitimate, manly work' (1).

¹⁵ Dowd's discussion of Whitney follows in the wake of an essay by Phillippy (1998), which similarly investigates cultural perceptions of the female servant and their uses for Whitney's self-authorization. A number of scholars have fruitfully explored the precariousness of many servants in early modern England, especially their close contact with poverty, homelessness, and transience as features of an 'economy of "unsettledness"', in Patricia Fumerton's words (2006, 11); Carroll 1996; McNeill 2007; and Woodbridge 2001.

Some of the richest recent work on gender and sexuality suggests that service represents neither wholesale freedom nor constraint but instead demonstrates the precarious nature of the divide between will, choice, and agency, on the one side, and constraint, coercion, and force, on the other. Melissa Sanchez explores this contested territory in dissecting the politics of gendered figurations of service. For Sanchez, service can act both as a constituent of liberty and its defining opposite. 'Seduction and Service in *The Tempest*' (2008), a stand-alone piece that is closely related to her *Erotic Subjects: The Sexuality of Politics in Early Modern English Literature* (2011), reads the much analyzed terms of service in Shakespeare's tragicomedy in light of early seventeenth-century tensions surrounding subjects' consent to and coercion by sovereignty. The rhetoric of willing servitude, including Ferdinand's erotic subjugation to Miranda, is used to conjure a loving servant-master relationship of the kind that critics like Evett and Schalkwyk valorize and that in its contemporary moment James I saw as a model for his own 'consensual' relationship with the English people. And yet, as Sanchez shows, the boundary between willing servitude and enforced slavery in Prospero's relations with Caliban and Ariel is far from distinctly drawn and points to the uses of coercion and constraint in eliciting consent. Moreover, the threat of rape surrounding Miranda illustrates the ways in which commingled desire and violence underwrite political ideologies in which women act as a synecdoche for all political subjects in their status as potential servants or slaves. Though it may seem as if Miranda gains from becoming Ferdinand's beloved servant-wife rather than the victim of Caliban's violation, Sanchez argues that this is not necessarily the case in the play's juxtaposition of service and subjection: 'hierarchies founded on consent and desire may be no more beneficent than those that originate in conquest or violence; indeed, voluntary servitude may prove even more pernicious in that it lends a veneer of legitimacy to unjust orders of rule' (2008, 72).

Sanchez builds significantly on preceding discussions of queer modes of service. Bruce Smith (1991) and Mario Di Gangi (1997) each included servant-master bonds among the heterosexual and homoerotic relationships which they alleged were laden with intimacy and inequality and which contained the potential to threaten social order, but they restricted their analyses to same sex dynamics and to more generalized considerations of power. Laurie Shannon looked more specifically at relations between monarch and subjects, as Sanchez does, arguing that 'the king's personal dedication to one subject above all others subordinates the principle of commonweal it was his function to embody' (2002, 13). Yet in underscoring the monarch's favoritism rather than the subject's service, Shannon leaves untouched certain opportunities which Sanchez seizes to examine the relationship from the perspective of the servant-subject. Sanchez's alertness to the dynamics of service allows her to show that a service relationship based on volitional love, erotics, and intimacy both upholds sovereignty and exposes it to profoundly disturbing influences.

5. *Race and Slavery*

In addition to prompting new insights about the intervention of service into political discourse, Sanchez's argument corresponds with growing critical interest in how the language of slavery evolved out of and in conversation with the early modern languages of servitude and service with which we are more familiar. Several recent works have undertaken to clarify the historical status of slavery in early modern England, demonstrating the extent to which slavery and service intersected and the conditions under which they began to gain separate identities. According to Imtiaz Habib, in many cases black people in England endured a *de facto* slavery under the name of service. Habib's method in *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500-1677* (2008) is to document through painstaking archival research the empirical presence of black people in England. He finds that domestic service was often what brought them to England and/or what became their employment once in England (49). Beginning with bystander accounts of Katherine of Aragon's entourage, which included two African women described derisively by Thomas More as 'pigmy Ethiopians' (24), Habib teases out from typically brief but tantalizing references the scaffolding of a growing African English community. Records from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries suggest that many black servants belonged to Iberian or Italian expatriates (since Africans were more numerous in those populations); to merchant mariners who had acquired them in their voyages abroad; and, increasingly, to wealthy noblemen who displayed them as ornaments to their wealth and power. Habib argues persuasively that the condition of most black servants ought retrospectively to be labeled as slavery, even though England during this period was ostensibly not a slave-owning society. The hypothesis that white masters viewed these servants as chattel is supported by their frequent appearance in lists of material goods and even in wills. Habib also finds evidence for the sexual exploitation and abuse of black female servants in the inventory of children of mixed parentage; these children themselves were sometimes listed as belonging to their mothers' masters (200-203). Where critical orthodoxy long held that English involvement in the slave trade sprang forth only in the later seventeenth century, Habib's book narrates a more extensive preceding history leading up to 'the formal legalization of English possession of Africans' codified in the 1677 ruling on 'Butts v. Penny' (184).

The mandated reciprocity of early modern service relationships, which allowed for servants to have agency, however limited, did not apply to black servants, says Habib. English society, whose commentators overwhelmingly rejected the category of slavery, not only tolerated, but also often embraced, the possession of people because 'blackness' was already being produced as a sign of difference that put black servants outside of taxonomies of service: 'early modern English black people miss the minimum humanizing visibility of legal definition' (5). Invisible until very recently not only to their white contemporaries but to subsequent generations of historians and literary critics,

black servants could be treated in subhuman ways that white servants – about whom so many treatises were printed – were not.

Contributing substantially to an understanding of the process by which slavery was both interwoven with and methodically separated from the category of service, both in England and in an inter-Atlantic context, is Susan Amussen's *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640-1700* (2007). Amussen's earlier *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (1988) helped make servants a legitimate object of historical study; in this more recent work, she traces the seventeenth-century cementing of laws in the West Indies which addressed the usage and treatment of indentured servants and slaves. This narrative sets the stage for several important points: first, indentured servitude strained at, but did not rupture, the traditional metropolitan insistence on reciprocal responsibilities between servant and master, while slavery abandoned reciprocity altogether in its view of slaves as human property on whom only force and coercion could operate. Second, colonial planters and administrators responded to the dramatic increase at mid-century in the number of slaves laboring on sugar plantations by sharpening the distinction between servants and slaves. Amussen reports that the Council of Trade and Plantations in 1676, in considering the status of indentured servants, stated its displeasure 'with the word (servitude) as being a mark of bondage and slavery, And think fit rather to use the word (service) since these servants were only apprentices for years' (quoted in 2007, 129). To distinguish more rigorously between servitude and service, the ruling authorities hardened the boundaries between Christian and heathen, white and black, civilized and barbaric. This newly articulated separation dovetails with another point Amussen makes: racial discourses surrounding slavery evolved during the seventeenth century to the point that 'race became the primary element of identity' and the justification for the utter deprivation of slaves' legal, political, and human rights (174). While in this transitional period, black slaves might perform much the same types of labor as their white indentured counterparts, distinct identity categories were congealing around the two groups. Here is a case where service as an act seems less determining for the individuals concerned than are their material identities.

The emergence of the transatlantic slave trade helped to fashion modern ideologies of freedom. Amussen argues that English political theory was changed as a result of slave-owning, even as the material reality of slavery 'meant that it was no longer merely an abstract political concept deployed in debate' (2007, 231). No longer could slavery be marshalled in a flexible or figurative manner without its racial and economic connotations being brought to bear, and yet it was precisely its manifestation in social life that gave rise to the political idea that property ownership was the foundation of individual liberty and therefore was defined against the existence of people who did not have the right to own property and who themselves could be owned. Valerie Forman (2011) elaborates

on this interrelationship, explaining that in early seventeenth-century England freedom was interpreted as the political right to be free from tyranny, a right which in turn derived from the principle of restricted property ownership. As slave ownership in the Caribbean colonies expanded, the material category of slavery increasingly inflected white anxieties about political and economic 'enslavement' (350). Consequently, for England as well as its colonies, 'tying political liberty to material equality is the road not taken' (353). Amussen and Forman each suggest that the neo-liberal economy which dominates in the US and has grown in influence in the UK and continental Europe has its roots in the early modern period and was built on the literal backs of slaves as well as on the representational backs of their slavery. 'Freedom' is a species of privilege which both requires and excludes the slave.

The work done by Amussen and Forman can help us refine Michael Neill's thesis about the desacralization of service. Neill contended that in Protestant discourse, slavery operated as a conditioning opposite for service: 'by defining all that the servant was not, the abject bondage of the slave helped to sustain the idea of service as a system of voluntary engagement and profoundly naturalized "bonds" that constituted, however paradoxically, an expression of the free condition' (2004, 165). The newer research suggests that as enslaved people became part of England's colonial and domestic territory, this ideational binary evolved into a rationale for enslavement. Service may have been becoming steadily desacralized, and yet the perception that service should be freely performed became reinscribed as an indelible division between white Christian subjects who had the 'right' to serve and black non-Christian Africans to whom this 'freedom' was not available (often even when they tried to be, or were, baptized as Christians). Economics may have driven the ingress of slavery to England and its colonies, but slavery's usefulness as a foil for the sacred increasingly took on its own significance.¹⁶

In *Of Bondage: Debt, Property, and Personhood in Early Modern England* (2013), Amanda Bailey proposes another theory of how modern concepts of freedom emerge from early modern service. She traces the dependence of self-ownership, or liberty, on the ability, or freedom, to reckon successfully with one's debts. Those who remained debt-ridden became bodies in whom value inhered for others 'as a form of transferable and speculative property' (25). That is, the debtor has lost his liberty and been transformed into a piece of property in which his creditors invest and into a currency which might be redeemed at some future point. As Bailey points out, the English debtor often became the transatlantic indentured servant. In her chapter on Fletcher and Massinger's 1619 play *The Custom of the Country*, she argues that indenture functioned not only as a labor contract for the multitudes of young men who sailed willingly or unwillingly across

¹⁶ For the thesis that economic factors were determinative in the growth of slavery as a separate institution from indentured servitude, see Beckles 2011.

the Atlantic to help settle England's colonies, but also as 'a *prima facie* debt bond' in which their bodies acted as the surety for fulfillment of their contracts (98). These servants became more wholly the possessions of their masters, their actions and choices circumscribed more tightly, than were servants or apprentices back in England. While Amussen sees the indentured servant as insulated from the worst excesses of slavery, Bailey holds that the indentured, indebted servant was an essential precondition for the development of institutionalized slavery in these same colonies. The book's epilogue focuses on these connections as Bailey asserts that 'no legal code in either England or colonial America had ever denied that the slave was a person' and that 'the moral and political problems of slavery, arguably, grew out of the contradictions born of an economic and social order that insistently acknowledged the slave's humanity' (145). Like the debtor, and in particular like the indentured servant, the slave was a piece of *human* property, both incorporated within and subjugated to the surrounding white American society. Bailey's study adds to the growing body of criticism on race and slavery that offer a materialist perspective to counter the critical stance that freedom lies in the servant's attitude or affect. Instead, what we see in her research and others' is that servants enable freedom for others without being enabled to experience it for themselves.

6. *Where Do We Go from Here?*

To end where I began, *Downton Abbey* and other cultural products which put a spotlight on the extinct figure of the servant (from the novel and film *The Remains of the Day* [1989/1993] to *The Grand Budapest Hotel* [2014]) help us compensate for our cultural evasion of service, or properly, of the servant. The dynamic is complicated, for in some ways, *Downton Abbey* fetishizes its servants, casting them in a Shakespearean and early modern dramatic mold which suggests that little changed from the late sixteenth century to the early twentieth: Carson, the butler, has some Malvolio in him, evinced in his punctilious attention to decorum, both upstairs and downstairs, and punctuated by his occasional lapses into folly; and Thomas Barrow, the closeted gay footman, schemes constantly, Iago-like, to improve his standing in the household at the expense of his fellow servants, only to find himself repeatedly rebuffed and put back into his place. But the show also reflects the fact that from the teens through the thirties other modes of employment were opening for the working classes: one maid, Gwen Dawson, leaves to become a secretary, while in a later season the footman Alfred departs to be trained as a chef at the Escoffier School in London. *Downton Abbey* has also treated servant-master romance and erotics, most notably in the marriage of Sybil, the family's youngest daughter, to the chauffeur.¹⁷ Though

¹⁷ The decline of domestic service as a major source of working class employment in Britain was highly uneven, as Lethbridge (2013) details in tracking the influence of the post-World War I economic depression, which sent many women in particular back in desperation into service.

Sybil was killed off, Tom Branson, the chauffeur, has remained an uneasy but thoroughly embedded member of the aristocratic family, reinventing himself as the Earl's land agent, arguably another kind of servant. The series thereby depicts domestic servants who go into more modern, autonomous fields of service. *Downton Abbey* gives us our cake and lets us eat it, too: it professes nostalgia for a 'lost' past imbued with Shakespearean effects even as it portrays the advent of greater social and economic mobility in a way that suggests new material and subjective advantages for servants. 'Isn't this vanished way of life glorious?', the show seems to proclaim, as at the same time it says, 'Aren't you glad things have changed?'. These seemingly contradictory questions express an under-examined ambivalence toward service which early modern scholars are beautifully positioned to explore.

Up to this point, most Anglo-American scholarship on early modern service has adhered scrupulously to its 'own' sphere, enclosing service within the geographic and temporal borders of England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and containing it largely, too, within disciplinary boundaries.¹⁸ Although literary critics working on service have drawn amply on the work of historians and occasionally on the work of sociologists and anthropologists, and although recent histories on service often turn to literature and its criticism as sources, there has been very little interdisciplinary collaboration on the subject. Digital humanities projects have the exciting potential to become a truly joint endeavor between, at the very least, historians and literature scholars. For instance, Dowd's discussions of the physical movements of women servants in early modern London and other urban centers would lend themselves nicely to a kind of project that, to my knowledge, scholars have not yet undertaken, one that would track servants' circulations and migrations using geospatial mapping tools. One can imagine mapping not only the daily routes that household servants would have taken, broken down by different occupational functions or by gender, but also on a larger scale the migratory patterns of the young men and women who constantly resupplied the service workforce in cities. Using such methods would add new knowledge and dimensions to the still spotty histories of early modern servants.

And it is not only twenty-first century research methods that are needed. We owe more sustained attention to service in twenty-first-century global contexts. At a time when public discourses in the United States are confronting more frankly and deeply than ever before the troubled history of American slavery and racism, a richer understanding of how early modern English rhetorics, cultures, and contexts of service formed the cradle for American

¹⁸ There are exceptions, such as Peter Erickson's 2009 essay on visual portraiture of black servants in England; his discussion crosses historical periods, extending from the sixteenth century to the twenty-first.

slavery has much to add to an ongoing story which is both uniquely American and completely global. American slavery can also be used as a prism through which we might renew our understanding of early modern service. How, for instance, might nineteenth-century publications dispensing advice to slaveholders shed new light on early modern English treatises on service which have already received a good deal of attention from critics but have not yet been read in a broader context? How do the ways in which religious ideology and biblical scripture were invoked to defend slavery – and alternately, to resist it – resonate with the Christian (de)sacralization of service about which Michael Neill and others have written? How in particular can we reevaluate the image of early modern volitional service through the pernicious myth of ‘the happy slave’? What possibilities are there for reading American literary texts ranging from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* to *Beloved* to *Gone With the Wind* to *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* alongside early modern texts that could include not simply expected treatments of slavery like *The Tempest* or *Othello*, but also, to take just a quick sample, *The Comedy of Errors* and *Titus Andronicus*, Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* and Nashe’s *The Unfortunate Traveller*? Such pairings might help critics refresh inquiries into the relation of service and literary form. For example, narratives centered on slaves, from *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, often take the form of the picaresque, a generic force as well in early modern narratives which feature servants, like Harman’s *A Caveat or Warning for Common Cursitors* (Rivlin 2012, 141-144). There is much exciting work waiting to be done through comparative analysis across the spectrum from the most figurative, abstracted notions of service to the most material applications of servitude and the servant.

In an even broader global context, we might fruitfully ask which legacies of early modern service are still discernible today. In the past fifty years, the United States, in company with other developed nations, has segued from an industrial and manufacturing economy to a service economy. Some four hundred years ago, early modern England was shifting dramatically toward capitalism, a change which was both impelled by and wrought profound transformations in definitions and representations of service. My conclusion in *The Aesthetics of Service* was that the repertoire of possible forms of service expanded greatly. What I described as ‘increasingly and self-consciously histrionic, plentiful, and unrestrained’ performances of service in early modern England have arguably only further proliferated today (Rivlin 2012, 5). Although the sovereignty of the individual remains allegedly unrealized before the Enlightenment, there is an uncanny resemblance in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature to the proliferating scenes of service we see played out in the twenty-first century: in the yawning void between ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’, and between those who serve in ways insufficiently valuable in the language of capital and those who serve the engines of profit and thereby serve themselves, becoming clients and consumers in ever more facets of their lives.

Our selection of authors and texts might better reflect the diversity of service and servants in the early modern period and thus our ability to examine critically the range of meanings attached to these terms today. In particular, the disproportionate attention paid to Shakespeare has limited the questions critics have asked about service and the answers they have generated. Reading the plays of Middleton, Dekker and Jonson, the prose fiction of Deloney and Sidney, the poetry of John Donne, or Christian captivity narratives, to name just a few examples, through the lens of service helps us see the myriad ways in which contemporary critiques of income inequality and neo-liberal individualism, for example, find a complement in early modern literature.¹⁹ Widening the body of literature beyond Shakespeare and putting Shakespeare into more frequent conversation with other writers and texts would help critics tell this and other compelling stories. One study which has sought to make a new connection between servants in early modern literature and the present is Kevin LaGrandeur's *Androids and Intelligent Networks in Early Modern Literature and Culture: Artificial Slaves* (2013). LaGrandeur aims to show the ways in which 'servant networks' in dramas including *The Tempest* but also Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* 'anticipate ... the kinds of philosophical issues regarding subjectivity that cyborgs and intelligent networks like supercomputers bring up for our "posthuman" society, in which the human and the machine are becoming increasingly intermingled' (153).²⁰ The history of the artificial servant, which entails both the fantasy and the subversion of absolute mastery, is a promising lead in diversifying the study of early modern service.

The depersonalization of service which occurs in the shift from the 'servant' to 'service' is in fact one of the trends that we can see continuing from the early modern period through the twenty-first century. Affluent and middle class inhabitants of developed nations worldwide by and large do not have servants, but we do expect and rely on a multitude of services in our everyday lives. To put it more transparently, we rely on actions or functions which happen to be performed by people: babysitters, cleaning people, restaurant servers. Servers, not servants. With service firmly in the ascendancy, we are all about what gets done or provided for us, or alternatively, what we can do or provide to others – our neighbors or foreigners half a world away – in order to make a living or turn a profit. Buying coffee at Starbucks, consulting

¹⁹ Among critics who have cultivated a broader outlook on service within drama are two who have used Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* to launch treatments of service by other playwrights, see Correll 2007 and Huntington 2013.

²⁰ The promise of LaGrandeur's thesis remains despite the fact that he does not situate his argument in relation to the considerable body of work on early modern service and servants. Such a critical perspective could have sharpened and nuanced the readings he offers of specific dramas.

with a financial analyst, traveling by commercial airliner, shopping at a chain store: all of these activities, minor or major, every day or just once, imbricate us in a service economy vaster and more far-reaching than, but nevertheless detectable in, the ‘china-houses or the Exchange’ that were the scenes of consumerism in Ben Jonson’s London (Jonson 1979, 1.3.35-36). In the United States, the trend is overwhelming: as of 2012, almost 80% of American employment was in the ‘services-providing’ industry sector, which includes everything from educational services to utilities to government, with the total percentage projected to grow still higher by 2022.²¹ The vast majority of Americans employed outside the home thus work in fields officially designated as ‘services’, and yet of course we are also almost all consumers or clients as well. Though the rest of the globe has traditionally lagged behind the United States in the progression toward a service economy, there are indications that the gap is fast closing.²² Many services are now performed by individuals in other nations. We have become a nation – and increasingly, a world – of clients and service providers, and we oscillate continuously between these roles. Even more recent is the arrival of what some have called a new age of ‘self-service’, in which technology accomplishes many of the tasks that were formerly performed by people.²³ The rhetoric of self-service might imply that we are our own servants; alternately, we serve the technology that appears to serve us. The myth that self-service propagates of total self-sufficiency is the promise of a service economy taken to its farthest extreme, even as it forecasts the undoing of that economy.

The weakening of the categories of servant and master and their replacement by the category of service does not mean the disappearance of hierarchy, subordination, and inequity. Far from it. Opportunities to serve and be served are not distributed proportionally, and the term ‘services’ obscures enormous disparities. The study of service could reveal that, far from guaranteeing greater human and civil rights, the end of the servant brings new challenges. These days we may eschew the rhetoric of master and servant, but from the perspective of early modern service, we might ask if the role of the client or the consumer is not simply a different expression of a very old desire for mastery. And then there is the fact that the depersonalization of service through language and technology conceals the extent to which people are still performing its functions, even if at a remove; this effacement contains its

²¹ Figures are cited from a table of employment projections provided by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, <http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_201.htm>, last modified 19 December 2013.

²² See Davis 2007.

²³ See ‘You’re Hired’, 16 September 2004, <<http://www.economist.com/node/3171466>>, accessed 23 January 2015.

own forms of dehumanization and subjugation. For the purposes of cultural analysis, it is obviously absurd to compare the social status and economic compensation attached to an executive at Facebook versus that attached to a home health aide; yet both belong to the services-providing sector of the economy. In this respect, the transitional economy of early modern England is instructive, for during that era, established categories of service were pushed, pulled, and stretched to their breaking point and beyond as capitalist mores and imperatives grew in influence. As now, some people thrived and profited on the changes while others became vulnerable and dispossessed. Does a service economy, then, create more ‘freedom’ in a neo-liberal sense while suppressing other definitions of freedom that are more collective in nature? Service remains a site on which to interrogate our notions of freedom, and the field remains open for studies that develop the genealogy of service from the early modern period to the present.

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Good to Think with: Domestic Servants, England 1660-1750*

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Abstract

This article surveys scholarship dealing with domestic service in England at the latter end of early modernity. Neglected by British social historians of 'productive' working classes, servants began to attract serious interest only after demographers of the 1970s showed that in the north and west of pre-industrial Europe youths of all social ranks passed several years in 'life-cycle service'. The concept has proved controversial, but fruitful for study of the family and of the many functions performed within the extended household. In the 1980s feminism, and the revival of servant-keeping, stimulated interest in modern domestic workers, to whom those of earlier times were often assimilated. The focus has since shifted to radical changes (feminisation and proletarianisation) taking place in the later eighteenth century, and away from the complex hierarchies typical of great houses onto middling-sort servant-keeping. Recently historians have investigated the agency enjoyed by eighteenth-century servants, and affective aspects of household relationships. Archival research, facilitated by digitalisation, studies of material culture and household spaces, willingness to read between the lines and against the grain, now offer greater insight into the experiences of and cultural forms used by this group of labouring-class men and women.

Keywords: Domestic Service, Early Modernity, England, Long Eighteenth Century, History

1. *Thinking with Servants*

'Good to think with' is an expression borrowed via Carolyn Steedman (in adapted form) from a passage in which Claude Levi-Strauss proposed that people, animals, any natural species, can be used for cognitive purposes (Steedman 2009, 15n). This is how Steedman applies it to domestic service in England in the long eighteenth century:

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Domestic servants were used – more than any other social group – to write histories of the social itself. This was an important aspect of their function, not the same as dusting, boot-cleaning and water-carrying but, rather, an involuntary labour, by which they were employed by all manner of legal theorist and political philosopher, to think (or think-through) the social and its history. (13-14)

Among the political philosophers in question is John Locke, who in 1689 used a servant cutting turf to show how the products of one man's labour may be appropriated by another, and in 1693 cited nursemaids' story-telling as illustrating barbaric methods of education. In his *Commentaries* (1765-1769), that most influential of legal theorists, Sir William Blackstone, classified the master-servant relationship as the first of the three great relations of private life to come within the remit of the law.

Servants have been used to think (or think-through) key aspects of social life in many times and places. In *Housecraft and Statecraft: Domestic Service in Renaissance Venice, 1400-1600*, Dennis Romano shows how the late sixteenth-century physician and playwright, Fabio Glisenti, used servants, gondoliers and other '*persone basse, e vili*' to 'serve as representations of the senses triumphing over reason', to recommend the importance of a good death, and to justify a static political and social hierarchy (1996, 37, 40). Romano himself uses 'the lens of intimate relations between masters and servants' (xv) to investigate the Venetian shift 'away from egalitarian republicanism and communal values and toward an ever more hierarchical and stratified society' (228). The decision to use domestic service as a key was not difficult, he explains,

since the master-servant tie was one of the most fundamental relationships that characterized European society before the era of the French Revolution ... Like the bonds between lords and vassals, masters and apprentices, even fathers and sons, ties between masters and servants linked tens of thousands of Europeans in relationships imbued with economic, social and political significance. No relationship, with the exception of that between husbands and wives, better expresses the patriarchal and hierarchical ideal of early modern society ... (xv)

Quite different but equally 'social' are the aims of the recently concluded 'Servant Project', a vast network of scholars who have investigated and promoted the social ideals affirmed by the European Constitution of 2004 – human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity – through case studies of master-servant relationships in regions as far apart as Sweden, Japan, Turkey and Latin America, and over a time scale stretching from the middle ages to the twenty-first century.¹

¹ On the aims of the project, see Sarti 2005a, xvii.

One of the organisers of – and principal contributors to – that project (and to this volume) has recently published a survey of fifty years of international scholarship on service (Sarti 2014) which takes into account a much bigger range of work published in many more languages than I am able to deal with. This article tries only to give a sense of what social and cultural historians have been saying during the last thirty years or so about domestic (i.e. live-in) servants in England between the Restoration and the mid-eighteenth century.² Even within those narrow geographical and chronological confines, it does not do credit to the many types of servant whose work later became obsolete (chairmen, for instance) or who were re-configured as professionals (such as secretaries), or discuss the related issues of slavery and indentured service.³ Nevertheless the material is vast and the questions debated many and complex. Was there a crisis in servant-master relations in the late 1700s and early 1800s, for instance? Had contractual, cash-based relations supplanted patriarchal ones? Were servants still considered members of the master's family – if they had ever really been? Did the 'aristocratic style' of servant-keeping, with large hierarchically-organised establishments serving as masters' power bases, survive – and was that style imitated by the newly-rich middling sort? When and to what extent did the 'bourgeois style' of employing small numbers of multi-tasking domestics come to dominate? Was domestic service – already in the eighteenth century – being proletarianised, feminised and stigmatised? Can servants then – ever – be considered 'working class'? Is the notion of life-cycle service developed by demographers applicable to England in this period? How much power, economic, cultural, emotional, sexual, did servants wield? Where and how can we hear the voices of those who left no written record of themselves?

Many of these questions concern chronology, and they relate, it seems to me, to a smouldering debate about the long eighteenth century as whole. All of the studies we shall be looking at see profound changes as taking place in the nature and meaning of service – at some point; they disagree, however, about when those changes took place. The implications of this are broad, because the changes add up to something we call modernisation; where we locate that process thus determines where we set the cut off between early modern and modern. In what follows I shall stress the early modern aspects of domestic service in late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century England, but do my best to keep in mind the example of Daniel Defoe, who liked to see both

² R.C. Richardson offers a lucid overview of scholarship on household servants in early modern England in the first chapter of his book of 2010 (1-20). This article covers some of the same ground but with different emphases.

³ On the difficulty of defining 'Who are Servants' over the course of early modern history, see Sarti 2005b.

sides of any question and rarely came down on one without crossing the floor soon after. Defoe might have called his own time, as he did servants and many other social categories, ‘amphibious’: but that epithet was not meant to be complimentary.

2. *Masters’ Voices*

It took a long time for the historiography of service to come to England. In early nineteenth-century France scholars were already comparing the conditions enjoyed by servants since the Revolution with those of the past, and in the recently united Italy of the 1860s historians began serious archival research on the history of Mediterranean slavery (Sarti 2014, 280-281). It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that an innovative American social historian told the English-speaking world that servants, past and present, were worth studying (Salmon 1901, 16). The main aims of Lucy Maynard Salmon’s *Domestic Service* were to put popular discussion of the ‘great American question’ (dissatisfaction with servants) on a ‘broader basis’ than that of mere personal experience, and to encourage economists to ‘recognize domestic service among other industries’. Salmon introduced her survey of over 1,000 employers and 700 domestic workers with three historical chapters which clarified differences among the various types of servant-hood into which men and women were sold or sold themselves to labour in North America, analysed changes in the semantics of the word ‘servant’, and investigated the revival of hiring of domestics which followed recent waves of migrants from Ireland, Germany and China. Easy with statistics as with the broader view, Salmon also insisted on ‘going back to the sources’, and had a special ‘gift of finding in the common place something significant’.⁴

Both are illustrated in her use of settlers’ letters to give us a feel of the materiality of everyday life in colonial America, a sense of the strong feelings that could be aroused in the process of getting the work around house and farm done, the sharing of small domestic spaces and kitchen utensils, and regulating sexual behaviour. Here is seventeenth-century Maine farmer John Winter justifying his wife’s having beaten Pryssylla, a servant who – he feared – may have been spreading ‘yll reports’:

⁴ ‘Lucy Maynard Salmon’, in *Vassar Encyclopaedia*, <<http://vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu/faculty/prominent-faculty/lucy-maynard-salmon.html>>, accessed 23 January 2015. Salmon’s methods of enquiry anticipate the modern interest in material culture: ‘One of Salmon’s favorite historical records was the laundry list. Salmon and her class in Historical Material advertised in the *Vassar Miscellany* before winter break for students’ laundry lists from home. “Laundry lists”, the ad read, “being closely and continuously connected with daily life, reflect custom and change in social conditions, industry, or in language, with a detail and rapidity which other sources seldom do”’.

she had twice gon a meching in the woodes, which we haue bin faine to send all our Company to seeke. We Cann hardly keep her within doores after we ar gonn to beed, except we Carry the kay of the doore to beed with us. She never Could melke Cow nor goat since she Came hither. Our men do not desire to haue her boyle the kittle for them she is so sluttish. She Cannot be trusted to seme a few piggs, but my wyfe most Commonly must be with her. She hath written home, I heare, that she was faine to ly yppon goates skins. She might take som goates skins to ly in her bedd, but not given to her for her lodginge. For a yeare & quarter or more she lay with my daughter vppon a good feather bed before my daughter being lacke 3 or 4 dales to Sacco, the maid goes into beed with her Cloth & stockings, & would not take the paines to plucke of her Cloths: her bedd after was a doust bedd & she had 2 Coverletts to ly on her, but sheets she had none after that tyme she was found to be so sluttish. (83)

Evidently worried about Pryssylla's power to besmirch his and his wife's name in the community, Winter piles on details of faults and shortcomings, sins committed (meching),⁵ duties omitted (milking, tending pigs), repulsive personal habits (getting into bed fully dressed). In the process he tells us a lot about his interesting maid (she seems to have been adventurous enough to run off into the woods at night, fastidious enough to complain about sleeping on goat skins, and though unskilled in animal husbandry, was clearly literate enough to write letters home), and about his surprisingly fussy male employees (who objected to her handling cooking utensils). He also implies a good deal about his daughter (who made journeys into town, and insisted on appropriate bed wear), about his wife's responsibilities on the farm (as well as her disciplinary role), and about his own duties as guardian: he felt bound to organise expeditions to find his maid when she made off, and to prevent further 'mechings'. No distant, impersonal 'employer', he seems to have been closely involved with the members of his extended, hard-working but well-equipped household (not lacking in good feather beds), and was by no means emotionally detached. The death by drowning of another servant aroused Winter's compassion and puzzlement, though it also touched his self-interest:

Tompson had a hard fortune. Yt was her Chance to be drowned Cominge over the barr after our Cowes, & very little water on the barr, not aboue i foote, & we Cannot Judge how yt should be, acocept that her hatt did blow from her head, & she to saue her hatt stept on the side of the barr ... I thinke yf she had lived she would haue proved a good servant in the house: she would do more worke then 8 such maides as Pryssyllea is. (84)

⁵ Presumably meeting a lover: the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the verb 'mech' as one of the Middle English variants on 'match', meaning to 'pair' or 'mate', which is usually – but not always – used transitively.

Salmon's book was, in Sarti's view, to remain the most important work on domestic service in the United States for seventy years or so (2014, 282). By contrast Dorothy Marshall's article, 'The Domestic Servant of the Eighteenth Century', was written from *within* 'the servant problem in its modern aspect' (1929, 6). Relying almost exclusively on employer testimony and the abundant eighteenth-century literature of complaint, Marshall bought into the charges of 'insufferable behaviour' levelled by Defoe, Mandeville and other polemicists, confirming the notion of an eighteenth-century crisis in master-servant relations.⁶ Swift's *Directions to Servants*, for instance, is cited as evidence that servants actually cheated on the shopping. 'The mass of evidence tends to show that the servant body as a whole had got out of hand' she unsurprisingly concluded, indeed 'more than ordinarily out of hand' (38-39), implicitly betraying her own assumption that a degree of insubordination on the part of servants is regrettably inevitable.

It was not for another twenty-seven years that the first full-length study of the subject appeared. In *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth-Century England* J.J. Hecht used a wide range of letters, diaries, newspapers and magazines, travel literature, treatises and pamphlets on social and economic problems to construct an overview of labour supply and demand, servant hierarchies, contradictions in master-servant relations, and servant functions, including that of cultural nexus: the transference of masters' and mistresses' values and customs (manners, dress, tea-drinking, political opinions) to the lower classes, and the 'flow from city to country' (1956, 209-224). In his account the direction of flow is always top-down; like Marshall's, the bulk of Hecht's material derived from employer testimony (xi-xii). The book tells us a great deal about the rich and status-conscious who employed large numbers of servants with a high proportion of males, for many of whom the main function was display – to tell the world that their master was wealthy enough to pay them for doing very little.

Hecht was neither the first nor the last to be fascinated by the specialized duties, the precise territorial demarcations and hierarchical organisation of great houses: fixed seating arrangements at table, differences in dress, diet, leisure time and, above all, in opportunities for familiar exchange with employers that signalled distinctions between upper and lower servants, and fine grading in between (35).⁷ But households like these were, by the eighteenth century,

⁶ Defoe (1724), quoted on p. 16; to be fair, Marshall did examine and reject the charge that servants were demanding 'exorbitant wages'.

⁷ As Elizabeth Rivlin points out in this volume fascination with service relations in great houses is evident from the popularity of television series such as *Downton Abbey* (from 2010) and the earlier *Upstairs Downstairs* (1971-1975), as well as films such as *The Remains of the Day* (1993) and *Gosford Park* (2001). Lucy Delap (2011) sees these productions as 'heritage performances' insinuating that domestic service belongs to and in the past.

a small minority. As Hecht acknowledged in passing, below the gentry there were by this time large numbers of households with one or two multi-tasking servants, perhaps a maid of all work and a footboy-cum-apprentice (8). In rural areas duties would be even more varied:

Eighteenth-century domestic servants, the majority of them working in single or two servant-households, did all sorts, in an era when 'housework' did not have the narrow connotations of 'indoors', in a 'house or other dwelling place'. She (sometimes he) mopped the floors, milked the house cow, turned out a bedroom, fed the pigs, hoed in the vegetable garden, washed the babies' nappies, and helped with the hay if the family was growing a cash crop. (Steedman 2009, 31)

It was not for many years that historians began helping us hear the voices of these workers, still longer to begin to hear those who worked as chars or washerwomen on a casual basis.⁸ But then there was not much interest in doing so, even among the great pioneers of 'history from below' in 1960s and 1970s Britain: Christopher Hill, Eric Hobsbawm, E.P. Thompson. 'Very little has been written on eighteenth-century domestic service in England since J.J. Hecht's work' Bridget Hill wrote, somewhat misleadingly,⁹ as late as 1996:

What are the reasons for British historians' persistence over the last forty years in virtually ignoring domestic service? All female domestic servants, it is assumed, performed housework ... Women have performed it since history began. Nothing has changed. To historians concerned with change over time it is of no interest ... essentially unproductive. (7-8)

In the meantime, Hill noted, two excellent studies of domestic service in *ancien régime* France had appeared (Maza 1983; Fairchilds 1984); if there had been no English equivalent it was partly because servants did not fit easily into the powerful narrative of Britain's pre-eminence as 'the first nation to industrialize', and of industrialisation as the seedbed of the working class. Modern historians, she suggested, found it 'puzzling and a little disconcerting to discover that, despite burgeoning manufacture, the most important occupation remained service. What has domestic service

⁸ In *Down and Out in Eighteenth-Century London* Tim Hitchcock devotes some pages to charring – 'the most common, and least discussed, of the beggarly professions' – and finds a 'palpable social boundary' between charwomen and 'such servants as had attended their masters or mistresses' (2004, 61-63). Hitchcock's work reminds us that domestic servants in stable 'places' were highly privileged compared to many of those who did the really dirty work in early modern houses, never mind on farms. Mary Collier's satiric thrust at the sleepy maid who keeps the washer-women waiting in *A Woman's Labour* brings this home. See below, p. 58.

⁹ Because the demographers of the 1970s had indeed given service the key role in their theories of marriage patterns in north-western Europe.

to do with the growth of industry and the rise of factories?’ (8). Steedman traces the roots of the problem farther back:

the plot lines of modern social history have a tenacious grip on us all. Adam Smith’s 1776 formulation of the servant’s labour as a kind of non-work, or anti-work, and Karl Marx’s use of the formulation to analyse the occupational structure of modern (1861) capitalist society, underpins much canonical twentieth-century social history. (2009, 16)

By the 1980s however that ‘tenacious grip’ had loosened under the impact of feminist attacks on the ideology of housework and caring as propensities natural to women. At the same time, after years during which it was assumed that domestic service had or soon would disappear (Sarti 2005c, 251), it was dawning on observers that household help was still commonly employed in many regions of the world, and that even in the north of Europe and in North America the middle classes were again paying people – now known as ‘domestic workers’, ‘helps’ or ‘collaborators’ – to do their cleaning, gardening, nannying and caring. New versions of the ‘servant problem’ were being aired in newspapers, fiction, films and television series, while sociologists were debating the ‘servicing of the middle classes’ and the re-emergence of class divisions (Meldrum 2000, 3). Studies including the expression ‘domestic service’ in their titles shot up from about 50 per year in the 1980s, to nearly 300 in the 1990s, and an astonishing almost 700 per year in the first decade of the new century (Sarti 2014, 303).

The trouble for us is that ‘eighteenth-century domestic servants were not the type of working woman that the twenty-first century sociological imagination reads out of gender history’; they were not the ‘dirty, disgusting others’ of the world of globalised, de-regulated and racialised service (Steedman 2009, 26-27). Nor did they much resemble the employees of nineteenth-century middle-class families that historians such as Theresa McBride (1976), and Leonora Davidoff and Catherine Hall (1987) had described as founded on the ideology of separate spheres, feminine and private on the one hand, public and male on the other. Bridget Hill’s *Servants* has been accused of back-projecting onto the eighteenth century a Victorian model of servants as victims of contractual relations, vulnerable to sexual exploitation, confined to separate spaces in the household and isolated from their own families and from the rest of the world (Meldrum 2000, 6).¹⁰ In cities, Hill wrote, many ‘remained invisible, rarely leaving their households and venturing into the outside world’, while in the country ‘life was largely confined to the household’ (1996, 1); in contrast to that of the master, the servant’s voice was ‘seldom raised’. Like Marshall before her, Hill took the polemics of Defoe, Mandeville and Hanway as evidence that ‘relations

¹⁰ Robert Shoemaker (1998) offers a balanced view of continuity and discontinuities with respect to gender roles in the long eighteenth century; on domestic service see 175-179.

between servants and masters were clearly at crisis point' (2), and saw that crisis as continuous with the 'servant question' of the next century. Her essays did, however, challenge the 'myth of service on an upstairs/downstairs model, with highly specialized servants whose work was defined by their occupation labels, living in households in which a strict hierarchy was preserved' (10), winning recognition of the fact that the overwhelming majority of eighteenth-century servants were women employed singly or in small groups, and bringing attention to previously neglected sources and groups of servants – such as casual day labourers, pauper servants recruited from parish workhouses and philanthropic institutions, and live-in kin.

3. *Servants' Voices*

Less impressionistic methods of enquiry than those used by Hecht and Hill had by this time, however, brought to light a more particularised picture of early modern servants' experiences. In 1989 Peter Earle used consistory court archives to study the female labour market in London at the turn of the seventeenth century, showing that women were expected to work for their livings. Seventy-seven per cent were 'wholly maintained by employment' (333), and 'Domestic service ... was the commonest and was also normally the first occupation of women working in London' (339); it was indeed one of the very few that was not 'casual, intermittent, or seasonal' (342). There were other advantages in going into service. Under the Law of Settlement of 1662 and its subsequent amendments, right of settlement, and hence the right to claim parish benefits, could be earned by a year's hiring. Challenging the common assumption that female servants were a poorly-paid, dependent group 'with little control over their destiny', D.A. Kent analysed examinations of women servants claiming settlement rights in St Martin-in-the-Fields (1989, 112-113), and concluded that these benefits, together with the 'diet and board' guaranteed by employers, even quite lowly ones, and the small annual wage, made the rewards of service quite advantageous, even in this 'crowded and shabby' London parish. More so, Kent thought, than those offered by other kinds of women's work (such as needlework and laundering), and indeed by marriage, which placed all earnings under the husband's control; servants, by contrast, enjoyed a degree of 'choice and relative economic independence not enjoyed by most married women' (115). In the light of this, the young Moll Flanders, whom Defoe represents as horrified by the prospect of going into service, seems perverse: 'The women who flocked to London in their thousands', Kent claimed, did so because they understood the basic economic realities and they saw in domestic service the opportunity for personal advantage' (125). Nor was this a merely temporary advantage, for among those claiming settlement there were substantial numbers of older women: 'service was sufficiently attractive that some women chose it as a way of life rather than simply as a stage in their life-cycle' (112).

The concept of life-cycle service, one of the most important – and controversial – with which we have to deal, had been developed in the 1960s and 1970s out of the sociological and demographic historiography of the Cambridge Group for the Study of Population and Social Structure (Sarti 2014, 289). In *The World We Have Lost* (1965) the Group's founder, Peter Laslett, described the 'minute scale of life' in pre-industrial England, putting at its centre a notion of family which included apprentices and servants, and of a home which was also 'the scene of labour' (1971, 13, 53). Also in 1965, John Hanjal (1983) published an essay on European marriage patterns arguing that in the north and west of the continent large numbers of men and women did not marry at all, and that those who did put off doing so until they had accumulated the economic wherewithal, the life skills and professional competence needed to set up independently: domestic service was one of the important means to that end. It also emerged from quantitative data collected and analysed by the Cambridge Group that any one time between the late sixteenth century and the early nineteenth over thirteen per cent of the population of England was in service, and as much as sixty per cent of the population aged between fifteen and twenty-four. In 1977 Laslett identified service, along with late marriage and a nuclear structure, as the three inter-related characteristics of the western family, and in 1978 E.A. Wrigley described it as an essential form of 'ex post facto family planning' for early modernity: families with more surviving children than they could maintain or employ could send their surplus to those with too few for their labour needs (quoted in Kussmaul 1981, 26). In her own pioneering book on farm servants, Kussmaul identified it as 'one of the simplest differences' (3) between the early modern and the modern:

the existence of service in all its forms in early modern England is one of the simplest distinctions that can be drawn between the modern and the early modern worlds. It is also one of the greatest obstacles to the simple application of modern categories to early modern experiences. (9)

The notion of a period of service (or apprenticeship) as a normal phase in the lives of the young of all social ranks seems not to work for southern and eastern Europe, for Latin America and much of Asia (Japan is an exception). But as far as the north and west of Europe are concerned it has proved highly suggestive, especially for studies in the history of the family and of youth. Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos thought that among the labouring poor and among middling groups of early modern England domestic service was 'the most formative in the lives of women' (1994, 155). Extending the range of skills gained under the tutelage of parents, they 'gained a range of social competences, cooperating with fellow servants and apprentices, supervising and sometimes instructing younger ones ... and negotiating with masters', as well as acquiring 'invaluable household skills such as sewing, knitting, brewing, cooking, washing and rearing children ... supervising apprentices, offering advice and managing

shops' (153-154). On the other hand, as Laura Gowing points out, life-cycle service exposed young women distant from their parents to male assumptions of 'right of sexual access to their bodies', and in households employing only one maid could result in 'an ambiguous triangle of domestic relations ... [an] uncomfortable correlation between wives and servants' (2003, 62). These ambiguities were further complicated by the 'physical authority' of mistresses in charge of chastising female servants and keeping watch for signs of illicit sex, illegitimacy and infanticide, a task in which they would often be joined by neighbours: 'their bodies were policed by the investigating eyes and hands of the parish – and, most of all, by those of other women' (71).

Taking a broader view, Sheila McIsaac Cooper mentions a range of functions performed by life-cycle service: the alleviating of family tensions, reduced risks of incest and of epidemic infection, provision of surrogate families for orphans, and the extension of opportunities for social advancement and of marriage choices; service could also feed, and feed upon, client/patronage systems, protect and reinforce religious communities: 'placing a young person, taking one in, facilitating placement – all helped lubricate interaction at a time when social links were crucial' (2005, 64-65). Delpiano and Sarti have explored the two-way educational functions further:

masters' responsibilities towards their servants involved religious, moral, practical and educational aspects. Before the spreading of the school system, indeed, domestic service represented a major channel for the transmission of knowledge and expertise from one generation to the other ... Yet, servants were in turn likely to teach a wide range of things to their employers' children, while governesses and tutors were supposed to do so. As a consequence, the teaching and educational process that took place at home was a circular process, within which the members of the domestic staff were at the same time pupil and teacher. (2007, 490)

The spread of formal schooling during the eighteenth century which led to the loss of this function may have been partly responsible for life-cycle service losing its appeal for children of gentry and middling sort, and hence to the gradual stigmatisation of all service as a lower-class occupation (McIsaac Cooper 2005, 65).

Historians still disagree about the chronology of proletarianisation, stigmatisation and feminisation, all aspects of modernisation. Those who place these changes later in time link seventeenth- and eighteenth-century service and social conditions in general back to those of the fifteenth and sixteenth rather than forward to the class-stratified, industrialised world of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). Meldrum's *Domestic Service and Gender* (2000), still the best scholarly monograph on the subject,¹¹ holds out for continuity, at least in

¹¹ Meldrum's study is not representative of England as a whole in that Londoners had more servants, and more women servants, than did other English households and farms, where proportionately more servants in husbandry were needed. Pamela Horn's *Flunkeys*

London between the Restoration and the mid-eighteenth century. From witness depositions by servants at church courts in the metropolis Meldrum constructed 1,500 biographies of individual servants which confirmed the gender bias (four women servants to every one male), and established the importance of household size (men were only employed in large establishments, and never as ‘drudges’). He also took a fresh look at the insistent complaints about servant behaviour, discussing the norms laid down in conduct literature for servants in the context of the many energetic (but not always successful) attempts to reform and regulate social life, especially as lived by the lower sort. Here, as in describing personal relationships within and without the household, of the concrete realities and fuzzy confines of servants’ work, and of the combinations of cash and other types of remuneration, Meldrum distinguished sharply between the experiences of men and women, and between those employed in great houses and those in smaller ones, but found little sign of chronological change. He contested, for instance, the notion that it was in this century that service became feminised, for it had long been ‘the largest sector of women’s employment’. He also denied the emergence of ‘separate spheres’ and demarcation of separate spaces in houses in the first half of the century:¹² mistresses had always exercised authority over domestic servants, but middling sort and lower sort employers, who were the majority, lived in close proximity with their employees, and they interacted constantly with them (41). Far from living confined and isolated lives, servants, like most non-elite early modern people, lived much of their lives out of doors. Unlike the work of artisans and shopkeepers, which tied them to their places of business, servants’ duties involved fetching, carrying, shopping and errand-running, tasks which brought them into regular contact with neighbours, traders, and other servants. Finally, Meldrum also rejected the idea that by the mid-eighteenth century domestic service had been totally transformed from a social relationship to one governed by the cash nexus: a form of moral economy in which cash wages combined with other, customary forms of remuneration, persisted well into the next century. What did distinguish domestic servants in the capital during these hundred years, both from those that preceded and from those that followed, he argues, was their ‘relative good fortune’:

and Scullions (2004) ranges more widely but is based on published sources, and tends to assimilate the eighteenth century to the early nineteenth.

¹² Amanda Flather’s recent work (2011) confirms that, at least until the 1720s, household spaces were not rigidly segregated according to status or gender, although there were important differentiations in the ways different members of a household could use them. Tessa Chynoweth’s forthcoming Ph.D. thesis on *Domestic Servants and Domestic Space in Eighteenth-Century London* (Queen Mary University of London) will add more to our knowledge of this important aspect of servants’ lives.

Demography and economy, allied to the expansion of London, created for domestic servants in the metropolis and empowered them in the service labour market in ways which may have begun to be undermined even before ... [the] period ended. (209)

The time period and geographical context on which Paula Humfrey has recently focused in *The Experience of Domestic Service for Women in Early Modern London* falls within Meldrum's, and she too stresses independence, mobility, and agency. Humfrey, however, disputes what she sees as the 'prescriptive assumption' built into the life-cycle model (2011, 25) in favour of one of a complex contractual nature, and one which made 'the workforce of women in domestic service ... an engine of capitalist proto-industrialization' (28-29). Her sample of women, whose voices we hear making depositions before London church courts and Westminster settlement examinations, were 'independent women who could rely on service as a means of getting income throughout their adult lives – as single women, married women, and widows – thereby exhibiting a degree of agency that took them well beyond the prescribed ambit for early modern women in civic life' (29). Rather than describing and analyzing this agency, however, Humfrey asks us to dig it out for ourselves from the dossier of statements she edits. If we are, as she asks us to be, 'generous in our attention and acute in our focus' (38), we find that agency here is expressed not merely in terms of opportunities to turn favourable market conditions to their economic advantage, but in terms of knowledge possessed, cultural understanding and power of self-expression: all abilities which put these women in a position to determine their own futures and affect the lives of others, including those of their employers. By interacting and observing, remembering and testifying these women show themselves to be 'highly visible participants of public life' (29), and from their depositions we can pick up a great deal about their daily experiences and self-perceptions.

To take one example, 23-year-old Anne Orran looked after the children of Martha Branch – and almost certainly did a lot of other kinds of work in the house and in the poultry shop which occupied part of the ground floor (82-84). She also had cultural work to do in court when, in 1696, she was called by her mistress to bear witness in a defamation suit against a neighbour, Mary Palmer, who seems to have gossiped about having seen through her window some sort of scandalous behaviour between Martha and Christopher Backhouse, the man who wrote letters for the shop. Anne Orran's voice comes across strongly, precise in command of salient detail, and in perception of the relationships within the household and with their neighbours. She gave a clear description of how the interlocking spaces of the two houses made it impossible for any person to see out of Mary Palmer's dining room into the Branch's kitchen – and would have done so even if there had not been up against the window at the time of the alleged infidelity (it was late August) a trough containing balm and mint plants 'not fallen'. She also reported that on the day in question

Martha Branch went to bed – as usual – before the children, so as to be able to rise at three or four in the morning to look after the shop when her husband was travelling. She was evidently a hard-working woman, and probably her husband, so often away, was too. They clearly relied heavily on others to keep household and business going; Anne Orran's child-caring and housework would have freed Martha to run the shop, while Backhouse was presumably needed to write business letters they were not able to write themselves. Anne signed her deposition with a mark, so there may not have been much of a social difference between her and her employers. She was certainly familiar with her employers' habits, and the kitchen, at least, was clearly still a multifunctional space used by mistress and clerk as well as maid.¹³ Such shared spaces made for a familiarity that 'worked both ways', allowing mistresses to 'keep a sharp eye' on servants' bodies, and vice versa (Gowing 2003, 69). In this particular case, the tables are further reversed in that the 'sharp eye' of the servant saves the mistress from the malicious spying of a neighbour. We cannot be sure what kind of 'emotional and affective relationship' they had (Steedman 2007, 19); this household may even have qualified for the old meaning of 'family' as a unit including servants as well as kin (Tadmor 2001) – though we need to remember that 'servants *in* a household were not necessarily *of* the family: they were there by legal arrangement' (Steedman 2009, 18).

That 'the law – its assumptions, principles and practices – was a certain presence in plebeian lives' is a recurring theme in both of Steedman's books on servants, for it both 'shaped the course of them' and 'demanded self-narratives (autobiographies) of applicants for poor relief, for example, and in this way forced self-reflexivity on many people (who may very well have rather done without it)' (2009, 30). What is explicit here is implicit in the work of Earle, Kent, Meldrum, Humfrey and countless other historians of domestic service of the last thirty years, for if they are able to balance the employer testimony in the form of letters, diaries and essays that dominated the work of say, Hecht, it is thanks to their sifting through the mass of legal and administrative records which, though mediated by clerks and reporters, can bring us close to the experience of servants themselves.

Douglas Hay and Paul Craven have studied another aspect of the law relevant to domestic service. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries the employment of labourers (hired by the day, perhaps working for several masters) as well as servants (usually hired by the year, usually young and

¹³ Flather describes the Restoration kitchen as 'a highly integrated social space in which different household members coexisted and went about their respective tasks within a gendered division of labour with very little apparent segregation according to status or strict patterns of control' (2011, 176). In smaller early modern houses all rooms 'were multifunctional and often multi-occupied. Bedrooms might be shared not just by husbands and wives, but by servants and apprentices as well' (Gowing 2003, 60).

living in their masters' households), was regulated by statute, administered by magistrates and enforced by means of penal sanctions. As Douglas Hay and Paul Craven explain, labour was not 'free' in early modern England:

Master and servant law was carefully designed to create labor markets that were less costly, more highly disciplined, less 'free' than markets on which the master's bargain was not assisted by these terms ... Master and servant legislation was a catalog of constraints and disincentives: the penal sanctions, of course, but also minimum terms, maximum wages, discharge certificates, obligations and offenses ... all constitutive of the boundaries of the market within which bargaining could take place. (2004, 32-33)

It was not through civil remedies that employment law was administered by magistrates and enforced by means of 'Imprisonment and whipping and fines', Hay goes on to explain, but 'The law also gave remedies to workers, a fact of great significance for the public perception of the law' (2004, 61). In *Master and Servant* Steedman underlines the positive significance for servants of legal regulation, arguing that it made pre-industrial workers 'legal bodies with legal personae, in a way that their nineteenth-century counterparts were not' (2007, 14). And in a way in which twenty-first century domestic workers are not either, she adds in *Labours Lost*:

the young woman or man who was a permanent servant in the eighteenth-century household was a contracted employee who possessed rights within the relationship that could be – and sometimes was – upheld by law. The story of nineteenth-century and indeed, twentieth century domestic service, is to do with those legal rights being substantially lost. (2009, 28)

It was in legal hearings that such rights were articulated and applied. When employers charged their 'runaway' servants before magistrates with leaving before their agreed time was up, when servants charged their employers with failure to pay wages or withholding their possessions:

The law provided the formal means for both the making and understanding of social relations, personhood and identity. It told masters and mistresses, and men and maids, what was the godly and legal nature of what had passed between them when she had agreed at the hiring to wash the baby's nappies for 2s extra a year and a new gown; and he, to churn butter, but not to milk the cows. (14)

As even this brief quotation shows, Steedman likes to work with the material and the active; she is continually pushing home that things (nappies, new gowns, butter) animals (cows) and physical actions (washing, milking) are also 'good to think with'. We have been told umpteen times that the rising middle-class demand for domestic servants put those seeking work at an advantage, and that servants were highly mobile; eighteenth-century pamphlets rant bitterly about this, while conduct books for servants repeat *ad nauseam* (and inaptly)

that ‘a rolling stone gathers no moss’. What *Masters and Servants* and *Labours Lost*, and other recent social histories, are adding to the massive scholarship that underpins them is an imaginative ability to read between the lines and give documents, rulings and statistics the feel of the lived experience of ordinary people. The great fear of eighteenth-century mistresses, for instance, was

that the servants would leave, ‘run away’ to a place that gave her 1s a month more, tea to her breakfast and a new pair of stays, leaving her frantic, with no cook for the dinner, the house cow unmilked, slut’s wool under the beds, and a screaming, dirty baby. (Steedman 2009, 23)

4. *Cultural Forms*

A passage like this recalls Swift’s *Directions for Servants*, in which a fictional footman mercilessly points up the vulnerability of employers by homing in on physical details: chamber pots, hairs in the food, breathing in mistresses’ faces, dogs getting the joint. ‘The most available form for articulating this relationship [between owners and workers, masters and servants] was the comedic – and that it was thought of by means of things’, Steedman suggests (2009, 34). Comedic in mode, hugely various in form:

jokes, rude poetry and much ruder skits and satire upon servants that employers told in tap rooms to amuse their companions and ladies (High Court judges and the like) and locates it in the everyday world, in kitchens in particular. The invented voice of a servant in a novel, some actually existing maidservant’s impolite poem about her employer’s literary and culinary tastes – these were some of the forms with which the service relationship was articulated and argued about ... (15)

During the last twenty or so years literary scholars of post-Restoration England have been broadening the canon to include some of those voices and forms. Those of the ‘actually existing’ are mainly to be found in volumes of verse published by subscription, which is where Donna Landry found the poems by and about women of the labouring classes that are the subject of *The Muses of Resistance* (1990). One of these is Mary Leapor, a kitchen-maid who was dismissed for writing poetry, and who wrote some angry poems about the standards of beauty demanded of women; her ‘Crumble Hall’ satirised both boorish men servants and improving estate owners (1751, 111-122). Mary Collier was one of those who did some of the hardest drudgery in early modern England, laying her hand to any casual work available, from hay-making to beer-brewing and doing the wash. Her best-known poem, *The Woman’s Labour* (1739), is a sardonic riposte to (by now ex-farm labourer) Stephen Duck, who had written dismissively of women ‘prattling’ idly in the hay-field (1731, 6). Collier sets out to make ‘great DUCK’ and his like feel how it was to make hay

or glean corn all day only to return home to set the home in order 'Against your coming Home', to boil the bacon and dumplings, to feed the pigs, and mend the children's clothes (11). Even harder are the days on which the women rise in a freezing winter dawn to wash at 'the House' the latest new-fangled fashions in lace-edged muslins and ruffled shirts. Their men, by contrast, sleep till sun-up, their dreams perplexed at worst by thistles. But it is not only gender that brings privilege and earns Collier's sarcasm. 'Oppressed with Cold' the washer-women stand at the great house door calling in vain until 'the Maid, quite tir'd with Work the Day before / O'ercome with Sleep' (12) makes her appearance; the mistress appears later still, 'in her hand, *perhaps*, a Mug of Ale', and on her lips, recommendations to '*save her Soap, and sparing be of Fire*' (13-14).

There is nothing 'simple' about this poetry of protest. As Landry, and more recently Richardson (2010, 52-53) have noted, it eschews the traditionally 'popular' forms of the ballad and song, 'ventriloquizing' the dominant, satiric mode of Augustan literature and its favourite tetrameter metre, and thus challenging the 'verse forms and values of mainstream culture'. Collier 'turns the georgic to plebian feminist use'; Leapor 'turns the pastoral dialogue, the neo-classical epistle and the country-house poem to surprisingly unconventional ends'. A 'far from servile discourse' Landry call these poems:

The clever, skillful, sometimes brilliant appropriation of mainstream literary culture by these women, these examples of *les voleuses de langue*, the thieves of language who steal and fly, produces a discourse potentially more culturally critical in its implications than many later, more 'authentic' working-class self-representation. (Landry 1990, 13)

If we now find this sophistication strange, and even find it strange that plebian women wrote in verse at all, it is perhaps because we blot from our consciousness the fact that poetry was 'the most influential literary genre in eighteenth century England' (Weiss Smith 2014, xiv), accounting for forty-five per cent of published titles. In his Preface to his poem 'Servitude', Robert Dodsley, footman turned publisher, explained that he had written in verse in order to 'induce some of my Brethren to buy it, who other wise would not' (1729?, 3). If we do not take such statements seriously it may be due to our having embraced 'the notion that the rise of the novel is the central literary episode in the story of modernization' (Schmidgen 2014, 88). Over the past thirty years this notion has, Schmidgen argues, offered 'precious public legitimacy' to eighteenth-century literary scholars left bereft by loss of pride in the enlightenment. Yet novels accounted for less than eleven per cent of material published in the long eighteenth century. As far as I know no servant or labouring-class writer produced one, though probably many read them, in full or abridged versions, or had them read aloud to them in houses like the Berkshire rectory where George Woodward's twelve-year-old son read *Tom Jones* to an 'Audience in ye Kitchen' (quoted in Mullan and Reid 2000, 7).

That audience would have heard a lot about invented servants of various kinds. In 1986 Bruce Robbins, following in the tracks of Auerbach's *Mimesis*, examined the 'repertory of aesthetic functions' (103) performed by servants in narrative fiction from Homer to Woolf: framing, narrating, moving the plot, permitting ending. A synchronic study which explicitly eschews a historical perspective, *The Servant's Hand* nevertheless noticed the special powers wielded by servants in major eighteenth-century fiction. Robinson Crusoe, unable to answer Friday's rational objections to the Christian God's failure to kill the devil, pretends to be deaf in his efforts to evade his slave's penetrating questions (62-63). It is servants who bring about Tom Jones's restoration to name, family, love and land, and who, in a great rousing chorus, proclaim the happiest of happy endings; they can only do so because, unlike the heroes of Victorian novels, Tom drinks in the kitchen, a space not yet exclusively assigned to the labours of the lower classes (79). And while in the Victorian novel servants' verbal confrontations with their employers diminish 'in length, frequency, animation and centrality', eighteenth-century ones are filled with 'loquacious' master-servant pairings in which the two speak the same language:

No class-based distinction of dialect infringes ... on the long confidential session of Roxana and her maid or the quibbling, wordy battles between Pamela and her master ... As far as linguistic equipment is concerned ... [they] fight on more equal terms than any nineteenth century master and servant. (82)

In the summer house scene in *Pamela* Mr. B, unable to beat down his maid's arguments, tries 'shut[ting] down the conversation' with 'Do you know whom you speak to?', only to receive the answer 'Yes I do sir, too well!' (Richardson, 1958, 16). In the novels of the next century, Robbins suggests, such a dispute would never have started (1986, 83).

Much more recently, Kristina Straub has dealt with the problematic intimacy in master/mistress – servant relationships at the heart of five eighteenth-century canonical novels, as well as in theatrical contexts and in the conduct books and polemic writings through which moralists tried to contain not merely servants' economic and social aspirations but also their emotions and their sexuality. *Domestic Affairs: Intimacy, Eroticism, and Violence in Eighteenth-Century Britain* started out, Straub explains, as 'a cultural study of power relations', but ended up as a narrative

as much about love as about class conflict, as much about a desire for connection as about the creating of modern class differences ... polemical and imaginative literature on domestic service, servants and their employers often oppose, exploit, and even do violence to each other, but these stories also portray people who live with, work with, and often care a great deal about each other. (2009, 1)

An obvious example is *Pamela*, where Straub sees Richardson as constructing a radical third alternative to the servant as either whore or innocent child (stereotypes which dominate the advice books and pamphlets) in the person of a girl whose prudence, moral responsibility and polite sensibility contain and coexist with her sexuality, enabling desire to both feed on and float free from class difference. Straub sets the novel and the 'media event' it generated beside the two-year controversy over the disappearance of Elizabeth Canning. This eighteen-year-old servant girl claimed to have been kidnapped by a gypsy, Mary Squires, with the intent of forcing her into prostitution. The two stories are linked thematically, but also through Henry Fielding, first and foremost of the anti-Pamelites, first and foremost of the pro-Canningites. He was the Justice who first examined Canning, and he believed her; Squires went to trial and was convicted. But the verdict was fiercely contested by a lobby alleging that Canning had run away from her place in order to give birth to a bastard child. The 'Egyptians' eventually won out; Squires was released, Canning tried for perjury and transported.

Reading the *Pamela* and Canning controversies side by side helps us understand how servants' sexuality was debated within and without fiction, and how interpretation could be determined by eighteenth-century expectations about servant-maids' eroticism (the supposed ease with which they were seduced and tempted to infanticide), and stereotypes of gypsies as criminal predators on appetising young women. In this sense, Straub's study does what Lucy Delap's book on twentieth-century servants has been praised for: weaving together 'lived experience and cultural representation', so reaping 'the benefits of bringing cultural and social histories into closer alignment' (Peel 2014, 444). Yet, for a book that is as much about emotions and sexuality as economics and labour relations, *Domestic Affairs* remains rather 'removed from ... materiality' (Lloyd 2009). If, as Steedman suggests,

The servant's dream, 'the endless longing of the underprivileged that history (and life) be different from what it has been, and what it still is', was more available to eighteenth-century domestic servants than other categories of labouring people. (2009, 5)

– shouldn't we be asking whether actual servant girls like Canning dreamt of following in *Pamela's* footsteps, and attaining the high life? What about Fielding, the aristocrat whom Richardson had likened to a hostler, who got his own servant pregnant and married her, who as polemicist joined the chorus of disapproval of servants, but in practice took the part of many, and gave them agency in his fiction? The awful stories of Canning's disappearance (both are awful, no matter which was true), of the trial and conviction of Mary Squires, of the subsequent trial and conviction of the servant, are discussed as enigmas, interpretative cruxes and problems of narrative plausibility – which of course

they are; but they are also stories about real people whose lives depended, quite literally, on which of them was believed by judge and jury.

5. *And Where Do We Go From Here?*

I have here copied the title of the final section of Elizabeth Rivlin's essay in this volume in spite of the fact that I have chosen to survey studies of domestic service in post-Restoration England from an angle very different from that chosen by her in surveying studies of the earlier period. This is partly a matter of personal preference, and partly because I think it fair to say that long eighteenth-century studies have not, over the past thirty years or so, produced the wealth of excellent literary scholarship of the kind dedicated to the aesthetics and ethics of service in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England. Eighteenth-century historians, on the other hand, have gone a long way towards showing that servants can help us think (or think-through) the social; so, for that matter can the middling and lower-sort people who employed them (these have been rather neglected, as have the men and boys who constituted a minority, but still an important proportion of domestic servants). It is not, as was once thought, impossible to understand the lives and culture of the ordinary and less-than-literate people who made up the vast majority of the population. If we read with imagination and patience, read between the lines and against the grain, paying attention also to the givens, and at what the things and spaces can tell us,¹⁴ we can see a great deal of their side of the story, of their relations with each other and with those richer and in a better position to determine how the future would remember them.

It is now becoming easier to do this kind of study thanks to the digitalizing of archives. Kussmaul, Earle, Kent, Meldrum, Steedman, Humfrey and countless others had to plough through manually (though material documents always tell us more than we can get through a computer screen). The *Old Bailey Online* and its sister archive, *London Lives*, now makes it possible to write short biographies of most of those who spent part of their lives in London between 1672 and 1913 (a large section of the population of England), and the *Digital Miscellanies Index* allows us to study reception and reading of poetry like that of Leapor and Collier more

¹⁴ As Amanda Vickery writes, "The backdrop of a life is rarely the fodder of diaries and letters, just as routine are less interesting to record than events. They were taken as read at the time, and so remain elusive"; nevertheless with a certain 'versatility of approach' criminal records, for example, 'can be used quantitatively to chart the pans, teapots and boxes ordinary people had in their possession to begin with, and they can be read against the grain to rebuild boundaries that Georgian people, rich and poor alike, sought to defend' (2009, 4-5).

systematically. We now need to learn how to use these resources without getting lost in the big data, and use them in connected ways. Elizabeth Rivlin's call in this volume for better collaboration between literary scholars and historians is very much in the spirit of *JEMS*. She offers as an example a suggestion that geospatial mapping might be used to study the daily routes and migratory patterns of men and women in early modern London, and be read alongside discussions of women's work in early modern drama, such as that of Michelle Dowd (2009). Analogously one could compare the voices of servants accusing, defending and giving evidence at the Old Bailey with accounts of 'insufferable behaviour' contained in the polemics, and the more complex voices we hear in novels. In Defoe's fiction, for instance, domestic servants take on surprising functions. Robbins wrote of Friday putting to his master rational theological arguments Crusoe is unable to answer, Straub of Amy, a maid loyal to the point of (perhaps) committing murder to save a 'Mistress' who is indeed a 'Fortunate', if devotion is the most prized quality in a servant. In *Moll Flanders* service takes in various guises: as a girl Moll is reluctant to serve, but she does acquire an advantageous marriage opportunity by doing so, and when both marriage and needlework fail to provide the older woman with a means of livelihood and she takes to thieving, she is eventually caught and sent for trial, thanks not to any constable or to the broker whose damask she had meant to steal, but to two determined 'saucy Wenches' whose wages, as maid-servants to the broker, amount to £3 a year (2004, 214).

One might never have expected the author of *Every Body's Business is Nobody's Business*, *The Great Law of Subordination* and *Augusta Triumphans* to have invented maid-servants so zealous in policing their employer's property. But then we should perhaps be looking, both in fiction and out of it, for servants, and other ordinary people, behaving in unexpected ways; looking beyond what (we think) happens 'normally' and 'usually', to people such as the Anglican clergyman, John Murgatroyd, who allowed his servant, Phoebe Beatson, to bear her illegitimate baby in his house, kept her in his employ and left her a good sum in his will (Steedman 2007, 1). We have seen other examples of behaviour which might seem strange to us: an illiterate but sluttish maid in Maine, repeatedly running off to the woods, complaining about her bedding; a London poulterer's servant testifying in court to her mistress's sexual propriety, and against a nosey neighbour; a washer-woman writing disrespectful verse satire on husbands, mistresses and live-in maids. We might be better prepared to find more people like these, and see how they relate to cultural representations if, as Schmidgen urges, we stopped demanding 'modernity' from eighteenth century writers, stopped searching for 'bounded individuality' in the characters they invented, and distinct generic unity in their texts. 'Novelism', Schmidgen claims, has blinded us not only to the uses made of poetic genres by all

classes of society, but to the aesthetic Defoe's title pages lay claim to: an aesthetic of the strange and surprising, an aesthetic of inconsistency and endless, limit-defying variety (2014, 95).

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PART TWO
Case Studies

Cultural Services

‘I keepe my watche, and warde’: Richard Robinson’s *Rewarde of Wickednesse* (1574)*

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Abstract

In response to the recent call to re-evaluate what C.S. Lewis called the ‘Drab Age’, the article reassesses one sixteenth-century poem, *The Rewarde of Wickednesse* (1574), and its author, Richard Robinson. The poem is framed in such a way that the topos of service is central to an understanding of Robinson’s authorial identity, an identity determined by his proclaimed status within the household of the sixth Earl of Shrewsbury. The poet claims to be one ‘of a hundreth’ serving the family during the captivity of Mary, Queen of Scots. The article locates the *Rewarde of Wickednesse* within the relevant geographical, literary and socio-political contexts and reveals aspects of Robinson’s artistry that have remained hitherto unexplored.

Keywords: *de casibus*, Dream Vision, Mary Stuart, *Mirror for Magistrates*, Richard Robinson, Servant Writing

1. *Introduction*

The Rewarde of Wickednesse Discoursing the Sundrye Monstrous Abuses of Wicked and Ungodly Worldelinges is a little-known Elizabethan poem dedicated to Gilbert Talbot, son of the sixth Earl of Shrewsbury. It was written by Richard Robinson, a ‘Servaunt’ in the household of George Talbot and his wife, Elizabeth Cavendish (‘Bess of Hardwick’) and published in 1574, during

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the time Mary Stuart was imprisoned in Sheffield Castle.¹ It is evident that Robinson's work is part of a polemical, anti-papal agenda. As Allyna Ward points out, the *Rewarde* utilizes a *de casibus* framework in order to 'condemn bad moral behaviour but in the context of the dialectical opposition between Catholicism and Protestantism, an opposition that was not clearly demarcated during this period' (2009, 4). The condemnatory tone of the volume is established in the title-page:

Discoursing the sundrye monstrous abuses of wicked and ungodlye worldelinges: in such sort set downe and written as the same have beene dyversely practised in the persones of Popes, Harlots, Proude Princes, Tyrauntes, Romish Byshoppes, and others. With a lively description of their severall falles and finall destruction. (A1r)

The formal model for the *Rewarde* – and Robinson's most explicit source of inspiration – is *A Mirror for Magistrates*. The poem also contains a large number of narrative borrowings from the *Mirror*'s literary forerunner, John Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*. Like several editions of the *Mirror*, the *Rewarde* begins with a dream vision Prologue. In a busy alehouse on a cold December night, the poet falls asleep amongst a company of drunken revellers. He is visited in a dream by Morpheus, the god of sleep, who takes him on a voyage through Hell. On their journey, they are elected by Pluto to record the complaints of twelve illustrious sinners: Helen of Troy, Pope Alexander VI, Tarquin, Medea, Tantalus, Vetronius Turinus, Heliogabalus, the Two Judges of Susanna, Pope Joan, Midas and Queen Rosamond.² The dreamer witnesses each complainant being subjected to dreadful punishments for their sins. Nine of the complaints conclude with the legalistic-sounding device of 'The Bookes Verdict'. Robinson's voyage is drawn to a dramatic finish by a grisly pageant led by Pluto, Proserpine and 'bloodie Boner the Butcher' (P1v).³ This is familiar poetic territory; the poem exhibits clear traces of the classical convention of *katabasis*, the heroic descent to the underworld adopted in Dante's *Divina Commedia* and in medieval visions of the otherworld, such as *St Patrick's Purgatory* and *The Vision of Tundale*. Though bordering precariously on unorthodoxy, the *Rewarde* disposes of

¹ Six copies of the 1574 edition survive; the copy consulted and here referred to is held by the British Library (STC 1840: 07). An edition of the poem was published for the Modern Humanities Research Association in Ward 2009. For criticism of the *Rewarde* see Pincombe 2009; Heavey 2012; see also Schmitz 1990, 61, 168, 223.

² Vetronius Turinus was counsellor to the third-century Roman emperor, Alexander Severus. Severus was succeeded by his cousin, Heliogabalus, in 222 A.D. Rosamond is not the 'fair Rosamund' of the English complaint tradition, but rather the murderous wife of the sixth-century King of Lombardy, Alboin. King Alboin's tale is told in Book VIII of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*. On the *de casibus* tradition see Budra 2000; Mortimer 2005.

³ The line 'For when he was living he might not abide me' (P3r) suggests that Robinson may have earlier come into contact with Edmund Bonner. See Pincombe 2008.

the conventional visit to Purgatory (for this is Hades), whilst conserving the upward trajectory (Kruger 1992) and scribal ethos of the visionary tradition. The dreamer is taken by Morpheus to the Muses' paradise: 'To Noble Helicon: The place of Infinite Joye', a 'princely place' of 'grace' and 'pleasure' (P4v), but like many dreamers before him, he must 'return to his body [,] tell what he has seen and thereafter lead ... a reformed life' (Easting 1997, 3). Indeed, the Muses instruct the poet to record his experience as a matter of great urgency. They then bequeath to him the poem's title and the promise of eternal fame: 'And good yong man (quoth they) take paines these few newes to pen, / So shalt thou earne greate thankes of us, and of all Englishe men' (Q3r). The Muses vanish and the dreamer is forced to return to the alehouse where he had fallen asleep. He wakes from his dream and, displeased at his companions' drunken behaviour, describes his decision to spend 'the time in studye' and his determination that the *Rewarde* reach the printer's hands with 'haste' (Q3v).

This article is divided into two sections, the first of which concerns Richard Robinson and the *Rewarde's* paratexts. In my discussion I will show that by attending to the poem's dedicatory materials we may begin to flesh out a biography for this neglected author. I will also consider the critical reception of Robinson in the light of several related issues: the figure of the servant-poet, the flexible *topoi* associated with service, and the kinds of privilege and duty that the act of 'writing' might aspire to fulfil. With these matters in mind, I will then address the *Rewarde's* complaints. The second part of the article is devoted to a critical reassessment of some of Robinson's wicked men and women, together with their sources and analogues. Not only does Robinson address a widespread contemporary concern with sin and morality: the complaints of Helen of Troy, Medea, Rosamond, Tantalus and Midas also reveal a hidden political dimension. Robinson's engagement with these narratives speaks to a range of socio-political anxieties and concerns that are deeply pertinent to his position as servant in the Shrewsbury household.

2. *Richard Robinson: 'Servant in the household to the right honourable Earle of Shrovesbury'*

The critical response to Robinson has been severe. He has been considered a 'cheerful and vulgar figure' and an 'amateurish' author of 'botched verses and forced rhymes', though the *Rewarde* has been deemed 'more readable than most contemporary moral poetry' (Sheidley 1984, 65). But more recent critical attention to Robinson and the *Rewarde* reflects a new interest in the mid-Tudor period, together with greater appreciation of the material and political circumstances governing the stylistic decisions of erstwhile 'drab' writers. The proponents of 'Drab Age' verse were – for a long time – treated as though they had remained quite insulated from the turbulent events taking place in the period during which they lived and wrote. As Cathy Shrank and Mike Pincombe note, recent critics

have begun to appreciate the historical importance of mid-Tudor verse, although ‘few have yet championed its literariness’ (2010, 167). Without a doubt, Robinson’s stylistic inconsistencies and flagrant misogyny render his work difficult for modern audiences. In several sections of the poem, Robinson chose to adopt the much maligned line of the fourteeners. But for his Prologue, and more than half of the complaints, he opted for the rhyme royal stanza, a prosody associated with the dream vision, *de casibus* complaint and a courtly readership. Yet if Robinson’s poetry fails to adhere to a standard principle of organization (Ward 2009, 11), his eclectic approach suggests that he may have had a wide and varied audience in mind. The *Rewarde*, its title-page states, is ‘Veye profitable for all sorts of estates to read and look upon’ (A1r), while the poem itself draws on a range of exemplary figures from both chronicle history and the classics.

One of the main sources for the *Rewarde* is John Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* (c. 1431-1438), a composition in the tradition of Boccaccio’s *De casibus illustrium virorum* which paved the way for the mid-Tudor collaborative work *A Mirror for Magistrates*, first published in 1559 and in five further, enlarged editions printed between 1563 and 1610. A number of other works published independently of the *Mirror* similarly sought to ‘spur Englishmen and women to forswear vice by employing the powerfully persuasive form of exemplary tragic narrative’ (Lucas 2009, 233).⁴ The impact of the *Mirror* on the *Rewarde* is apparent in the Prologue’s resonances with Thomas Sackville’s wintry ‘Induction’ to the ‘Complaint of the Duke of Buckingham’ contained in the 1563 edition. Like Sackville, Robinson strategically casts his work as an ‘innocent aesthetic endeavour’ (Lucas 2009, 3) through his use of the dream vision Prologue. Robinson’s contemporary, John Higgins, also revisited the dream vision in his 1574 edition of the *Mirror*. As Robinson explains in his epistle to the reader, the dream is intended to proclaim the poem’s artifice: ‘faining that in my sleepe MORPHEUS tooke me to PLUTOS Kingdome in a Dreame: The which device, I mistrust not, but thou shalt thincke well of’ (A3r). Robinson here knowingly blurs the boundary between truth and fiction, positioning his work inside a distinct and authoritative literary tradition. To his immediate audience, the resonance with another, and rather more recent text – the *Metrical Visions* by George Cavendish (c. 1558) – would have been unmistakable.

A frequently over-looked work, *Metrical Visions* marks a momentous development in the English *de casibus* tradition.⁵ Gentleman-usher to Cardinal

⁴ Comparable texts include: George Whetstone’s *The Rocke of Regard* (1576), Thomas Proctor’s *A Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions* (1578) and Anthony Munday’s *Mirror of Mutabilitie* (1574). The title of Robinson’s later collection, *A Golden Mirrour* (1589), testifies further to the widespread tendency to link ‘exhortations to virtue to the widely-revered poems of *A Mirror for Magistrates*’ (Lucas 2009, 233).

⁵ The *Metrical Visions* exist in three manuscripts, the holograph of which is appended to Cavendish’s ‘Life of Wolsey’. As noted by Pincombe, a crucial event in the ‘Life of

Wolsey, George Cavendish was the elder brother of Bess of Hardwick's third husband, Sir William Cavendish. In his *Visions*, the poet is elected by the ghosts of the Henrician court and impelled by conscience to record their complaints. Like Robinson, Cavendish deploys a medium that queries the issue of narrative agency: the dream. He considers his poetic 'enterprice' in quasi-prophetic terms: 'that all estates myght se / What is to trust to ffortunes mutabylite' (Cavendish 1980, 27; Pincombe 2009). Unlike Boccaccio and Lydgate, however, Cavendish (as Wolsey's servant) can lay claim to a genuine relationship with each of his complainants. The Cavendishes were closely linked to Robinson's patrons, not only by the marriage of Bess and George Talbot in 1567, but also by the marriages which took place between their children in a double ceremony the following year, when Henry Cavendish was wedded to Grace Talbot and Mary Cavendish to Shrewsbury's eldest son, Gilbert.

Richard Robinson must not be confused with his better-known namesake, Richard Robinson of London (*fl.* 1576-1599; see Voght 1924). Indeed, the name 'Richard Robinson' is extremely common in this period, and this may explain the absence of a biography for our poet. The author of the *Rewarde* is, however, identified on the title-page as a 'Servant in the household to the right honourable Earle of Shrovesbury' (A1r). George Talbot and his wife were considered to be 'paragons of the service nobility' (Collinson 1987, 14) and renowned for their loyalty to the crown. The Talbots were considered right for the job of housing Mary, Queen of Scots and her sizeable entourage, for they also possessed the largest noble household of the period. Mary was moved between the estates of Tutbury Castle, Wingfield Manor, Chatsworth House and Sheffield Castle and Manor, estates which covered large parts of the north of England and were deemed sufficiently distant from both London and the Scottish border. It must have been during Mary's second period of imprisonment at Sheffield Castle between November 1573 and September 1574 that the *Rewarde's* preliminaries were composed, for Robinson makes a point of telling the reader that he wrote the poem 'speciallye in suche times as my turne came to serve in watch of the Scottish Queene' (A2v). This is confirmed in the epistle dedicatory to the Reader, which is signed 'From my Chamber in Sheffield Castle / The xix of Maie, 1574':

And I, being one of the simplest of a hundreth in my Lordes house, yet notwithstanding, as the order there is, I keepe my watche, and warde, as time appointeth it to mee: at the which times, gentle reader, I collected this together ... (A3r)

Scholars have variously shown that the *topos* of service was adopted by Elizabethan writers to communicate a range of related social anxieties and

Wolsey' is Cavendish's deferred revelation of a deathbed prophecy to which only Wolsey's closest servants were privy (2009, 375).

motivations (Whigham 1984; Wall 1993; Burnett 1997; Rivlin 2012). Notions of 'service' in literature were extremely flexible, incorporating 'chivalry, Petrarchanism [*sic*] and relationships with one's political betters and with one's God' (Steggle 2004, 58). The work of scholars such as Patricia Phillippy (1998) and Laurie Ellinghausen (2008) demonstrate further that authors choosing to adopt the postures of servants might also be suggesting that service constituted for them a real 'occupational identity' rooted in a 'widespread, socially important ... type of relationship, that of a personal retainer to his employers' (Ellinghausen 2008, 1). With a high proportion of the nation entering the service profession, and in a multitude of forms, Robinson's epistle assumes a special urgency. As Mark Thornton Burnett observes, household structures were undergoing significant changes. Undermining the steward's traditional role as 'guardian of the household's morality', the 'upstart' officer posed a direct threat to the age-old feudal economy and the exclusive, privileged nature of service (157, 184). The poet's proclaimed constraints of time and space and his perspicacious allusions to the 'order' of household hierarchy speak of a concern that was arguably in the minds of many. But in writing 'From my Chamber in Sheffield Castle' (A3r), Robinson lays claim to a certain material privilege. Indeed, the *Rewarde* is also referred to as his 'second worke' (A3r), and Robinson describes himself as bound by 'good will' to 'present some other noveltie, more fitter to feede' the 'fantasie' of his patron (A3r). This promise was to be fulfilled in *A Golden Mirrour* (1589), again dedicated to Gilbert Talbot. Though this text was published anonymously, the name 'RICHARD ROBINSON OF ALTON' emerges in a concluding acrostic verse. This suggested to Thomas Corser that Robinson had grown up in Alton (1851, ix), but it is conceivable that in the Earl's declining years he had been pensioned off to Shrewsbury's Staffordshire seat at Alton.⁶

Further evidence perhaps pertaining to the author of the *Rewarde* can be found among the papers of Shrewsbury's second wife, Bess of Hardwick. A single document relating to the Hardwick estate invites us to consider that there may have been a connection between Robinson and Bess' eldest son. The document mentions the sum of £600 owed to William Cavendish by a Thomas Barley of Stoke. Among the witnesses were 'Tho[mas] Knyveton' (brother to John Kniveton, another of Shrewsbury's servants), 'Robarte Bagshawe' (a common name, but sources suggest that he was a yeoman from one of the Shrewsbury estates) and 'Richard Robinson'.⁷ Though the individual mentioned here cannot with certainty be identified as our poet, it is not unreasonable to suppose that this was he. The name 'Robinson' occurs elsewhere within the family archives,

⁶ I am grateful to Alan Bryson for making this suggestion. See Lodge 1791; Hunter 1819.

⁷ Nottinghamshire Archives, Portland of Welbeck (1st Deposit): Deeds and Estate Papers, 157 DD/P/51/6 (17 January 1573).

most commonly in association with other service-based capacities, such as that of messenger and family tutor.⁸ Perhaps the most compelling piece of evidence linking the name 'Robinson' to the Shrewsbury household occurs in the correspondence of Bess of Hardwick herself. In a letter dated 24 March 1576, she appeals to the recipient, Lord Thomas Paget, as follows:

your Lordship and other the Quenes Justices shall have the hearing and determening of an offence to the lawe, for the deathe of a man by the great misfortune of one Robinson my servant. I am in his behalfe, standing at theis assyses in Stafford upon tryall of lyfe most earnestly to crave your Lordship's favour towards him, according to the true evidence already brought before the Coroner by men indifferent: and the same I trust is to be geven againe at the foresaid tyme before your Lordships. Truly my Lord I would gladly do the pore man good in this case: and therfore trust your Lordship will the rather at my request stand his good Lorde.⁹

Whilst the full identity and fate of this servant are as yet unknown, the letter testifies clearly to Bess' compassionate yet commanding nature, and to her feelings of personal accountability where her staff were concerned. Regrettably, the name 'Richard Robinson' does not appear amongst the family's extensive lists of household employees. But this in itself provokes a set of searching questions. Is the name 'Richard Robinson' a pseudonym? Is the *Rewarde's* Prologue nothing more than an elaborate fiction of surveillance? If so, what ends are served by the poet's claim to keep 'watche, and warde' over Mary?

In trying to answer these questions we need to keep in mind the campaign of 'semi-publicity' aimed at appeasing Mary's supporters by keeping up an appearance of protective benevolence toward the Scottish Queen (Phillips 1964, 55). This led to several desperate appeals on the Earl's part for financial assistance with accommodating his royal guest in a suitable manner. Shrewsbury was required also to provide for Mary's sizeable entourage and to fund a number of expensive trips to the spa at Buxton. As one scholar suggests, despite the fact that he was the second wealthiest man in England, 'what mattered ... was that like others he *felt* poor' (Kershaw 1992, 269 original emphasis). Adding to Shrewsbury's predicament were several

⁸ For example, Leader's account of Mary's captivity implies that George Robinson was selected from among Shrewsbury's entourage to serve as the Bishop of Ross' messenger (1880, 126n; 208). The family was also served in a much broader sense of the term by Dr John Robinson, who was the family tutor for several years and was later recommended by the Earl to the Deanery of Lincoln.

⁹ Bess of Hardwick Papers (hereafter BHP) 103 (29 March 1576). Access to these materials has only recently become possible thanks to the AHRC-Funded Project, *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence*, c. 1550-1608, <<http://www.bessofhardwick.org>>, accessed 2 January 2015. On the letters between Bess and her servants see Daybell 2004; Maxwell 2012.

incidents involving disloyalty on the part of servants which caused numbers of watchmen (initially set at forty) to oscillate frequently over a period of sixteen years. In the spring of 1573, a Privy Councillor had questioned Shrewsbury's son about security at Sheffield Castle. Gilbert is said to have replied as follows:

there good numbers of men, continually armed, watched hir day and nyght, and both under hir windowes, over her chamber, and of every syde of hir; so that, unles she could transforme hirself to a flee or a mouse it was impossible that she should scape. (Lambeth Palace Library, Talbot Papers, MS. 3197, 79 [letter of 11 May 1573])

The watch were fully-armed and required to stand in pairs 'at the stair foot of the said Scots Queen's lodging'. Eight additional soldiers were stationed within and without the castle walls (Leader 1880, 236-239). Many of these men, mostly drawn from the Sheffield yeomanry, ranked poorly in comparison with the more senior figures of the steward or gentleman-usher. Traditionally, yeoman servants were placed in noble households as either foot-men, stable-hands or grooms (Burnett 1997, 155). Evidence suggests that the more senior servants in the Shrewsbury household were permitted to transmit the commands of their master and mistress to the less elevated members of the serving body and to administer punishments (Maxwell 2012, 10-11). Shrewsbury's 'officers' were also allowed to pass through the castle quarters on the Earl's 'speciall busynesse' (Clifford 1809, 125). Although it is not clear in what exact capacity Robinson was employed, specific details contained within the poem point to his covering role similar to that of the yeoman servant or armed guard. 'Yet notwithstanding, as the order there is', Robinson not only keeps his 'watche, and warde', he also writes. For the antiquarian Joseph Hunter, the 'extent and variety' of the sources the *Reward* draws on presented an anomaly 'that can hardly be expected from one of the ordinary servants of the earl' (1819, 59). Quite what 'ordinary' means here remains a matter for further discussion.

One possible reason for the neglect of Robinson may be the fact that servant-writing has only very recently been granted significant critical attention. The *Reward* poses a major challenge to the notion that servants 'did not generally write or commit themselves to print' (Burnett 1997, 12). Recent work also recognises the value of texts not by convention considered literary – letters, diaries, household books – even the walls of houses in helping us understanding the roles played by servants within both the literary and domestic spheres.¹⁰ As one scholar recently stated, the servant is a 'prominently visible object' in this period, though usually 'invisible as

¹⁰ See Fleming 2001; Hackel 2005; Dowd 2009. Heidi Brayman Hackel also cites the example of Lady Anne Clifford, delightfully employing her servants to decorate her chamber with excerpts from her favourite books (2005, 38).

subject' (Erickson 2009, 24). Scholars generally accept that servants within the noble household descended from middle- or lower-gentry families and were granted positions that promoted family connections. Marriage between members of the nobility and servants certainly did take place, though such alliances met with varying degrees of approval. The example of John Kniveton, a servant-turned-kinsman to Shrewsbury through his brother's marriage to Bess' half-sister, Jane Leche, suggests that a servant's formal responsibilities and status could be improved by virtue of this bond (Daybell 2004, 130n). Bess' steward, Thomas Pusey, was also appointed Sheriff of Nottingham, a position which then 'enabled him to arrange advantageous marriages for his daughters' (Burnett 1997, 175). As Burnett states, 'it was not always easy to recognise where male domestic service ended and other forms of social attachment began' (89). Indeed, the office of servant could both enable and be initiated by a literary career. Thomas Howell (*fl.* 1560-1581) dedicated his first publication to Shrewsbury's daughter-in-law, Lady Anne Talbot and his *Newe Sonets and Pretie Pamphlets* (1570) 'To his approved Maister Henry Lassels Gentelman' (A2r), who was also employed in Shrewsbury's service. Howell later sought patronage from Lady Anne's step-daughter, Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke. The poet Barnabe Googe (*fl.* 1560-1588) was also kinsman, ward and servant to William Cecil and a source of direct inspiration for Robinson's work.

Servants who not only wrote, but then went on to publish, also pose a significant challenge to preconceived notions of authorial subjectivity and agency. Writers such as Isabella Whitney (*fl.* 1567-1573) and the lesser-known James Yates (*fl.* 1582) turned the very experience of domestic service to imaginative and profitable use. Steggle's research on the latter author shows how publication was actively encouraged by the household in which Yates lived and worked. The traditionally courtly genre of the dream vision is also used by Yates to promote ideal models of service and courtesy, but geared ultimately toward the higher master, God (Steggle 2004, 58). Servants were expected to emulate their masters, but emulation was predicated on the master's own reputation for loyalty. To take an earlier example of the connection between authorship and service, we may turn to John Russell's *Boke of Nurture* (c. 1460), a fifteenth-century compendium of household instruction. Here Russell cites his posthumous allegiance to Lydgate's patron, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, as enabling him to impart his knowledge to a new generation of aspiring servants:

an usshere y Am / ye may beholde / to a prynce of highe degre,
 þat enioyethe to enforme & teche / alle þo thatt wille thrive & thee
 Of suche thynges as here-aftur shalle be shewed by my diligence
 To them þat nought Can / with-owt gret experience.
 (British Library Harleian MS. 4011, 171r)

Burnett's characterisation of servants as consumers – not producers – of literature can be assimilated to a pervasive (mis)representation of servants. By the latter part of the sixteenth century, the 'serving man's vaine reading' of ballads, and the maidservant seduced by cheap, popular fiction had become stereotypes with advocates of literary reform (Hackel 2005, 153). The avowed concern was that reading the 'wrong sort' of books might lead to absconding, idleness or sexual depravity, though these complaints may also have been clever marketing ploys designed to advance sales amongst a newly-literate portion of society. On the other hand, conduct books such as William Fulwood's *The Enimie of Idlennesse* (1568) attempted to promote the activity of writing 'at vacant tymes when leisure permitteth' as an exercise in manners: 'thou shalt both purchase frendship, increase in knowledge and also drive away drowsy dumps and fond fansies from thy heavy head' (A6v-A7r). Fulwood is praised by Robinson at the end of his *Rewarde* (Q3r), and the epistle dedicatory re-works Fulwood's words, describing his treatise as a 'Drousie Dreeming peece of work' (A2v). Robinson again echoes *The Enimie of Idlennesse* when he implores the reader to forgive the ingenuous aims of his own poem: 'take in good part this simple travaile of mine' written 'to eschewe Idlennes', 'the daughter of destruction' (A3r). The dream becomes an effective literary device by means of which he is able to at once articulate his poetic talent, and also use writing as a tool for implementing some of the moral imperatives of his profession.

Returning to the example of Shrewsbury's household, writing also emerges as a vital medium for communication during Mary's captivity. During this time the Earl remained almost entirely absent from London and the court, returning on one occasion for the trial and execution of Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, in 1572. Members of the wider household nexus – comprising family, kin and servants – would therefore act as agents transmitting news between the country and the court. John Kniveton emerges as a key representative of the family during this period (Daybell 2004, 123). Thomas Baldwin was another such intermediary based in London and required by Shrewsbury to settle the debts incurred as a result of Mary's over-exuberant diet (Talbot Papers 3198, 26 [24 June 1580], cf. 47, 53, 61). Gilbert Talbot was kept away from Sheffield at Queen Elizabeth's request, but considered 'wrytyng' from the court a duty he owed his stepmother (BHP 080, 28 June 1574). Indeed, 'What newes out of the northe?' is a question frequently posed in this period, and one which suggests an avid 'appetite for political discussion' (Fox 1997, 600). The *Rewarde's* title-page makes it evident that the producers of this book wished to exploit the seductive nature of 'strange' stories:

A dreame most pitiful and to be dreaded:
 Of things that be strange,
 Who loveth to read:
 In this Booke let him raunge,
 His fancy to feed. (A1r)

In 'The Booke to the Aucthour' Robinson refers to the heavy demands put upon a news-intelligencer: 'And must I needs be packing hence, about such newes to beare'; 'But speede, as speede maye, abroade I will attempte in haste' (A4r). The depiction of the Muses in 'To Noble Helicon' also captures something of the interrogative mood of the nation: 'Why hast thou bene so long (quod they) what newes has thou brought with thee?' (P4v). It is by abiding by the terms of his journalistic contract that Robinson can hope to win eternal fame. At the close of the poem, the dreamer encounters a laurel tree laden with golden pens, then walks through a gallery containing life-like portraits of the classical authors and the medieval triumvirate of Chaucer, Skelton and Lydgate. These authors then make way for a contemporary equivalent, '*Wager, Heywood, and Barnabe Googe, all these together sate. / With divers other English men, whose names I will omit*' (Q2r). In a direct evocation of Jasper Heywood's Preface to *Thyestes* (1560), Robinson's Muses then look to the Inns of Court for inspiration:

Your Honours have in Th'innes of Court, a sort of Gentlemen,
That fine would fit your whole intentes, with stately stile to Pen.
Let Studley, Hake, or Fulwood take, that William hath to name
This peece of worke in hande, that bee more fitter for the same. (Q3r)

The lines from Heywood's Preface read as follows: 'In Lyncolnes Inne and Temples twayne, Grayes Inne and othe mo, / Thou shalt them fynde whose paynfull pen thy verse shall florishe so' (1560, *7v).

The analogy is indicative of Robinson's affinity, if not in reality then certainly in spirit, with the fellowship of writers operating in and around the Inns of Court (Shrank 2007; Shannon 2009; Winston 2011). It is perhaps no coincidence that these passages from 'To Noble Helicon' also allude to the translators of Seneca. During the 1560s, translation and adaptation of neoclassical drama became an intensely popular mode for political expression at the universities and the Inns of Court. Recent research by scholars such as Laurie Shannon and Jessica Winston show how these works also point to the 'social function' of tragedy: translation and the adaptation of Senecan drama 'helped authors to connect with other participants in this literary and social community, and to address issues that were important to them in contemporary social affairs' (Winston 2009, 482).¹¹ The first text attributable to Robinson, a lost play entitled *The Ruefull Tragedie of Hemidos and Thelay*, can be dated at the perimeter of this epochal decade, for it is listed in the Stationer's Register as of 1570 (Corser 1851, vi-viii; Wiggins and Richardson 2012, 52). This title suggests that Robinson may have engaged with the contemporary fashion for

¹¹ See also Winston 2005; Woodbridge 2010.

tragic narrative and neoclassical adaptation. Other links from the Inns of Court emerge in the form of Robinson's possible connection with William Cavendish, who was resident at Gray's Inn during the 1570s, and in a poem entitled *A Poore Knight his Pallace of Private Pleasure* (A Student in Cambridge 1579). This work, evidently written in imitation of George Pettie's *A Petite Pallace of Pettie his Pleasure* (1576), contains proof of the *Rewarde's* wider circulation. Published by an elusive 'J.C. Gent' of 'Grayes Inn', it contains two separate episodes in which Robinson is praised directly for his depiction of Pope Joan and Helen of Troy:

Revenge craves, the Gods have it permitted,
 Wherfore (quoth shee) let her be led away:
 But whither it was, I cannot truly say,
 Yet Morpheus sayd, that Robinson should tell,
 As well her paine, as where this Lady dwell. (Poore Knight, F1r)

These putative connections with the Inns of Court are given substance by Richard Smith's dedicatory verse to the *Rewarde*. Smith also published George Gascoigne's *The Steele Glas* and *The Complainge of Phylomene* (1576), which, like the lost tragedy of *Hemidos and Thelay*, were printed by Henry Bynneman. Smith himself draws the connection between the *Rewarde*, the writings of Gascoigne and the wider Inns of Court community through his invocation of the Muses (Shannon 2009). Curiously, they are the Muses of 'Thespyas' (A4v). The poem contains several references to earlier works (possibly Robinson's lost play, as well as 'pleasaunt Poemes, and Sonettes'). Smith's depiction of Robinson as a 'Jewell for an Earle' and his celebration of his removal to Parnassus, where he 'Contrites the time both daye and night, in service of the same', are deeply suggestive.

Though the occasion may appear to be of little magnitude, Robinson fashions its publication into a collaborative and intensely patriotic endeavour. In the Epistle dedicatory, he asks that the reader attribute the volume's 'cause' to 'the busie lives, that all my Lorde my Maisters men do leade in the service of our Sovereigne Lady, the Queenes Maiestie' (A3r). He then projects the obligations of his office onto his readers, calling on them to protect the text 'from the spoile of Sclander, and the bloody butcher Envie, by the same, garde and keepe' (A2v); he thus endows the act of service with both patriotic and patronal virtues. These topical concerns are given their sharpest edge within 'The Author to the Reader', where the image of the 'Mirrou' evokes the ideally symbiotic relationship between the master and the servant:

Sith the protection of the Scottishe Queene was committed to my saide Lorde in charge, whose true and duetifull service therein, to his Prince both night and daie: as well by the travaile of his Honours owne Person, as also all them that serve him: I doubt not but FAME hath tolde it to all the Princes in EUROPE and noble subjectes: as it were to bee a Mirrou to the rest, that shall serve in credite of their Prince. (A3r)

Indeed, in seeking to promote Shrewsbury's own 'true and duetifull service', the passage might be read as a response to doubts about the Earl's fealty to the English crown.

These would have been timely assertions. The several preoccupations keeping Shrewsbury away from London had allowed a 'bruit' to spread of his – and his household's – sympathy for the Scottish Queen. In the expectation that Shrewsbury would be relieved of his office and Mary released, in December 1573 two chaplains from the Earl's estate made their way to court armed with libels alleging carelessness and disloyalty. The Earl openly decried their 'foule and evyll reports' as attempts to not only 'deface' his 'dutiful heart and loyalty' but also to bring about 'the rooting up' of his house and the 'utter overthrow and destruction' of his 'lineal posterity'.¹² As rumours of Shrewsbury's sympathy for the Scottish Queen intensified, so too did his reputation for tyranny. As Stephen Kershaw observes, the 'apparently impregnable position' of the Earl was directly threatened by his failure to uphold custom, a failure brought about by his at once inventive and ruthless efforts to clamber back some of the revenue lost during his time as Mary's keeper (1992, 276). This eventually led to marches on London by the 'clamoruse people' of the town of Glossop in 1579. The Earl's response to such 'weked speches' is detailed in a letter of April 1574:

How can it be imagenyd I shuld be desposed to favor this Queen for hur cleme to succede the Quenes Majestie? My delynge towards hur hath shoid the contrare: I know hur to be a strangar, a Papyste, and my enemy. (Talbot Papers, MS. 3206, 691 [16 April 1574]; Rawson 1910, 114-118)

The discovery of spies operating from within Shrewsbury's household – including the servant Thomas Morgan (later a conspirator in the Babington Plot) and Henry (or 'Hersey') Lassells, 'in lynnes with the Queene ... by the meanes of his brother being in servyce there' – continued to provoke fears on the part of Lord Burghley and Elizabeth that the household had fallen sway to the 'cuning Practises of the *Scotts* Quene, and her Friends'. There was, indeed, evidence to support their concern.¹³ By upholding the appearance

¹² Talbot Papers, MS. 3197, 47 (30 January 1574), cf. 77; 3198, 290; 3206, 673, 679, 691; Strype 1824 [1709], 371-374; Rawson 1910, 114-118.

¹³ Hatfield House, Cecil Papers, 172, 65 [201, 272] (29 December 1573). See also BHP 225 (13 October 1571); State Papers (Scotland), SP 53/8, 43 (28 February 1572); SP 53/10, 1 (16 January 1575), 53/10, 3 (21 January 1575), 53/10, 37 (30 April 1575); Leader 1880, 126n; 208. Under interrogation, Morgan implicated four other men including an attorney, a schoolmaster and a porter, who were believed to 'haunt one Gree's house in Stanyng Lane, in London'. Earlier in 1571, the messenger George Robinson was imprisoned in a house in Sheffield after secretly delivering letters to Mary. On another occasion he was interrogated along with two others for smuggling letters in cipher concealed within his shoes. In 1579, Anthony Babington, a key conspirator in the plan to assassinate Elizabeth, had served as a page in the Earl's household (Williams 2004).

of custodial benevolence, the Shrewsburys had fatefully undermined an otherwise untainted reputation for loyalty. Elizabeth's anxiety was only fuelled by the discovery of a clandestine marriage between Bess' daughter and the Earl of Lennox in the summer of 1574.

The first part of this article has shown that the imperatives of 'service' might be interpreted in terms of an authorial, occupational and noble identity; the second will consider the extent to which the *Rewardé's* infernal complaints speak to these concerns. Focussing particularly on the lamentations of Helen, Medea and Rosamond, I suggest that these figures are presented in such a way as to declare the Earl's proper execution of his duty as Mary's keeper – his 'delynge towards hur'.

3. *'For she was never lyke Penelopie': Defaming Mary Stuart*

To publish a poem that directly defamed Mary Stuart was a risky undertaking. 'Maister Randolphe's Phantasey: a breffe calgulation of the procedinges in Scotland from the first of Julie to the Last of Decembre' (c. 1566), ostensibly the work of Thomas Randolph, the English Ambassador to Scotland, was disseminated amongst Mary's Protestant opponents in and around Edinburgh (Phillips 1964, 34-37). Upon her discovery of 'Le Songe', Mary called for the immediate exile of the Ambassador, whom she mistakenly believed to be the poem's author. Like the *Rewardé*, the poem is heavily indebted to Sackville's 'Induction'. The first part of the 'Phantasey' describes the Scottish nobles who had advised Mary against her marriage to Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley. The second part describes a dream in which Mary confesses that she ignored the advice of her councillors and that the 'wanton delight of effemynate force' now rules her court (Cranstoun 1891, 17). She commands Randolph to record her complaint:

... because thy expert yeres
Dailie attendent may truelie reveale
a whole dyscourse how I did prevale. (Cranstoun 1891, 14)

Yet the sole extant manuscript copy of the poem contains the signature of a servant of Randolph's, a Yorkshireman named Thomas Jenye.¹⁴ Elizabeth promised Mary that, 'even if but a dream and not written, she will not think [the perpetrator] worthy of living in her realm', but no evidence of the case having gone further survives (State Papers, Scotland, SP 52/12, 69 [13 June

¹⁴ State Papers (Scotland), SP 52/11, 241 (31 December 1565). Jenye was later involved with the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland in the Northern Uprising. He escaped to the continent and worked for the Spanish secret service, for which he received a generous pension (Cranstoun 1891, xvii-xxiv; Lucas 2009, 232-233).

1566]). The curious case of 'Maister Randolphe's Phantasey' suggests that the poem was in fact commissioned by Protestant authorities and was therefore a work of state-sponsored propaganda.

On 10 February 1567, Darnley's half-naked body was found in the grounds of Kirk O'Field. The body exhibited no signs of injury from the explosion that had allegedly blown Darnley from the building where he slept. The several rumours surrounding this mysterious discovery led to a slew of propagandist libels, broadsides and placards – often posted under cover of darkness.¹⁵ Initially criticizing Mary for her failure to punish the culprits, the campaign went on to accuse Mary of adultery and of complicity with her new husband, James Hepburn – the 'Bludie' Earl of Bothwell – in murder. One placard depicting Mary as a mermaid was accompanied by the Latin motto, *Mala Undique Clades* ('Destruction awaits the wicked on every side'). The association between Mary and unchaste, 'wickit wemen', such as Clytemnestra, Jezebel and Medea, had been generated by a cluster of ballads by Robert Sempill. Designed to incite revenge for Darnley's murder, the ballads frequently utilized the typically 'medieval' conventions of dream vision, dialogue and complaint. In 'Ane Tragedie, in forme of ane Diallog betwix Honour, Gude Fame, and the Author heirof in ane Trance' (Buchanan 1571), for example, the Earl of Moray appears to the dreamer 'Nakid and bair, schot throw pudding and panche, / Above the Navill, and out above the hanche' (A2r). 'The testament and tragedie of umquhile King Henrie Stewart of gude memorie' (1567) also assimilates the language of the law into its title and narrative structure, thereby drawing on the rhetorically persuasive example set by the literature of complaint. Through their self-deprecatory appeal to Boccaccio ('Bochas'), the ballads derive much inspiration from Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* and the authors of *A Mirror for Magistrates*:

War Johne Bochas on lyve as he is deid.
 Worthy workes wald wryte in hir contempt,
 Alsweill of tresoun as of womanheid.
 Thairto his pen wald ever mair be bent
 Hir for till shame, and bludie Bothwell shent. (Cranstoun 1891, 37)

As J.D. Staines has suggested, by positioning recent events within a providential structure and by claiming Mary as the 'origin' of contemporary misfortune, the balladeers sought to defend her deposition, 'fomenting the violent passions of civil war' (2009, 53-54, 25). Their productions were used as

¹⁵ The ballads are reproduced in Cranstoun 1891 and in McElroy's forthcoming edition. See also Bawcutt 1998; McElroy 2007; Staines 2009; Shrank 2010a; Shrank 2010b; Smith 2012; Barrett-Graves 2013; McElroy 2013.

evidence for the political climate in Scotland and sent, by way of ambassadors such as Randolph, to Mary's detractors at the English court.

Although Elizabeth had placed injunctions on the printing of works that directly defamed her cousin, George Buchanan's *Ane Detectioun of the duinges of Marie Quene of Scottes* (1571) evaded censure by masquerading as a Scottish translation of a French text entitled *De Maria Scotorum*. *Ane Detectioun* included a first printing of the notorious 'casket sonnets' and of Mary's letters to Bothwell ('quhair sche maketh hir self Medea' (G2r, Cecil Papers 1222, 376 [7 December 1568])). By omitting any indication of its English origins, *Ane Detectioun* represented a clever tactic of 'semi-publicity' (Phillips 1964, 55). The essence of this campaign had earlier been captured in the performance of *A newe enterlude of vice conteyninge, the historye of Horestes* (1567) by John Pyckering of Lincoln's Inn. In contrast to the Sempill ballads, revenge is here transformed into the 'restoration of social harmony after, and through punishment' (Staines 2009, 66; Shrank 2010b, 538). As Rosalind Smith further observes, the post-Darnley trail of anti-Marian propaganda was followed by an outpouring of analogous texts on the subject of husband-murder. Plays such as *Arden of Faversham* (1592) illustrate the popularity on the English stage of true crime stories offering 'often surprising ... approaches to feminine guilt and criminal agency' (2012, 498). This brief overview of the anti-Marian propaganda campaign and its essentially tragic tenor may put us in a better position to understand the representation of 'wicked' women within the *Rewarde*.

As the first of Robynson's complainants, Helen of Troy is a principal character not only in a catalogue of wicked women, but also in the didactic scheme of the entire *Rewarde*: an example to all 'that live in godlie fere' (D1r). Her punishment revives a standard Dantean formula, that of 'Howe fornicatours in hell rewarded bee' (C4r), but also voices a popular desire to respond to Helen's paradoxical status as both chaste victim of rape and seductive adulteress (Schmitz 1990, 60-75; Heavey 2012). Though the analogy is not unambiguous, early modern interest in Helen was inspired in part by what Katherine Heavey describes as a 'desire to praise not just anonymous women who are unlike Helen, but in particular the epitome of chastity, Elizabeth herself' (2012, 473). In casting off 'Golden Rayes, and ritche attyre' and assuming 'the mourners weedes', Helen insists that one can mimic and exploit the image of chastity: 'seeme to lament: / Hide your painted faces, that sette mens heartes on fire' (C1r, my emphasis). Queen Rosamond, a character drawn from Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*, analogously claims that 'it is harde for to knowe / When a woman speakes fayre, if shee meanes it or no' (O4r). The issue of feminine speech is given further treatment in the complaint of Pope Joan. Here, the dreamer slides from blame into pity for the speaker: 'Bicause shee was a woman, and had so litle grace' (P4r). But it is Robynson's sense of sympathy for Helen that confirms the ability of this particular speaker to affect her audience: 'Alas uneth my hande can holde the

pen, / my sight deuoured is with greeuous teares' (C2r). Robinson's emotive response to Helen's complaint might explain away any scribal inaccuracies, but it also questions the validity of her complaint and its subsequent bearing on the textual record. In an allusion to Ovid's *Heroides*, Robinson locates the most damning evidence against Helen within her letters to 'good Paris': 'I layde him letters, in secrete holes and noukes, / for to attempte the venture for my sake' (C3r). But the final proof is in the publishing:

And then when Fame hath sounded up hir trumps,
 and publisht all your deedes and filthy life:
 Then shall confusion put you to your Jumpes,
 your Husbandes shall disdaine to call you wife. (C3v)

Helen's complaint culminates in a cacophony of exploding cannon-fire, dissonant voices 'hurling up and downe' and the solitary cry of 'vengeaunce (on them that were defilde / with spilling guiltlesse blood)' (C4v). 'The Bookes verdite upon Hellen' also contains a direct warning to the reader, using her example to offer admonitions of a more immediate and seemingly more personal nature: 'Sith Helens faultes are knowne, and yours in secret hyd / Take heede least you be overthrowne' (D1r).

When Robinson began composing his *Rewarde*, John Higgins' *First parte of the Mirour for Magistrates* (covering the period from Brutus, the founder of Britain, to Julius Caesar) emerged from the press. This second version of the *Mirror* also turned to classical exemplars which were so 'sufficiently distant from English politics' as to make it difficult to forge direct parallels with the present day (Budra 2000, 32).¹⁶ Whereas by placing political concerns safely within a classical context, the *Mirror's* authors could evade the censors, audiences of *de casibus* tragedy were encouraged to discern similarities between the classical past and contemporary events. For Scott Lucas, the readers of the *Mirror* were invited to pursue a path of retribution and even punishment for the *Mirror's* modern-day counterparts (2009, 15). With regard to Robinson's Helen of Troy, it is the female reader who is encouraged to derive a lesson from her example:

Although it doth abashe eache daintye Dame,
 to reade of mee, or yet to heare mee read:
 I am the marke for you to shun like shame. (C1v)

¹⁶ I do not, however, believe that when the *Mirror* sets aside questions of power in favour of those relating to 'beauty and chastity' (Budra 2000, 67; that this is as apolitical as Budra suggests).

In these lines, Helen presents herself as a profoundly literary figure and a self-proclaimed victim of the textual record. The 'verдите' also contains a Chaucerian-style list of virtuous women which includes Alceste, Cleopatra, Criseyde, Griselda and Penelope. Although Cleopatra may strike the reader as a rather enigmatic choice for inclusion in this list, she serves here, as in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, to illustrate a direct concern with fame. The fact that Cleopatra is also the missing link in the *Noble Women of the Ancient World* series, a set of hangings commissioned by Bess of Hardwick during the 1570s, reinforces this assessment. It is instructive to contemplate the widely-held conviction that Mary participated in the design and construction of these hangings (Ellis 1996; Frye 2010). According to Susan Frye, the hangings represent a coded instrument of feminine power and dynastic ambition, promoting the paired ideals of domestic and political action as opposed to 'passivity and silence' (1999, 166-167). Conversely, Robinson's Helen of Troy is presented as the origin of ill fame for women; hers is the 'face' that 'did staine the rest' (D1r).

Robinson's account of Helen's fall and punishment shares some remarkable incidents with records of contemporary events. In February 1572, the Earl reported the actions of 'one Morgan my servant' and several other men, 'punished and put forth of my house' for delivering ciphered letters to and from Mary. Afraid of being caught, Morgan had hidden these letters underneath a stone in the grounds of Sheffield Castle.¹⁷

This episode also bears subtle traces of Robinson's acquaintance with anti-Marian propaganda. Although Helen of Troy was not cited explicitly in the attempt to defame Mary Stuart, Cathy Shrank locates the 'evident proofs' against Mary within the libellers' treatment of the handwritten record (2010a). *Ane Detectioun* contains the defamatory exhortation by Privy Councillor Thomas Wilson to 'call to minde that part of hir letters to Bothwell quhairin sche maketh hir selfe Medea' (Buchanan 1571, G2r). The casket sonnets were described as 'divers fonde ballades of her owne hand' and were said to have been enclosed, together with the said letters to Bothwell, inside 'one small gilt cofer nat fully ane foote lang, beyng garnishit in sondry places with the Romaine letter F under ane kyngis crowne' (O2r). *Ane Detectioun* also relates how Mary had

attemptit a disguisit maner of mournyng. But the myrth of her heart far passing the fayned sorrow, she shut the dores in ded but ... within fower dayes she threw away hir wayling weede, and gane to behald baith sunne and open skye agayne. (E2v-E3r)

Mary was further condemned for eloping under 'a marvelous fine inventioun god wote, that Bothwell should ravishe and take away the Quene by force'

¹⁷ (Scotland, 2), 151-152, SP 53/8, 40-43, 137-138 (28 February 1572).

(F2v). It was not, however, the figure of Helen of Troy, but rather that of Medea that was to become the most pervasive and damning of all literary representations of Mary (Shrank 2010b).

Although Robinson's Medea obstinately insists that Helen's 'wicked life and mine God knowes / are not to be comparde', Medea is presented as another 'good example for Women' (F1v). But while the complaints of Helen of Troy and Queen Rosamond deceptively implore women to do away with cosmetics and flamboyant clothing, 'The rewarde of Medea for hir wicked actes' goes further and critiques the trappings of witchcraft, 'Magike, and vile Conjuracion' and by implication, of Catholicism: 'You witches all take heede ... / Leave of your invocation, your crossings and your charmes' (G3r). There are several possible sources for Robinson's depiction of Medea, though the episode differs from the classical strand of the story and is re-worked along distinctly Lydgateian lines by substituting the instrument of murder – conventionally a poisoned cloak and chain – with a gilded 'cofer': 'invented with divers Jewels ... Subtillye contrived of a straunge fashion' (G1r).¹⁸ Medea's sons deliver the coffer to Creusa, the woman for whom she had been abandoned by Jason and, upon its undoing,

there flewe foorth fire, that burnde both man and child ...
 Consumde to dust this Ladye fresh and gaye,
 burnde all the pallas five yardes within the grounde. (G1r-v)

Robinson also turns to Lydgate for the *Rewarde's* final complaint, 'The rewarde that Rosamond had in hell, for murdering of hir husbande Albonius and living vitiouslie in hir husbandes dayes':

I polluted filthilye my Husbandes bedde,
 With one of his servauntes, whome after I made
 Most Traiterously to smite of his head,
 As hee laye a sleepe with his owne sworde or blade.
 And so tooke his Treasure, and to the Seas wee fled,
 There leaving my Husband wounded to dead. (O4r)

Robinson, however, departs from Lydgate in conflating the two figures of the king's murderer and Rosamond's lover into one and the same, the servant 'Melcheus'. In contrast to the *Fall of Princes*, the *Rewarde* presents the king as unarmed and sleeping at the time of the attack, in which his own 'sword or blade' is used.¹⁹ Rosamond's 'vile duplicitye' swells into pride as she then

¹⁸ See Lydgate's account of King Oetes in the *Fall of Princes* (Book I, 2171-2401). On Robinson's use of continental sources see Ward 2009, 58n.

¹⁹ By contrast, Lydgate's King Alboin puts up a fight against Perdeus with 'A speris hede to a tronchoun bounde' (Book VIII, 3312).

re-directs her affections toward the exarch of Ravenna. Having no longer any use for her servant, she offers him a cup tainted with poison, but he realises that he has been betrayed and forces Rosamond to herself drink from the cup, thus bringing about both their deaths. Although Melcheus' complicity in murder is the cause of his demise, he functions essentially as foil for both Rosamond's acts of revenge and for her ultimate fate. In this connection it is interesting to consider how similar moments of domestic disorder on the stage stirred early modern audiences to not merely 'expand investigations of the war between the sexes' but to also 'consider the place of servants' (Wall 2002, 200). Burnett has shown that a contemporary desire for preferment by those seeking to 'overcome the handicap' of their estate fuelled myths of the 'false steward', a paradigm of social ambition in early modern drama (1997, 184). Yet it is through depicting the falls of Tantalus and Midas that Robinson's interest in the sins of pride and evil governance extend to and conceal prerogatives pertinent to his status within the Shrewsbury household.

From the outset, the complaint of Midas, entitled 'Mydas, Which Tirannouslye, swallowed not onely his Countrey for Lucre sake, but his householde Servauntes also' (O1r), reminds the reader of Robinson's proclaimed status as a 'Servaunt in the household to the right honourable Earle of Shrovesbury'. The title also displays echoes of the epistle's conceit of the 'busie bee', 'commonly slain for the lucre' of her honey (A2-3r). In his complaint, Midas admits to having banished from his service 'the bloode of gentle race, / Which alwayes counsaylde me to minde, mine honor and my grace' and chose to lend his ear to 'Dunghil Doltes' (O2r). The downfall of Tantalus is similarly attributed to the wilful consumption of 'whispering tales' by the 'simplest sort' (H1v); the 'causers of my smart' he claims, 'counseld mee to play, the Tyrantes parte' (H1v). Thus, whilst the ghost of Tantalus in Heywood's *Thyestes* is the ancestral parent to a whole generation of cannibalistic tyrants, Robinson's re-working of the tradition emphasizes the dangers of ambition ('a privie poison', 'The nourishe of envie', G3v). Ambition spreads not only through the bloodline, but also among those serving one's own estate, in whom it surfaces in the form of 'Wicked counsell':

My servauntes through theyr counsell were principall,
 That thus I was corrupt, I crye therefore alas,
 They fed mee with fables, to bring theyr purpose to passe.
 And in my name the poore they spoyled quite,
 To mee unknowen, when I receiv'de no mite. (H1v)

Both Tantalus and Midas are presented here in the guise of sixteenth-century landlords. Though possessing 'mines, with vineyardes large, with corne and cattell store / Yea Lordships, lands, parckes houghe & wide' ('Midas', O2r), they 'famishte the countrey with fines and double rent' ('Tantalus', H1v),

thus bearing indirect witness to the contemporary trauma of enclosure (Ellis 2000). Through the 'bookes verdite upon Tantalus' the author implores those 'whome, the Lord appointes to rule' (H4v) to derive a moral lesson from this example. But it is against gossip, personified in the self-serving antagonist 'Piers' (or 'Peter') 'Pickthanke', that the full force of the *Rewarde's* attack is directed. This parodic take on Langland's *Vision of Piers Plowman*, the spokesperson of medieval estates satire, taps into a related anxiety over the roots of protest:

Lende not your eares in any wise, to Peter Pickthankes schole.
His flattering fetche doth robbe you al, of famous honour due,
Whose painting pensels evermore, reprocheful colours hewe.
And causeth curses of the poore, whose plaints the Lord doeth heare,
Redressing streight their care & grief, throughout the earth echewhere.
... Then are these muckscrapers at these daies, that swallow up the poore,
Which have to much, yet not content, but proule for more & more ... (H4r)²⁰

The prospect of rebellion is implied in the alehouse setting of the *Rewarde's* Prologue, 'When men delight to keepe the fire side, / And winter tales incline their eares to heare' (B1v). But it is only by limiting the spread of gossip, public opinion and complaint that the 'mighty' *can* truly prosper. In one final admonition, the 'Booke' contends: 'But wordes are wind, what will you more? No vertue is regarded: / Be as be maie, the daie will come, your workes will bee rewarded' (H4r). In signalling the reputational danger posed by rumour to those in power, the complaints of Tantalus and Midas thus posit the bogus, self-serving interests that lead to social and moral foment, and hence raise serious questions over the purpose, means and standing of the service profession itself.

The danger posed by rumour is counteracted in the closing episode of the poem. 'To Noble Helicon' is an allegory of patronage which champions the written record. Here Robinson has the Muses re-inscribe his earlier celebration of patronal virtues, assimilating the laureate ambitions of the poet and the sponsor's noble obligations into a single bond of 'grace' shared by both servant and master:

²⁰ The passage quoted confirms Robinson's acquaintance with *A Mirror for Magistrates* (See 'Death of the Poet Collingbourne', 1563). Whilst referring to the character as 'Piers' elsewhere in the *Rewarde* the reference to 'Peter Pickthanke' is a rather unfortunate example of Robinson's attempt to fill the line of the fourteener. The character appears at other moments in the *Rewarde* (and once in *Golden Mirrour*) accompanied by 'Tom Teltale' (H2v; H4v). These characters suggest further parallels between the *Rewarde* and the Scottish libel tradition, in particular the figures 'Maddie' and 'Tom Telltruth' (McElroy 2007). By extension, the passage evokes memories of the 1569 rallying cry, 'God Speed the Plough'. On the links between social satire and protest in the North see Lowers 1953; Kesselring 2004; Wilson-Lee 2012. See also Jansen 1989; McRae 2002.

So shalt thou earne greate thankes of us, and of all Englishe men.
 And for our ayde bee sure of it, gainste Zoilus and his whelpes,
 For to defend thy Booke and thee, wee promise heare our helpes.
 Loe heare you see, howe wee acquite our servauntes at the last. (Q3r)

Fifteen years later, in *A Golden Mirrour*, Robinson was to touch again on this concern.²¹ ‘The Authours name in Verdict’ repents, ‘Of wicked wilfull wretched workes’ and appeals to a higher master for deliverance: ‘Revenge not Lord, my wofull works, when I in sinne did wade’ (P3v). As this poem reveals, Robinson must in the meantime have achieved a degree of social advancement. While the printer’s preface simply identifies the poet as a ‘Gentleman of the north Countrey’ (A2r), his full identity is exposed in a final acrostic to be ‘RICHARD ROBINSON OF ALTON’.

A similar naming strategy is employed in the *Rewardes* finale. Here Morpheus at last reveals the true identity of the poet, but with a playful emphasis on his humble origins: ‘He is (quoth Morpheus) towards you al, and sproong of Robins blood, / Whose painefull pen hath aye beene prest, for to advance this place’ (Q1v). In *A Golden Mirrour* Robinson again explores the inextricable link between etymology and identity. Fourteen of these poems are penned on the etymologies of ‘divers worthy personages inhabiting the gentle natured countrey and Countie of Chester’ (A3r). One of the *Golden Mirrour*’s subjects – Lord Ferdinando Stanley – was a renowned patron of the arts. In writing of him, Robinson draws on the family motto (‘sans changer’) and Stanley’s sobriquet (‘Lord Strange’) in speaking of his noble comportment toward the poor:

... because his noble giftes
 Doe put equals to their shiftes
 Let poore me judge, that want refuge,
 That find their Landlords change,
 He takes th’olde rent, and is content:
 Which may be called Strange. (C4v)

Immediately preceding this verse we find an untitled encomium to ‘Talbot’, a twenty-stanza poem which concentrates specifically on the rich symbolic currency of the family’s heraldic emblem, the hunting dog. Like the *Rewardes*

²¹ *A Golden Mirrour* is also dedicated to Gilbert Talbot, ‘sonne and heire to the right honorable the Earl of Shrewsbury, Knight’ (A2r). It is interesting that the publisher of *A Golden Mirrour* claimed to have received the work in 1587, but deemed it necessary to examine ‘the end and purpose of the writer’ (A2r) before committing it to press. By making this claim the publisher re-configures the volume, in which the first poem appears to prophecy Drake’s success against the Spanish Armada, as a work of propaganda.

Prologue, the 'Talbot' poem is a dream vision, one in which the poet plays witness to a hunt of 'wicked weesels' from 'Britanian grounds'. It concludes with a direct counsel:

The heads and quarters of these Carrens vile
 I did beholde, where kites and Crowes did eate,
 A marke for many that do themselves exile
 From Dueties doctrine, and deale by deepe deceit. (C3v)

Once again, Robinson uses a cautionary tale to illustrate the punishments that await the wicked. The poem echoes the homiletic warning that rebels will be 'rewarded with shameful deaths, their heads and carcasses set upon poles, or hanged in chains, eaten with kites and crows, judged unworthy the honor of burial' (Cooper 2003, 34). Like the Devonshire tapestries of the fifteenth century, the poem represents an attempt – as Collinson would have it – to resuscitate memories of the Talbots' reputation for 'unconditional loyalty under three other Tudors' (1987, 5). As Edward Wilson-Lee has argued, the fashion for heraldic beast allegory, traditionally an elite form used to signal inclusion at court, had been taken up by balladeers during the time of the Northern Uprising (2012, 237). By celebrating the victory of the Talbot dog, the poem restores this tradition to its noble origins and commemorates the part Shrewsbury played in the 1572 trial and execution of the Duke of Norfolk. Arguably, this was a measure of great necessity. On losing custody of Mary to Rafe Sadler in 1584, Shrewsbury was obliged to make a 'humiliating statement' at court (Archer 2013, 190n). Although this cleared him of the earlier charge of disloyalty, allegations were revived in 1586 after the discovery of a plot to assassinate Elizabeth. The key conspirators were Anthony Babington, once a page in the Shrewsbury household, and Thomas Morgan, the man discharged from Sheffield for conspiring with the Queen. The ballad-like refrain of Robinson's encomium ('... here Talbot take it, for thou art ever trew') goes right to the heart of Shrewsbury's perennial pledges of allegiance to Elizabeth over almost twenty troubled years in her service.

4. *Conclusion*

In seeking to 'abandon Idlenes' through writing, Robinson puts his professional obligations at the service of a set of ethically and politically-motivated purposes. The crucial fact of being Shrewsbury's household servant garners a rhetorical potency which permits him to exploit the privileges of his position as 'watche and ward', messenger and scribe. Whilst Robinson's engagement with the dream vision and *de casibus* complaint may not immediately strike the reader as having resulted in outstanding poetry, these modes of writing relate to contemporary efforts by writers from the Inns of Court and its surrounds to revitalize and reform interest in the possibilities of 'medieval' genres. Like so many dreamers before him,

Robinson emerges from the *Reward* as a liminal figure prominently situated between Hell and Helicon, delivering news along the proverbial highways of 'Crosselesie lane, and little Wittame home' (Q3v) and striving for admittance into the Muses' hall of fame. His true identity and function, however, remain unknown. Was he, perhaps like Jenye, an instrument of propaganda? Undeniably, the *Reward*'s polemical tone and content are in accord with accepted notions of Protestant reform. But in considering Robinson's rhetorical capability, his geographical and social mobility and his interaction with a broad array of textual modes and traditions, it is possible to see that his *Reward* might also have spoken to the socio-political preoccupations of his time. Ultimately, it is through his depictions of the rise and fall of the mighty that Robinson reminds his reader of the dynamic and decisive role played by the servant, the several hazards of his particular occupation, and the rewards that may lie in wait.

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William Basse's *Polyhymnia* and the Poetry of Service

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Abstract

The career of the little-known seventeenth-century poet William Basse (c. 1583-1653?) combined two distinctive elements. He served, in the first instance, as a 'retainer' to the Wenman family of Thame Park in Oxfordshire for a period of more than forty years. He was also, however, a published poet who produced a substantial body of verse which reflected and intertwined with his career in service. The article aims to stimulate interest in Basse by drawing attention to a manuscript collection of his poems which remains unpublished and has until now been considered 'lost' in scholarly accounts of the poet. The *Polyhymnia*, held at Chetham's Library in Manchester, was prepared as a gift in the late 1640s or early 1650s for relations of the Wenmans who lived on the nearby Rycote estate. It brought together poems from across the course of Basse's career, and displayed him writing in a wide variety of forms and genres. The article summarises current knowledge of Basse's life in service, sets out the context of the *Polyhymnia* as a manuscript apparently designed to fortify the links between Thame Park and Rycote, and explores the importance of Basse's perspective as a servant to some of the more intriguing poems in the collection. It concludes by suggesting some of the ways in which a renewed focus upon Basse might contribute to study of the links between service and literature in the future.

Keywords: Presentation Manuscript, Retainer, Service, Seventeenth Century, William Basse

1. *Introduction*

The purpose of this article is to instigate reappraisal of a seventeenth-century poet, William Basse, who has until now elicited scant critical attention, and to ask how his writing might be of interest to scholars concerned with the relationship between service and poetry (or indeed literature more generally) in the early modern period. Basse spent much if not all of his life in service to a noble family – the Wenmans of Thame Park in Oxfordshire. What makes him particularly interesting however is the fact that he both enacted and reflected upon aspects of his service role in a variety of ambitious and sometimes experimental poems. Many of those poems have already appeared



in print, either during Basse's own lifetime or in the important nineteenth-century edition of his work edited by R. Warwick Bond. My interest in Basse here however stems from examination of a manuscript long considered lost and itself as yet unpublished. When Bond assembled *The Poetical Works of William Basse* in 1893 he recorded the existence of two variant copies of a collection entitled *Polyhymnia*, both of which had surfaced and then disappeared again over the course of the preceding century. He was thus able only to provide contents lists for these manuscripts and a few fragments of the verse they contained, drawn from descriptions by their previous owners. The whereabouts of both have been viewed, in biographical accounts of Basse, as unknown ever since. One of them, however, in fact forms part of the Corser collection at the Chetham's Library in Manchester, catalogued under the shelfmark Mun.A.3.54.¹ This version of the *Polyhymnia* is a beautiful and unique presentation manuscript, and adds a substantial amount of new verse to Basse's canon. As well as being an aesthetically appealing literary artifact in itself, it clarifies details of Basse's life and career, provides the texts of some interesting and unusual poems which span a wide range of genres, and raises a whole host of questions relating to both service culture and poetic culture during the first half of the seventeenth century. I will attempt to give some flavour of its nature and significance here by approaching it through two related areas of discussion.

The first is a material one, centering around issues of scribal publication and manuscript circulation. In the Chetham's *Polyhymnia* we encounter Basse using the form of the presentation manuscript to inscribe and reinforce his status as a trusted family servant, to underwrite his privileged personal position within that family's local Oxfordshire network and, I will argue, to fortify the ties which existed between his employers and their local relations. The resulting interplay between Basse's status as a family servant and his purposes as a poet offers a rich and multifaceted example of how presentation manuscripts could function as social and textual phenomena.

The second area of discussion is a more literary one. Basse is a rare example in the period of a servant who was also an established and prolific author. It is significant then that the Chetham's *Polyhymnia* combines the kind of functions we might expect of a presentation manuscript – offering praise, soliciting patronage and recording details of his patrons' family history – with exploration of a more diverse set of social and literary themes. There is a significant vein of poetry in the manuscript which depicts carefully figures of lower social rank, experiments with what might be considered more

¹ The manuscript is not at present listed in the online Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts 1450-1700, <<https://celm2.digsum.kcl.ac.uk/>>, accessed 22 December 2014, and is described as lost in both Blackley 1992 and Kathman 2004.

popular genres and modes, and ultimately turns to celebrate serving subjects themselves. It suggests that while Basse's poetry could act as an extension of his service role, his perspective and experiences as a servant were also an important source of literary inspiration in themselves. This aspect of Basse's work is open to a variety of interpretations. I will thus attempt here only to suggest some of the questions that it might throw up for critics interested in the way service intersected with literature in the early modern period, particularly in the light of Basse's distinctive role as a servant-author.

Before turning to the Chetham's manuscript, however, I wish to review the known facts of Basse's biography – in order to provide some context for the subsequent discussion of this relatively unknown poet, and in order to outline his interesting position within the complex sphere of early modern service culture.

2. *Basse's Life and Career*

In the only surviving contemporary account of Basse, Anthony Wood describes him as 'of Moreton near Thame in Oxfordshire, sometime a retainer to the lord Wenman of Thame Park'.² Probably born in the early 1580s, Basse appears to have spent his entire adult life living in Oxfordshire in the service of the Wenman family, whose main residence at Thame Park was about fifteen miles from the city of Oxford itself. Its lord during the majority of Basse's residence there was Richard Wenman (1572/3-1640), created Viscount Wenman of Tuam in 1628. Comments in one of Basse's works raise the possibility that he was originally from Northampton, and this led Bond to suggest that Basse may have travelled to Thame Park as a page in the service of Richard Wenman's first wife, Agnes, who was also a native of Northamptonshire, and who came to Thame upon her marriage in or around 1596 (Bond 1893, xii).³ At some point Basse married, but it is not known when. Only the date of Eleanor Basse's burial is recorded, on 27 September 1637. He had at least one daughter, who died in 1634, and possibly more. Wood's description of him as 'of Moreton' (about a mile from Thame Park) suggests that at some point his position advanced enough for him to obtain his own property independent of the main house, probably through the benefaction of the Wenmans (Bond 1893, xx-xxii). He lived to an advanced age, and is thought to have died in 1653 or shortly thereafter.

² Quoted in Kathman 2004. The main sources for Basse's biography (upon which I have relied here) are Bond 1893, 'Introduction'; Blackley 1992; Kathman 2004.

³ Agnes Wenman was herself a writer, whose translation of Jean de Maumont's French version of John Zonaras' *Histories and Chronicles of the World* is still extant in Cambridge University Library, MSS Dd.i.18, Dd.i.19 and Mm 3, 32.

Basse began writing poetry early, and published three relatively substantial works during the early 1600s: *Sword and Buckler, Or, Serving-Mans Defence* (Basse 1602a), a precocious and carefully designed defence of the class of family servants to which Basse himself belonged; *Three Pastoral Elegies* (1602b), a pastoral narrative imitative of Spenser and dedicated to Sir Richard Wenman's mother, Lady Tasburgh; and *Great-Brittaines Sunnes-Set* (1613), an elegy occasioned by the death of Prince Henry, but dedicated and addressed to his own master Richard Wenman. Two major collections of his work were assembled towards the end of his life (although they drew together poems composed at different points in his career) which remained in manuscript. The first of these was the *Polyhymnia*, in its two variant forms, and the second was *The Pastorals and Other Workes*, a carefully prepared volume (dated 1653 on its title-page) which formed the centre-piece of Bond's nineteenth-century edition of Basse, and which is now in the Folger Shakespeare Library (MS V.b.235). The latter included a set of nine 'Eclogues' dedicated to Richard Wenman but composed over a period of many years; an early Ovidian narrative (written before 1612), 'Urania: the Woman in the Moon', dedicated to Wenman's daughter Penelope Dynham; and a later narrative poem, 'The Metamorphosis of the Walnut-Tree of Boarstall', written in the late 1640s or early 1650s at the request of the same daughter, and set in the grounds of her own home near Thame. As with the *Three Pastoral Elegies* and *Great-Brittaines Sunnes-Set*, both of these manuscript collections display abundant evidence of the origination and circulation of Basse's poetry within local social networks linked directly to the Wenman family. Other works, however, hint at a wider literary acquaintance and raise questions about how well-connected Basse was beyond the immediate circle of the Wenmans and their relations, and whether or not he can be considered to have had a significant career or life as a writer distinct from his professional employment in Oxfordshire.

Basse was almost certainly the 'W.B.' who contributed a commendatory poem to the second book of William Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals* in 1616, a fact which put him in the company of other contemporary poets including John Davies of Hereford, George Wither and Ben Jonson.⁴ He is probably now most commonly cited as the author of a widely circulated epitaph on Shakespeare, mistakenly attributed to Donne in the first edition of his *Poems* (1633), later reprinted in the 1640 edition of Shakespeare's own poetry, and possibly alluded to by Jonson in the elegy on Shakespeare he contributed to the 1623 folio (Bond 1893, 113-117).⁵ A poem by Basse appeared in the

⁴ It has also been suggested that Basse was the 'W.B.' who contributed commendatory verses to Francis Beaumont's *Salmacis and Hermaphrodite* (London, 1602) and Philip Massinger's *The Bondsman* (London, 1624), although I find both attributions problematic.

⁵ For a recent attempt to reattribute the epitaph to Donne, see Centerwall 2006.

volume *Annalia Dubrensis* (Walbancke 1636), celebrating Robert Dover's 'Cotswold Games', which again set him alongside significant contemporary poets including Michael Drayton, Thomas Randolph, Ben Jonson, Owen Feltham, John Mennes and Shackerley Marmion. In 1653 a song of Basse's appeared in Izaak Walton's *Compleat Angler*, which Walton described there as 'lately made at my request'. The Oxford clergyman and physician Ralph Bathurst also wrote a commendatory poem intended for Basse's *Pastorals and Other Workes*, when that collection was apparently being prepared for the press.⁶

His inclusion in the Browne and Dover volumes suggests a connection to the poetic circles of Jacobean and Caroline London and has been taken by Basse's biographers to indicate a network of literary friendships. Several things need to be taken into consideration in this regard however. Critics, for instance, have not previously noted that the second commendatory poem prefixed to Browne's *Pastorals* was by Thomas Wenman (1596-1665), the son of Sir Richard Wenman and Basse's own employer later in life, who had entered the Inner Temple (of which Browne was a member) in 1614.⁷ Whether Basse escorted Thomas to London as an attendant of some kind, accompanied Thomas or his father more occasionally to the capital on business, or was simply given access to literary circles through correspondence with his master's son, it seems quite possible that Thomas was his primary source of contact with the metropolitan literary world and occasioned his appearance in the Browne publication. Both Bond and David Kathman suggest that George Wither was referring to Basse in *The Shepherd's Hunting*, when he said that his work had been 'graced' by 'the noblest nymph of Thame' (Sidgwick 1902, 23-24). Wither however was in that passage asserting his fitness to 'woo a shepherdess' and it is highly unlikely that he would refer to Basse as a 'nymph'. It is far more likely that Wither was referring to Agnes Wenman who (as noted above) was herself an author and did not die until 1617. If Basse did know Wither then it was likely to have been through Thomas Wenman or Agnes herself. The wide circulation of the Shakespeare epitaph certainly demonstrates contact with networks of manuscript circulation, but again such contact may well have occurred through the Wenmans rather than through personal relationships maintained by Basse himself.

His appearance in the *Annalia Dubrensis* is hard to interpret because the exact circumstances of the volume's assembly and publication are not clear. The poems would appear to have been composed over a number of years, some specifically for the volume and others more occasionally, and so Basse's inclusion cannot be taken to indicate personal intimacy with any other poet

⁶ There were also a few more ephemeral Basse publications. His poem 'A Memento for Mortalitie' was included in the popular miscellany *A Helpe to Discourse* (London, 1619), and songs by Basse were printed as broadsheets in 1620, 1676 and 1682.

⁷ For details on Thomas see Carlyle 2004; for the poem Browne 1616, sig. A2r.

who appeared therein.⁸ Dover's games may have provided an occasion for Basse to foster or maintain literary friendships, but this is as likely to have reflected his relatively close proximity to and frequent attendance at the games (which were held about 35 miles from Oxford), as an active social network which stretched significantly beyond his Oxfordshire locale. This relative proximity also makes it likely that the Wenmans themselves would have attended the games, and that they may again have influenced Basse's contact with literary and cultural circles. It is worth noting that in his account of the *Annalia in Athenae Oxonienses*, Anthony Wood sets Basse apart from the better known contributors to the volume as a poet of 'lesser note' (Bond 1893, 106), and that Basse self-consciously describes himself in his poem as 'the slendrest Oate, / That Mirth hath to your Mountaine brought' (*ibid.*, 110), meaning that his contribution may not have been sufficient to obscure the social or cultural distinctions between himself and some of the other authors.

By what means Walton solicited the text of a song from Basse, or whether they were personal friends, is not yet clear, but Bathurst's knowledge of Basse emphasizes the point that the most obvious hub of social and intellectual activity available to him was probably Oxford itself and that much of his own cultural activity is likely to have taken place within the close environs of his Oxfordshire home.⁹

Another problem is presented by Basse's apparent acquaintance with two of the period's most significant women writers and patrons, Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke and Elizabeth Cary, Viscountess Falkland. Basse referred to the patronage of Sidney several times in the *Pastorals* (see eclogues 2, 5 and 8 in Bond 1893), whilst he included two sonnets to Cary, written on the occasion of her departure for Ireland in 1622, in the *Polyhymnia* itself. I have not yet been able to establish how or how well Basse knew these women: Herbert was related through the marriage of her son Philip to Bridget Norris, the wife of Francis Norris, whom the *Polyhymnia* in part commemorated and who was a relation of the Wenmans. We also know that from 1615 Herbert was building a house at Houghton just over thirty miles from Thame Park.¹⁰

Cary meanwhile spent her early life at Burford Priory in Oxfordshire, again just over thirty miles from Thame Park (see Hodgson-Wright 2004).

⁸ Bond presumes that the poems were composed annually to mark the celebration of the games, and that Basse's poem must have been composed in 1618 because the games were said to have been founded in 1602 and his poem appeared sixteenth in the volume. There is no evidence however either that the poems were composed in this way (internal evidence in fact suggests not), or that the games were indeed established in this exact year (Bond 1893, 106).

⁹ We might note that his elegy for Prince Henry was printed at Oxford and the title-page of *The Pastorals* makes clear that this volume was to be printed there too.

¹⁰ Bridget was the sister of Philip's wife Susan, Countess of Montgomery. For details of the family connections see Hannay 2010; for Houghton, Hannay 2004.

These suggestive hints indicate that further connections may be established in the future. The probability is again though that any contact Basse had with such aristocratic women would have come through the activities or facilitation of his own employers, rather than through his own literary connections.

Evidently then more work needs to be done on the nature of Basse's links to other writers. We can only say at this point that where his work was published in London or appeared alongside that of more well-known writers this credibly involved the influence of his employers, and the idea that he sustained a more independent network of literary relationships, whilst worth exploring, also needs to be treated with care. We have by contrast plentiful evidence of his poetry's imbrication within the Wenman's local, family sphere. I would thus argue that this sphere should be viewed (for the moment) as the primary and most significant context for his work.

3. *The Nature of Basse's Service Role*

With this established we might ask exactly what kind of service Basse provided for the Wenman family. This task is inevitably hindered by the fragmentary nature of his life records and we must therefore turn to the potentially unreliable evidence of the poetry itself in order to develop a picture of his career. There is justification for this however: biographical and local details form a central constituent of Basse's writing throughout his *œuvre*, be they factually presented (as in the many references to people, places, patrons and so on) or more figuratively portrayed (as one suspects is the case, for instance, with some of the landscapes described in the *Pastoral Elegies*). Such details consistently tally with the known facts of his life, and suggest that he saw his poetry as a vehicle for recording and preserving elements of his own biography, presumably in the awareness that it would often be read by a local audience of readers who knew him well, rather than for creating elaborately fictive personas for himself.

One of Basse's earliest published works, *Sword and Buckler*, is an explicit defence of serving-men against the views of 'The publike multitude that do's us wrong' (Bond 1893, 5). It makes explicit claims about Basse's situation at the time. He states that 'I ... have served but a little while' and 'Live in the place and manner of a Page' (28). The poem also implies that Basse considered himself to be part of a class of household attendants of relatively humble background who had to work for their livelihood, rather than those drawn from the children of the nobility or gentry:

A man that's neither borne to wealth, nor place,
But to the meere despite of Fortunes brow,

...

Submits himself unto a servile yoke,
And is content to weare a livery cloke. (9-10)

He nevertheless had a sense of hierarchy, and other passages intimate that he waited directly upon the Wenmans themselves, and that this distinguished him from servants who undertook more menial domestic duties. He described the serving-man from whose perspective he wrote as ‘Continually at hand, to see, to heare / His Lords his Masters, Ladies, Mistris will’ (10). He also made clear their relative superiority within the household structure:

... you charge us much with idlenes,
 And chiefly those that have superiour roomes
 In service; but to meaner offices,
 As Bailiffes, Caters, Vndercooks and Groomes,
 You doe impute more labour and lesse sloth:
 ...
 No Serving-man, that ever waited well
 In’s master’s chamber, or in other place,
 But will be sworne with me his toyles excell
 The daily labours of th’ inferiour race ... (23-24)

Sword and Buckler then suggests a picture of Basse working as a page in the Wenman household from a young age, distinguishing himself from more menial or domestic staff by the fact that he wore his master’s livery and attended personally upon him, but not himself of noble or gentle background.

We are also faced in the poem however with Basse’s evident and relatively precocious learning. As well as being able to read and write, his poetry suggests that he had received a solid literary education, indicated in his developed imitations of Spenser and Ovid amongst others, and his command of a wide variety of literary genres. Details in his later work suggest that he was probably a proficient Latinist (see, for instance, the epigraph from Horace on the title-page of the *Polyhymnia* below; see fig. 1). His own family may have been of sufficient standing to send him for a grammar school education either in Northampton or in Oxfordshire before he entered employment at Thame Park, but the extent of his literary abilities, his sizable early poetic output and his repeated references to the encouragement he received from members of the Wenman family combine to suggest that his education was probably continued and extended within the household itself. On the basis of a passage in the *Pastorals* Bond speculated that Basse studied at Oxford in some capacity – possibly at Balliol. That passage however implies only the attendance of the narrator’s acquaintance ‘Meredit’ at the college, not Basse’s own.¹¹ In fact, given Basse’s references to Oxford and his acquaintances there, and his tendency throughout his writings to stress the debts he owed to the Wenman family, it is hard to believe that Wenman could have funded a stay

¹¹ Bond 1893, xii-xiii, and for the passage from the *Pastorals* in question, 205.

at Balliol or another college without much being made of it in Basse's verse. It is also hard to see why Wenman would choose to send a page of common background to the university when his key role was one of service, however talented the boy. These arguments are only supported by the absence of Basse's name from the university registers (Bond 1893, xiii), and the strongest likelihood appears to be that his education was advanced domestically. If Wenman employed tutors to teach his own sons Basse may well have been given instruction by them, and once his literary potential was understood he may also have been granted free time and access to the family's library in order to promote his own reading and writing.¹²

If these surmises are correct, then it also seems highly likely that he would have gone on to fill a more advanced secretarial or administrative role within the household, perhaps in relation to the management of the estate, the organization of correspondence and accounts or even, as time passed, the tutoring of younger children. The profound emphasis on thanking, praising and commemorating his employers in his poetry suggests a strong association in Basse's mind between the practices of writing and service, an association which would be appropriate if he undertook secretarial tasks as part of his employment. Certainly, if the *Polyhymnia* manuscript was copied by Basse himself, then he was a skilled scribe. We might also note that many of his poems, with their emphasis on fable or parable-like narratives, their simple moralisations and their relatively accessible style and diction, would have worked well as texts to be performed for or circulated amongst a varied domestic audience of men, women and children. Other poems flatter the Wenmans' relations and memorialise details of family history. Producing poetry for household consumption or other social purposes may then have come to be a recognised part of his role. Domestic academic training might thus have been provided for Basse with the intention that he would use it practically in serving the family and their estate.

The conclusions above are speculative, but what is certain is that by the later part of his life he had risen to become a well-respected member of the Thame Park community. It has not been noted before that in Sir Richard Wenman's will of 1640 Basse was bequested an annuity of ten pounds per annum, to be paid for the rest of his life – a privilege accorded to only three other servants from the household (National Archives, PROB 11/182/587). Richard's son Thomas served as a parliamentarian commissioner in negotiations with the king throughout the civil war, and it has again not previously been noticed that in the state papers of John Thurloe there is a 'List of the retinue to the

¹² Wenman apparently had four sons, Thomas, Edward, Philip and Charles, although only Thomas and Philip lived to adulthood; see Bond's genealogical table in Bond 1893, inserted between 142 and 143.

parliament commissioners' dated 1645 which includes Basse's name amongst the four servants Wenman took to the negotiations. This demonstrates that he was sufficiently trusted and respected in Wenman's eyes to attend upon him in a highly sensitive political context, and that his services had been retained after the elder Wenman's death and despite Basse's own advanced age (Birch 1742, 59). We have already noted that at some point Basse was probably provided with his own property in Moreton by the Wenmans. We might also note that on the title-pages of the *Annalia Dubrensis* and the Chetham's *Polyhymnia* manuscript (probably compiled in the late 1640s or early 1650s) Basse styled himself as 'gent.'. This indicates that if he viewed himself in 1602 as a young domestic servant with little or no wealth or social status of his own, he could view himself later in life as a man of some means and respectability.

Basse then offers us at one level an example of the variety and flexibility possible within early modern service culture: a household attendant who was also a self-assured poet and who may have moved within literary circles; a professional family servant who rose from the humble status of a page to style himself 'gent.'; and an individual who served different generations of the same family in a career which stretched from the final years of Elizabeth I's reign to the political upheaval of the civil war. It is also worth considering in this context, however, Wood's description of him as a 'retainer' later in the century (Bond 1893, 106). Basse's career straddled a shift in the meaning of that word and the actual practices which lay behind it, from the feudal sense of a nobleman's dependent who wore his livery, attended him as a mark of status in public and turned out to fight for him when necessary, to that simply of a household servant (often of long-standing) (*OED* 1.a.).¹³ That shift mirrored the change which has been identified as taking place in domestic service more generally during the seventeenth century, from a culture of important social bonds centred around the aristocratic household towards 'more contractual and occasional forms' of wage-based service (Rivlin 2012, 10; see also Evett 2005, 4). Wood probably used the term 'retainer' simply in the sense of a family employee who had contributed many years of service. Yet the feudal connotations which still linger around the word might give us pause.

We have already seen that Basse described himself in *Sword and Buckler* as wearing his master's livery and also there stressed his personal commitment to and attendance upon his lord. He even shaped a narrative voice for himself which displayed a martial air redolent of the retainer as servant-in-arms. The poem can be read in this sense as gesturing towards a traditional ethos of neo-feudal service. A concomitant sense of deep social

¹³ On the feudal role of the retainer see, for instance, Girouard 1978, 20. On the decline of that role see Girouard 1978, 84-85; Mertes 1988, 190-193. Note that Mertes mentions Basse at 191 but gives a misleading account of his biography.

connection with and reliance upon the Wenmans and their relations is in fact prominent throughout Basse's writing and is of particular significance for the *Polyhymnia* itself. That collection, assembled in the wake of the civil war, can also be read as emphasising themes relevant to an idealised but potentially nostalgic view of service, including loyalty, gratitude, respect and intimate co-dependence. Basse may have emphasised such themes for a variety of reasons: to give coherence to his own identity as a servant-poet and to unify a body of poetry composed over many years; to reflect values which had been genuinely important to a career stemming back into the sixteenth century; and perhaps also to counterpoint the traumas of the revolutionary period by invoking a cohesive social order which rested in part upon such ideals of service and mutual obligation. If these surmises are correct, then we can see Basse as representing a tradition of service which was in many ways in decline. At the same time we can see in his *Polyhymnia* an example of how that mode of service could be deployed as a literary trope or device with its own social and cultural connotations.

4. *The Polyhymnia Manuscript*

These ideas will be made clearer as we examine the particular context of the *Polyhymnia's* genesis. The Chetham's manuscript is a beautifully copied presentation volume in quarto, of 57 leaves (18.7 x 15 cms), copied in an attractive calligraphic-italic hand. The care taken over the manuscript is reflected in the almost complete absence of corrections. The *recto* of the first leaf bears the name 'Norreys' in what also appears to be a seventeenth-century hand. The collection itself begins on f. 4r with the title-page seen in figure 1.¹⁴ It consists of ten individually titled poems or poetic sequences, which together make up about 1583 lines of verse. Its contents are highly varied, and briefly comprise: an initial group of commendatory or panegyric poems, including two poems to members of the Norris/Bertie family and two sonnets to Elizabeth Cary, Lady Falkland; two connected poems on natural subjects, 'Of a Great Floud' and 'Of the Raine-bowe'; a long allegorical narrative entitled 'The Youth in the Boate'; a lyrical reflection upon 'A fayre & virtuous Ladye's Picture' and a country house poem 'On the House of a Noble Knight'; a second allegorical narrative, the 'Elegie of a rare singing Bull-fynch'; and a mock-epic poem 'Of the foure mile Course ... run over by two famous Footmen'.¹⁵ The final two leaves of the manuscript (f. 56 and f. 57) are blank. Page margins are ruled in red ink and names and key words are highlighted in the same colour throughout. All of the poems in

¹⁴ Folio numbers are my own as the manuscript is not currently foliated or paginated.

¹⁵ A precise listing of the contents can be found in the table provided in the Appendix below.

the manuscript were evidently copied at the same time, but whether the hand in which they are copied is Basse's own or that of a scribe is not yet clear.

The considered and skillful presentation of the manuscript is significant because it points to the volume's nature as a gift, given specifically to the residents of Rycote, who were kinsmen of the Wenmans. Richard Wenman's grandfather (also Richard) had married in the sixteenth century Isabel Williams, daughter of Lord Williams of Thame. Isabel's sister Margery had meanwhile married Henry Norris (eventually to be made a baron by Elizabeth I) and the families had thus been linked for several generations.¹⁶ The Norrises had a family seat at Rycote, only a few miles from Thame and Thame Park.¹⁷ The occasion upon which Basse made this offering to the family is not stated in the manuscript itself or recorded elsewhere, but the manuscript must have been produced between 1648 and Basse's death in 1653 or thereabouts.¹⁸ It was in the first instance addressed 'To the Right Noble and vertuous Lady, the Lady Bridget Countesse of Lindsey, Barronesse of Ersbie, & of Ricot, &c.' in a poem signed 'Your Honors most humbly devoted Servant Will: Basse' (see figures 2 and 3), a detail suggesting that the volume was intended particularly for her eyes. Bridget was the sole surviving child of Elizabeth Norris and Edward Wray, born in 1627. Her first marriage in 1645 to Edward Sackville (second son of the Earl of Dorset) was apparently cut short when he was murdered by a soldier at Chawley near Oxford in the following year (Lysons 1813, 473). She subsequently married Montague Bertie, second Earl of Lindsey, some time between 1646 and 1653 (when their first son was born), possibly on 8 November 1648.¹⁹ Basse's styling of Bridget as 'Countesse of Lindsey' means his poem must post-date her marriage. Another poem in the Chetham's manuscript, the 'Elegie of a rare singing Bull-fynch', was dated 'June 19: 1648' in its title, and the manuscript must also have been copied after this date.

¹⁶ See Bond's genealogical table: Bond 1893, inserted between 142 and 143, although the table may not be reliable in all respects.

¹⁷ For information on the history of the estate at Rycote see the Bodleian website, <<http://rycote.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>>, accessed 22 December 2014.

¹⁸ Describing the manuscript in 1850 Thomas Corser asserted that 'It has the autograph of Francis, Lord Norreys, on the flyleaf', leading Bond to conclude that it must have been begun between 1621, when Norris was made an earl, and 1623, when he died (Bond 1893, 140). There is, however, no evidence that the name on the flyleaf represents the earl's autograph, and it seems more probable that it is simply a mark of family ownership, added at some point after the manuscript was presented at Rycote. That this took place after Francis' death is indicated by the title of the second poem in the volume, 'Verses To the Right Honorable Francis Lord Norreys Earle of Berkshiere (in his dayes)'. Bond was unaware of the presence of that final phrase in the Corser manuscript.

¹⁹ The latter date is given by Thomas Delafield in his eighteenth-century manuscript 'history of Rycote', Bodleian MS. Gough Oxon. 24, f. 274. See <<http://rycote.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/thomas-delafields-history-of-rycote>>, accessed 22 December 2014.

The *Polyhymnia* (like the other work which Basse had set down in manuscript at this time – the *Pastorals*) gathered poems and recorded events and friendships from across the course of his career. The second poem, a panegyric addressed to Francis Norris, was evidently first composed whilst Norris was still alive. The poem to Elizabeth Cary was presumably written in 1622 when she accompanied her husband, who had just been appointed Lord Deputy, to Dublin. Another poem in the second manuscript of the *Polyhymnia*, ‘Verses on the Chapel of Wadham College consecration’, was probably written in the year of that event, 1613. The Chetham’s volume was, then, a presentation manuscript circulated within the boundaries of the Wenman’s Oxfordshire family network, and recording both the historical and contemporary connections between Basse and the Norris/Bertie household. The statement of these facts however raises questions. What were the broader implications of a servant of the Wenmans offering such a volume to their neighbours and relations? Why were there two versions of the manuscript?²⁰ And what might the manuscript itself add to our understanding of how literary texts circulated within the scribal medium?

Answering the first two questions, I will propose that the manuscript was intended by Basse not merely as a private bid for patronage or a commemoration of personal relationships, but as a more communal contribution to the social and historical bonds which linked Thame Park and Rycote. The purposes of such a contribution are likely to have been manifold. In the light of this suggestion the differing versions of the *Polyhymnia* will be read as reciprocal counterparts, repeating certain materials in order to reflect the shared heritage of the two households, whilst in other ways being tailored to suit the interests of their individual occupants. This reading portrays Basse serving a subtle but integral role in the Wenman’s familial affairs, and offers us an interesting and suggestive example of the complex range of purposes that a presentation manuscript could fulfill.

Both the Chetham’s *Polyhymnia* and the still-untraced version which Bond called the ‘Cole’ manuscript, and which was described in the late eighteenth century, made clear their dedicatory and panegyric intent towards the Norris/Bertie family. Both opened with Basse’s poem to Lady Bridget Bertie, a poem which praised the countess by claiming that she embodied all of the historical virtues of the Norris line:

Renowned Ricot’s garlands still are seene
 Like to the Bayes that on Pernassus growes,
 ...
 As fresh, as if they yesterday had beene.

²⁰ For a comparison of their respective contents see the table in the Appendix.

And you (Rare Lady) both in birth & spirit,
The only heire that all their worthes inherit. (f. 5v)

Not only did Basse picture her as the sole inheritor of the family's glories, he also claimed that it was at her personal request that he was presenting his poems (stanza 4, f. 6r), exhibiting his close relationship with the countess and her household. Both versions of the manuscript followed this poem with his verses addressed to her grandfather Francis, the former lord of Rycote. This was another poem of extravagant praise which sought 'to frame / True honours to the great Norrey'sian name' (f. 7v). Both manuscripts also included a poem celebrating Wytham House (often known as Wytham Abbey), another country seat of the Norrises in Oxfordshire.²¹

The two versions of the *Polyhymnia* also, however, contained important differences. What the table in the Appendix shows is that the 'Cole' manuscript included poems specifically relevant to the Wenmans of Thame Park, whilst the Chetham's manuscript replaced these with poems of a more general tenor, or which had some relevance to Rycote which cannot now be discerned. The 'Cole' manuscript included a poem on Richard Wenman's sister-in-law, Lady Aungier, and acrostics on his first wife and daughters. It also included a poem 'On Caversham ... House', which Bond suggested was left out of the Rycote or Chetham's *Polyhymnia* because there was some kind of feud between the Norrises and Caversham's owners, the Knollys (Bond 1893, 148, n. 2). In their place the Chetham's manuscript included 'Of a Great Floud', 'Of the Raine-bowe' and 'Of Pen and Pensill, vppon A fayre & virtuous Ladye's Picture', all of which potentially alluded to events or objects linked to the estate at Rycote, although this was not made explicit in the poems themselves. There was thus a subtle counterpoint between the manuscripts. Both celebrated the Norris/Bertie family, but one seems to have been aimed at the Norrises themselves, whilst the other appears to have been prepared for their kinsmen at Thame Park. They represented an act of scribal publication in which both families were invited to engage and hence offered to make a concrete intervention into the social and familial relationship between the two households.

This idea can be understood more clearly through consideration of the poem to Bridget Bertie that we have already examined. In the context of the Chetham's manuscript, gifted to the countess herself, the poem would have acted as a conventional gesture of praise and flattery. In the 'Cole' manuscript, likely circulated at Thame Park, the poem would have served as a reminder to

²¹ 'On the House of a Noble Knight, & worthy favourer Of my Muse' was presumably the same poem as 'Of Witham House, Oxfordshire, the house of a noble Knight, and favourer of my Muse'; see Appendix.

the Wenmans of the prestige and virtue of their nearby relations – a reminder which was blended in the collection as a whole with praise of some of their own members, perhaps with the idea of demonstrating the virtues which the two dynasties shared. The collection, carefully reshaped, could thus act as a buttress of dynastic pride and familial identity for both households, with Basse acting as a sort of anchor or conduit between the two. Because the Chetham's *Polyhymnia* did not contain any poems explicitly praising members of the Wenman family, its power to link the households in this way might appear more tenuous. What must be remembered however is that, in the Rycote manuscript, Basse himself acted as the principal link back to Thame Park and the Wenmans, meaning that his own professions of respect, and indeed his presentation of the gift itself, could serve to evoke the connection between the estates.

Several reasons can be posited as to why a pair of manuscripts touching upon the links between the residents of Thame Park and Rycote might have been assembled in the years between 1648 and 1653. The heads of the two households supported opposing sides during the civil war, Thomas Wenman as a parliamentarian and Montague Bertie as a royalist, yet both were defined by their committed efforts as peace commissioners seeking to reach an accommodation between the king and parliament (Carlyle 2004; Smith 2004). We do not know how the war affected the other members of those communities which lived in and around the two estates, but their shared proximity to the royalist headquarters at Oxford means that they were each likely to have experienced disruption, and there is evidence that both houses were occupied by royalist forces at different points (Lobel, 1962, 160-178).²² Basse may well have been attempting to diminish the memory of internal divisions and to heal rifts caused by the war when he shaped a collection dwelling on the links between the two households. Lack of any direct mention of the war may in this context have been a careful diplomatic gesture. If this was the case, then his project may have had particular significance once the war had ended, when both Wenman and Bertie appear to have withdrawn to their estates, and when there would have been a palpable need to rehabilitate local relationships. Lady Bridget's second marriage introduced a new branch into the family network and may itself have stimulated the desire for a renewal of relations between the houses, even if the *Polyhymnia* did not celebrate that event directly. The relative calm of the years following the war may also have offered an opportunity for the revival of cultural activity within households such as those of Thame Park and Rycote, thus appearing to Basse as an opportune moment in which

²² Information on the Bodleian Rycote website, <<http://rycote.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/the-english-civil-wars-and-Interregnum>>, accessed 22 December 2014.

to circulate a collection which combined fresh creativity with nostalgia for past generations and events.²³

The nature of Basse's poetry as a function of his service role is key in this regard, since it was only by drawing upon his established reputation as a servant of the Wenmans and by matching his rhetorical strategies to his status as such that he could convincingly have contributed to the familial dynamics of his employers and patrons. He made that function visible in the *Polyhymnia* through a variety of means. The first and most obvious of these was his manipulation of the conventional rhetorical modes of dedication and panegyric. We have already seen that the collection as a whole was offered in the first poem to Bridget Bertie who, Basse claims, was called 'Polihymnia' by her parents (f. 5v) and therefore gave the collection its name. The poem combines the gesture of offering and dedicating the collection to Bertie with the claim that the poems themselves rely upon her for their emergence:

For had not you, into this twofold light
Of Muse-befreinding Phoebus, & your owne
Commanded them, my slender Poems might
In darke obscuritye haue slept vnknowne,
Whence, so by you redeem'd, These (as your right,
Illustrious Lady) wait on you alone,
Their life to lengthen, by depending on
Your Name & vertues ... (f. 6r)

Basse thus uses the dedication to register his own deferential humility and reliance upon the dedicatee. This was a technique which had been employed throughout his writings. The *Pastoral Elegies* of 1602 were dedicated to Lady Tasburgh, Richard Wenman's mother, in recognition of her 'honourable encouragements' and with the hope that in the future he would be able 'to make some more acceptable composition with your bounty' (Bond 1893, 35). The latter phrase implied that patronage like hers was integral to his own efforts as a writer. Despite the fact that it was an elegy mourning the death of Prince Henry, *Great Brittaines Sunnes-Set* was dedicated to Richard Wenman himself (Bond 1893, 91) and, though the work treated an event of national significance, approached its topic by invoking the shared grief of master and servant. That approach culminated in a remarkable image of sympathetic unity which figured the poet as simultaneously serving and being served by his lord:

²³ It is worth noting that if a professional scribe was hired to produce the manuscript, rather than it being copied by Basse himself, then this would indicate the seriousness with which it was treated by the Wenmans (who would presumably have commissioned such work) and provide further evidence both of the collection's real significance as a contribution to inter-family relations, and of the Wenmans' own willingness to employ Basse as an agent of some prominence within their personal affairs.

To you I therefore weepe: To you alone
 I shew the image of your teares, in mine;
 That mine (by shewing your teares) may be show'n
 To be like yours, so faithfull, so divine ... (Bond 1893, 93)

Again then Basse's poetic offering in fact revealed itself to be an expression of his own reliance upon and obligation to his addressee.

Allied to the act of dedication was the panegyric purpose of much of the poetry in the *Polyhymnia* manuscripts, evident in the Chetham's *Polyhymnia* in the poems treating Bridget Bertie, Francis Norris, Elizabeth Cary and the 'Noble Knight' of Wytham House. Again though, Basse's praise is often one which conceives itself as reliant upon the very subjects he praises. In his poem to Francis Norris he asks:

... what doth moue
 The Lawrell-louing Phoebus to allow
 The neuer fadeing favours of his love
 To winde themselues about my simple brow? (f. 7v)

He goes on to suggest that it is Apollo's desire to see Norris praised, rather than anything to do with his own worth as a poet, and concludes 'I iustly owe my Musique to this name' (f. 8v). He similarly begins his poem to Elizabeth Cary by asking 'What happy song might my Muse take in hand / (Great Lady) to deserue your Muses eare?' (f. 9r), again implying that the driving force behind any poetic success he might achieve resided with Cary as its addressee rather than with Basse himself as author. Thus, although Basse's panegyrics undoubtedly offered praise as one aspect of his duty as a servant and client, they also expressed an intimate sense of professional and artistic reliance upon those who facilitated, sanctioned and received his work.

This theme of mutual creative dependence is echoed in Basse's depictions of the idealised social order which he credits his patrons with maintaining on their estates. His poem to Francis Norris celebrates in Rycote a place:

Where ample lands, in ample hands are plac'd
 And ancient deeds with ancient coats descend:
 Where Noble blood combin'd with Noble spirit
 Forefathers fames, doth with their formes inherit.

...
 Where Loyalty, with Piety is infus'd,
 And publique rights are cherish'd with their owne ... (f. 8r)

The flourishing of the estate here rests upon the liberality of its lords and their respect for 'publique rights', but the mutual contract of service between the owners of Rycote and their dependents also offers the Norrises a key sphere in which to demonstrate their virtue and nobility. They are likewise rewarded

in this regard with the gift of Basse's praise. The same message is implicit in the poem 'On the House of a Noble Knight' which, in a conventional conceit of the country house poem, dwells upon the munificence of the house and its lord towards all classes of resident and guest:

The stately Chimney peece there, not disdaynes
 T' expose her herrauldry, to th'smokey staynes
 Of lib'rall fires, nor doth the daynty roome
 Nicely distast, the hot and dayly fume
 Of the full furnish'd board; but to the tast
 As to the eye, affordes all free repast,
 And in proportion such, as to the bare
 And indigent, still left a pious share.
 Wherin I marke, That what sometimes presents
 Least shew, may proue the best of ornaments.
 A dwelling rich, that has a ragged dore,
 Armes much adorne *the* gate, but almes much more. (ff. 44r-v)

The poem presents an idealised picture of estate hierarchy in which the generosity of its lord fulfils the needs of its lowlier members. This is a mutual economy however and what is crucial for the functioning of both this poem and the *Polyhymnia* as a whole is the role that Basse and his poetry play. As a servant and client Basse implicitly depicts himself as a beneficiary of his patron's magnanimity, but as a poet he contributes to and sustains the estate's reciprocal economy with the gift of his recognition and praise. By reflecting rhetorically in poems such as these his unique position as a servant-poet who both depended upon and benefited his addressees, he would almost certainly have given credence to his own attempt to reinforce the ties between Thame Park and Rycote.

We have already noted that Basse may have undertaken that attempt in direct response to the civil war, returning to poems which evoked idealised memories of harmonious estate life as a way of ameliorating some of the divisions and disturbances which the conflict had thrown up. If that was the case, then his project was also surely aided by his very real status as such a long-standing employee. Basse may have been able to call upon his rhetorical skill in celebrating values of mutual respect and obligation but, with a career in service to the Wenmans lasting half a century, he also stood as a tangible embodiment of such values. He would in this sense have been both a fitting and a convincing mouthpiece for messages of goodwill, friendship or reconciliation. His proven fidelity may also have granted him a somewhat privileged position in offering such messages to his superiors. Certainly it would have given a particular poignancy to the *Polyhymnia's* nostalgic tone, since Basse could claim to offer living memories of happier (or at least more idealised) moments in the families' history, and to have witnessed first-hand those amities they may have been seeking to restore.

The above interpretation reveals the *Polyhymnia* to be a rich and multifaceted example of the way a presentation manuscript could be employed in early modern England. Such manuscripts are, understandably, most often understood as tools for soliciting material patronage or preferment from patrons or dedicatees. Henry Woudhuysen has said that 'The presentation manuscript, the book as gift ... was a powerful weapon in the quest for patronage' which 'flattered the recipient's vanity and could win the donor a reward of some kind' (1996, 90). Manuscripts in the author's own hand 'must have made, or at least have been intended to make, a particularly personal appeal' (88). Harold Love has similarly said that 'In relationships of patronage and dependence, the client would present manuscripts upwards, either as a bid for reward or an expression of gratitude' (1998, 179). What is interesting about the *Polyhymnia* (in both its forms) is that although Basse was indeed an employee and client of his addressees, the collection seems to reveal a far more complex set of functions than the mere solicitation of reward or favour. Indeed, Basse's age, experience and apparent independence of means by this stage of his life suggest that the collection probably did not embody a quest for preferment in any conventional sense, since his position and security were already well established. The *Polyhymnia* undoubtedly wove together threads of recognition, gratitude and deference, and may have served in part to maintain his esteem amongst his addressees as he aged. It also, however, recorded details about the history and social connections of the Wenman and Norris families, made a potentially significant intervention into the cultural politics of their Oxfordshire milieu and indicated Basse's own importance within that milieu. It allowed Basse to draw together and preserve elements of his own biography and poetic achievement, to reflect on social themes and, as we shall see below, to pursue literary agendas which spread beyond the reiteration of personal and professional obligations alone. Perhaps it will seem obvious to state that presentation manuscripts were often likely to have enfolded multiple cultural functions. Yet the Chetham's *Polyhymnia* offers us a particularly interesting example of how this could work in practice. It may be valuable to scholars in the future asking how such manuscripts' various uses related to one another, and especially how their imbrication in patronage relationships was affected by the more personal creative and ideological imperatives of their authors and/or scribes.

5. *Other Aspects of the Polyhymnia*

With this in mind it is significant that the *Polyhymnia* constituted not only a tool of service deployed in Basse's relationships with his employers and patrons, but also a space within which he explored the poetic possibilities of a wider range of social subjects and perspectives. Many of these seem likely to have derived from his experiences as a figure who mediated between different

ranks and levels of society within his own locale, and perhaps particularly his experiences as a servant. The three longest and most distinctive poems in the Chetham's manuscript – 'The Youth in the Boate', 'An Elegie of a rare singing Bull-fynch', and 'Of the foure mile Course on Bayards-greene, sixe times run over by two famous Footmen Patrique Dorning & William O-Farrell' – are heterogeneous in their genre and subject-matter, but also share certain key features which are crucial in this regard. 'The Youth in the Boate' is a long allegorical narrative in two parts, reminiscent of the ballad form in its use of what is often called common metre, and brought to a conclusion with a 'Morall' advocating acceptance of those things which are most beneficial to us, even where they do not accord with our loftiest desires or aspirations. The poem counterpoints the stories of two contrasting figures: a wealthy youth forced to cast a contemptuous woman with whom he is besotted from his boat, and a poor fisherman's son who rescues and finds love with the castaway. The 'Elegie of a rare singing Bull-fynch' is in part a mock-elegy and in part a comic animal fable which describes the birds who attend the bullfinch's funeral. It again combines moralisation of the various birds' fitness or otherwise to attend the event with an engaging narrative style, underpinned by its swiftly moving iambic tetrameter couplets. 'Of the foure mile Course on Bayards-greene' is, as its title implies, a lighthearted mock-epic account of a race between two footmen which took place at Baynards Green, just less than twenty miles north of Oxford. It combines an entertaining account of the race itself with a coda (evidently written later) confessing that Basse composed this high-spirited poem in his youth, and offering a more sober account of the spiritual virtues necessary to win the soul's 'race' toward heavenly redemption.

What can immediately be said about these poems is that they turn from the sophisticated rhetoric of panegyric and commendation evident in the poems quoted above to explore genres and forms of a more accessible and popular kind. They experiment with genres including fable, parable and allegory, and combine humour with a strong narrative instinct and, where appropriate, straightforward moral exposition. To this extent they again raise the question of whether Basse produced such poems to be enjoyed by a wide domestic audience, including perhaps not only his noble patrons and their children but their servants as well. Such a conclusion would reinforce our understanding of Basse's poetry as an extension of his service role, but at the same time indicate his interest in addressing strata of the estate community (at either Thame Park or Rycote) beyond those high-ranking members whose favour underpinned his position.

This possibility is made more probable by the nature of the subject matter which Basse treats in these poems. Whilst the first part of 'The Youth in the Boate' describes the journey of a somewhat courtly figure, who sails in an ornate boat with 'Oares [of] Ivory' and 'Sterne [of] guilt' (f. 12v) and is largely consumed by his own introspective amatory quandaries, the second part (which is substantially longer) draws an affectionate picture of the working-class fisherman's son and

his parents. That picture features carefully selected details of the fishermen's everyday existence – the 'plaine & poore' condition of their boat (which they are nevertheless content with) (f. 21v); the son's 'motley gowne' (f. 23v); the 'country antidot[s]' his neighbours bring to revive the half-drowned woman (f. 24r). It also incorporates repeated arguments for the virtue of the meek and lowly, suggesting that a 'humble' heart so pleases heaven that '[i]t, mercy out of raging seas, / And helpe from ruine drawes' (f. 33r), and that 'want do's make *vs* better men / Then wealth' (f. 37v). In this context it is significant that Basse's narrator explicitly praises the castaway's decision to remain with the fishermen, whilst fashioning for himself the narratorial persona of a 'simple Swayne' (f. 42r), who professes his own lack of learning and his 'simple tongue' (f. 20v).

The 'Elegie of a ... Bull-fynch', because of the specific date given in its full title ('June 19: 1648'), might be thought to encode some political allegory relating to the second civil war. Yet if such an allegory is present it is extremely hard to decipher, and it may be that the poem was instead provoked by the real (if trivial) death of a pet and actually sought to diffuse or turn away from the realities of the war. Thus, although the narrator suggests that the bullfinch may have died of 'greife / To see and feele so cold a June' (f. 45v), perhaps in reference to the resumption of fighting in the summer of 1648, he then digresses self-consciously into lighter terrain, so that the poem becomes in part a kind of satire on local or provincial society. The idle cuckoo is criticised as one 'that liues at large, / And on the parish leaues his charge' (f. 47v) whilst the narrative concludes with Basse proclaiming:

My Muses meaning, it is this,
 Too much retir'dnesse, feare, or folly,
 Jearing, or rude, or melancholly,
 To civill meetings (if they list)
 May come, but if away not mis'd.
 Who is too much himselfe alone,
 Is nones companion but his owne.
 Who only is for others, he
 Must to himselfe needs wanting be.
 ...
 Dissembling, foolish, faynt, or dull,
 Doe nothing honest to the full.
 But to be good, (without deceit)
 In all good actions, that's compleate. (ff. 49v-50r)

The poem's reference to the 'parish' and to 'civill meetings' suggests that it has become a gentle skit upon parochial life, and whilst it is hard to tell whether its facetious tone was actually aimed at the stock character types it depicted or provincial morality more generally, either may have inspired knowing amusement when delivered by Basse in the environs of Thame Park or Moreton.

‘Of the four mile Course’ is interesting in this regard because it explicitly takes two racing footmen as its subject, as well as a country sport which (like Dover’s ‘Cotswold Games’) would probably have provided entertainment to a wide demographic of local residents. The poem is crucial to our discussion in that it formed the culmination point of both versions of the *Polyhymnia* – a work which occupied a significant position as the final piece in the collection – but at the same time placed serving subjects unapologetically at its centre. It is true that the poem adopts a mock-epic style in its treatment of the footrace, but it is important to note that this does not translate into straightforward mockery or denigration of the footmen themselves. The tone of the poem is in fact irreverent and celebratory and whilst it is humorous in its portrayal, also insinuates that the footmen themselves are individuals not unworthy of consideration and commemoration. Thus the poem opens:

The Pegasean Lady, that the deeds
 Of mighty sinnewed, & well-dieted steeds,
 Was sometime pleas’d, to memorize, among
 The weightier subjects of her numerous song,
 Lest where inferiour actions are related,
 Mens worthyer acts should passe vncelebrated,
 Now sings: the six-fold Race ... (f. 50v)

The suggestion of a parallel here between the footmen and ‘well-dieted steeds’ exhibits the bathetic comedy typical of mock-epic. However the imputation of the third couplet, that their exertions should in fact be viewed as ‘worthyer acts’, can be read as a defense of Basse’s portrayal of the serving-class in his poetry. Thus, after an energetic account of the race (which O’Farrell eventually wins), the poem concludes on an elegiac note which blends awareness of the frivolity of his subject with a nostalgic impetus to record and preserve the provincial scene:

Thus not alone with print of Charriot wheele
 Or forged plate of Coursers barbed heele,
 Hath this Olympus euer trampled been,
 But now and then, the buskin trac’d the Greene
 And th’infant Eyebright, and the dasye proud
 Vnder the whisking sandall scarsely bow’d
 When as this Muse & Course were neighbours young
 And one lent Eccho to the others song
 Those then, that of perenniall Poesie mis’d
 Vanish’d in their owne shouts, These here subsist
 In Shepherds songs (though litle state it beares,
 Yet made heroicall, by heroicall eares. (ff. 52v-53r)

The final line reiterates Basse’s characteristic argument that it was in part his noble audience which elevated his poetry. There is also however a contrasting note of affection for his serving subjects, evident in the assertion that those who had

otherwise 'Vanish'd ... here subsist / In Shepherds songs'. The lines recognise that Basse's poem has memorialised lives that would otherwise be forgotten, and imply that such lives are worth memorialising, even if they are of 'litle state' to many eyes. They also assert this as an important function of Basse's own verse.

As will already be evident, to point this out is not to suggest that such poems outwardly challenged the orderly social ethos which Basse elsewhere invoked. These works were in fact an integral part of the collection which he offered to his employers, and can often be interpreted as endeavouring to buttress a hierarchical outlook. Thus 'The Youth in the Boate', whilst dwelling on the dignity of its working-class characters, also endorses the power of their patrons and benefactors. Basse-as-narrator muses that the 'gracious heau'ens, for poor ones sake / Doe often blesse the greater' and imagines a 'happy heart, that most depends / For helpes, on hands aboue' (f. 38v), again seeming to idealize a social system based around responsibly administered aristocratic largesse. Similarly the 'Elegie', in condemning those birds who are 'Proud, idle, careless, ignorant', lack 'good manners', and only 'seeme to mourne / By their outsides' (ff. 47v-58r), attacked many of the faults which Basse had specifically defended the serving class from in the *Sword and Buckler* at the start of his career, and which were a classic preoccupation of didactic literature about service in the period (see, for instance, Rivlin 2012, 15).²⁴ The poem can thus be read as implicitly promulgating the values of good and loyal service whilst also reflecting on communal relations more generally.

'Of the four mile Course' is again a crucial culmination point in this respect, for the way it simultaneously revels in and moderates its portrayal of the footmen. We have already seen that Basse defended his choice of subject-matter whilst acknowledging the role of his noble auditors in endorsing his verse. He went on to echo this duality at the end of the poem. Noting his own youth when he had composed the main body of the narrative, he suggested that it might still 'please some men / (Perchance) as youthfull now, as I was then' (f. 53r), but also confessed the limited consequence of such 'trivially pastime[s]', before turning to the spiritual message of his revised conclusion. He thus offered a restrained perspective on the import of his portrayal of Dorning and O'Farrell, whilst also refusing to dismiss them out-of-hand as figures of literary interest.

Hopefully it will by now be clear that the poetry of the *Polyhymnia* constituted not only a vehicle by which Basse could enact aspects of the service role he performed for the Wenmans and their relations, but also a more variegated creative enterprise. The poems described above moved away from courtly panegyric and the solicitation of patronage, attached value to servant

²⁴ Such literature was often keen to condemn 'eye-service', which appeared outwardly loyal but hid self-interested motives.

figures and scenes from common life, and began to explore the ways in which poetic form could be used to reflect or register diverse aspects of Basse's own experience as a servant. As a result the *Polyhymnia* gives us a glimpse both of literature shaping service, and of service being used to shape literature. I would like to conclude by asking how its rediscovery might be useful to scholars studying the intersection between these two fields in the future.

6. *Future Potential*

The issue I turn to first is one of subjectivity. Important recent studies have become interested in the way the labours of work and service (and their opposites – unemployment and poverty) were related to the subjective experience of members of the lower and working classes.²⁵ Yet it is also the case that investigations of early modern service have often had to rely upon literary representations of servants and workers, commonly in combination with contemporary polemical tracts on the subject, because of the lack of writings left by actual servants themselves (see, for instance, Anderson 2005, 9). Basse then is immediately of interest because he worked for an extended period as both retainer and poet, and explored many themes relevant to service fulsomely in his work. He provides us with the opportunity to study the poems of a writer who emerged from an often hidden or ignored sector of society, in a body of non-canonical texts which have themselves been largely forgotten, perhaps in part because of Basse's relatively humble status.²⁶ He also offers us a provincial perspective, fostered certainly in the country houses of wealthy Oxfordshire landowners, but at some distance (for most of his life, it would seem) from the London hubs of the Inns of Court, the court itself, Parliament, and even the now much-studied theatres.

Basse's work then might be used to think further about how early modern service culture could be viewed from within, and offers the opportunity to study both the way an early modern servant articulated his own sense of self and the way he portrayed other servants and members of the working class. I have broached a relatively conservative reading of the *Polyhymnia* here, in which Basse apparently offered no resistance to or critique of his professional position, and instead expressed gratitude about his status as a beneficiary of reciprocal estate communities founded on rank and patronage. Such a reading might itself be of interest in relation to ideas such as those of David Evett's concerning 'volitional primacy' (2005, 27-28 and chapter 7 *passim*), namely the means by which servants could construe service as a product of choice rather than imposition (and hence perhaps discover in it the possibilities of

²⁵ See, for instance, Fumerton 2006; Dowd and Korda 2011, especially the introduction.

²⁶ On the turn towards non-canonical texts see, for instance, Howard 2011, 244.

satisfaction or self-fulfilment). Equally, though other critics might discover possibilities for tension or conflict in his writing, conscious or unconscious, and hence relate it to some of the fault lines inherent in any culture based fundamentally upon service. What for instance were the implications of juxtaposing courtly panegyric with works which portrayed and idealised figures of lower rank in the *Polyhymnia*? What were Basse's intentions when he offered to his patrons moralistic narratives which commended beneficence and good governance whilst also praising, on occasion, the meek and lowly?

Studies of service have often turned to the problem of power (Evet 2005, 21), how it was negotiated in relationships between servants and their employers, and how it underpinned literary representations of service. The *Polyhymnia* provokes questions on this topic because, whilst it proclaims to offer poetry in service to its dedicatees, the nature of the manuscript also raises questions about Basse's own agency and influence as an intermediary in family affairs and a representative of the Wenmans. Was he acting alone or with their blessing when he presented his gift to the countess of Lindsey? How did his poetry serve to advance his own position and status as a servant? And how might the Wenmans have benefited from his capabilities as a medium of communication and display? In raising such questions the Chetham's manuscript has the potential to contribute to future studies of the relationship between service and power, especially where such studies are interested in the servant's point of view.

The issue of performance may well be key in this regard. Elizabeth Rivlin has suggested that as peripatetic, wage-based service displaced more traditional, intimate bonds between servants and their employers, service became inherently more performative (Rivlin 2012, 17). Basse's career though suggests a more complex story. His poetry seems to offer evidence of the intimate place poetic performance could occupy in a life of committed personal service, yet it must also have functioned in part as a commodity for soliciting favour and reward. The *Polyhymnia*, similarly, testifies to the power of deeply-felt personal alliances, but may itself be a specially prepared performance designed to sure up such alliances under the pressure of fragmentation. What then, it might be asked, did the literary text as performance allow Basse to bring to his service role, what tensions did his performances reveal, and how did these relate to wider changes in service culture over the course of the seventeenth century?

I wish to mention finally some of the ways in which an awareness of Basse's professional identity might advance literary study, rather than vice versa. The most evident of these concerns genre. Basse's innovative engagement with genre was one of his defining characteristics as a poet, and the *Polyhymnia* itself offers fulsome evidence of his skill in this regard. The texts contained therein thus have much to offer scholars interested in the way writers working from a service perspective could reshape and deploy established literary forms

for their own purposes. I should also note here that this is not only true of the *Polyhymnia*, which needs to be set in the context of Basse's work as a whole in order to be fully understood. Many of Basse's other writings suggest the importance of his experience as a servant to his literary enterprise – from its obvious role in *Sword and Buckler*, where he used poetry explicitly to defend the serving class, to the *Three Pastoral Elegies*, where he subtly used the first-person narrative perspective of an attendant figure to reveal the amorous tribulations of the poem's other courtly protagonists. Studying such work might provoke further reflection on the way service itself could function as a literary trope and device.

The *Polyhymnia's* idealisation of hierarchical and reciprocal local society in the wake of the civil war also raises questions about the manuscript's political and ideological significance. As we have already seen, Basse was possibly a friend or acquaintance of the royalist and Anglican writer Izaak Walton. With this in mind the nostalgic tenor of the *Polyhymnia* might be read as betraying a conservative distaste, of which Walton would have approved, for currents of social radicalism unleashed by the revolution. His work then usefully proposes the question of how service was used as a political or social signifier, in both literary texts and elsewhere, during the decades of the civil war and interregnum, and particularly of how Basse's evocation of a nostalgic social order related him to other authors who made service their subject at that time. This said, the *Polyhymnia* did not express a duty of service either to king or parliament (or indeed to any other political faction), and so the manuscript also raises questions about how ideologies of service and social hierarchy were employed beyond the spheres of rigidly partisan and polemical discourse, and how factors such as localism and personal identity could inflect literary responses to the upheavals of the war.

7. Conclusion

The questions and avenues of study proposed above are not intended to be definitive or limiting. They are offered instead in order to demonstrate the possibilities inherent in a return to Basse's work, and some of the rewards which might result from his incorporation into the study of early modern service. The *Polyhymnia* manuscript itself is a beautiful and intriguing material object which includes a substantial quantity of unpublished poetry deserving of further study. It is of particular value though, as I hope I have shown, for offering us an insight into the first-hand literary endeavours of a writer whose long career was shaped by the profession of service, and whose work was defined by a constant interplay between these aspects of his life.

Appendix

Contents of the Chetham's ('Corser') MS	Contents of the 'Cole' MS (drawn from Bond 1893, 147-148)
<p>'To the Right Noble and vertuous Lady, the Lady Bridget Countesse of Lindsey, Barronesse of Ersbie, & of Ricot &c.' (ff. 5r-6r)</p>	<p>'To the Right noble and virtuous Lady, the Lady Bridget, Countess of Lindsey, and Baroness of Eresbie and Ricot, in verse'.</p>
<p>'Verses To the Right Honorable Francis Lord Norreys Earle of Berkshiere (in his dayes)' (ff. 7r-8v)</p>	<p>'To the Right Hon. Francis Lord Norreys, Earl of Berkshire (in his dayes).'</p>
<p>'To the Lady Falkland vppon her goeing into Ireland. 2. Sonnets.' (ff. 9r-9v)</p>	<p>'To the Right Hon. The Lady Aungier (then wife of Sir Thos. Wenman) upon her coming out of Ireland, and return thither.'</p>
<p>'Of a great Fload.' (ff. 9v-10r)</p>	<p>'To the Right Hon. the Lady Viscountess Falkland, upon her going into Ireland, two Sonnets.'</p>
<p>'Of the Raine-bowe.' (ff. 10r-10v)</p>	<p>'The Youth in the Boat.'</p>
<p>'The Youth in the Boate.' (ff. 11r-41v) (including: 'The Second part Of the The Youth in the Boate' (ff. 19r-39v) and 'The Morall' (ff. 40r-41v)</p>	<p>'Acrosticks.' 'Of the truly noble, virtuous, and learned Lady, the Lady Agnes Wenman.' 'Of the Lady Penelope Dynham.' 'Of Mrs. Jane Wenman.'</p>
<p>'Of Pen and Pensill, vppon A fayre & virtuous Ladyes Picture.' (ff. 42r-42v)</p>	<p>'Verses on the Chapel of Wadham College consecration, St. Peter's Day 1613.'</p>
<p>'On the House of a Noble Knight, & worthy favourer Of my Muse.' (ff. 43r-44v)</p>	<p>'On Caversham or Causham House.'</p>
<p>'An Elegie of a rare singing Bull-fynch, found dead in his Cage in the cold & wet June 19: 1648.' (ff. 45r-50r)</p>	<p>'Of Witham House, Oxfordshire, the house of a noble Knight, and favourer of my Muse.'</p>
<p>'Of the foure mile Course on Bayards-greene, sixe times run over by two famous Footmen Patrique Dorning & William O-Farrell.' (ff. 50v-55r and including: 'The Spirituall Race', ff. 53v-55r)</p>	<p>'Elegy on a Bullfinch, 1648.'</p>
	<p>'Of the Four Mile Course of Bayardes Green, sixe times over, by two famous Irish footmen, Patrick Dorning and William O'Farrell.'</p>
	<p>'L'Envoy.'</p>

Comparison of the contents of the variant manuscripts of the *Polyhymnia*

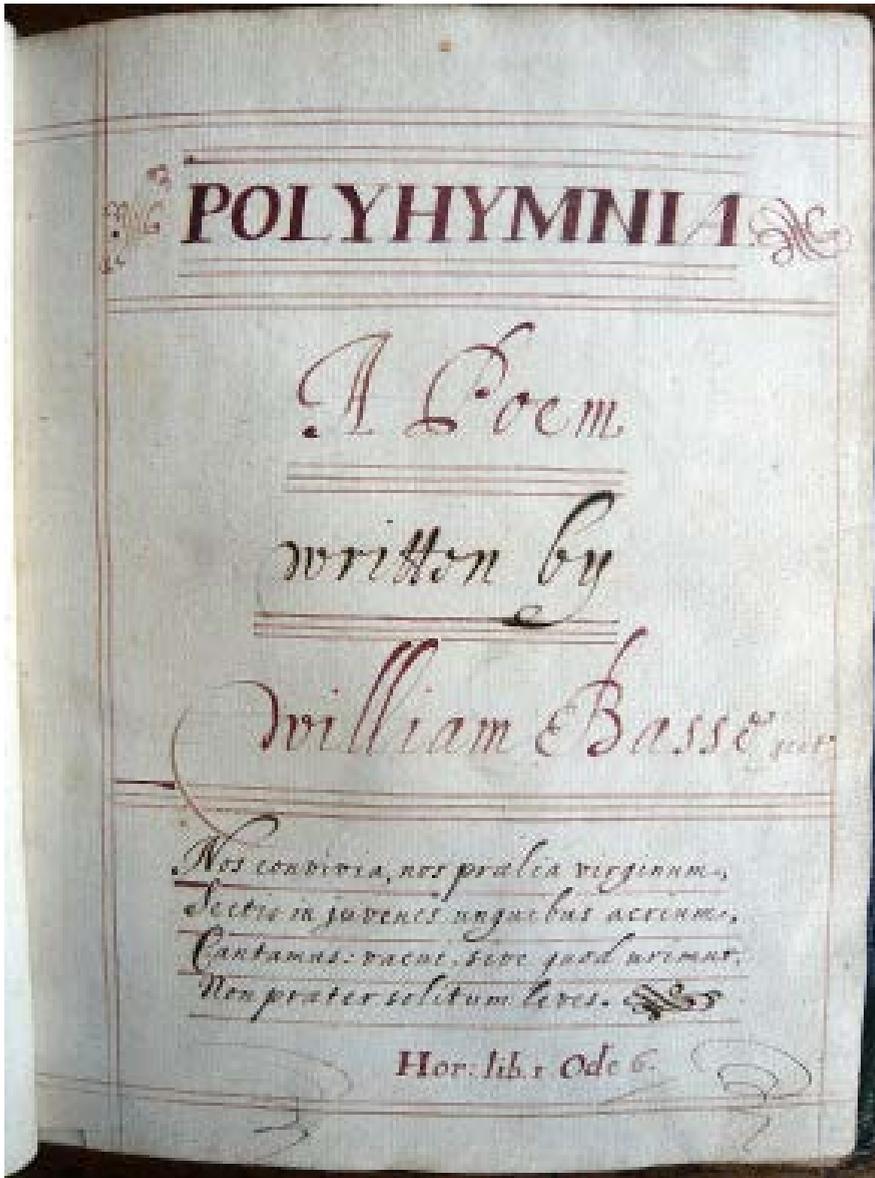


Fig. 1 - Title-page of William Basse's *Polyhymnia*: Chetham's Library, Manchester, MS Mun.A.3.54, f. 4r (all images reproduced by permission of Chetham's Library)

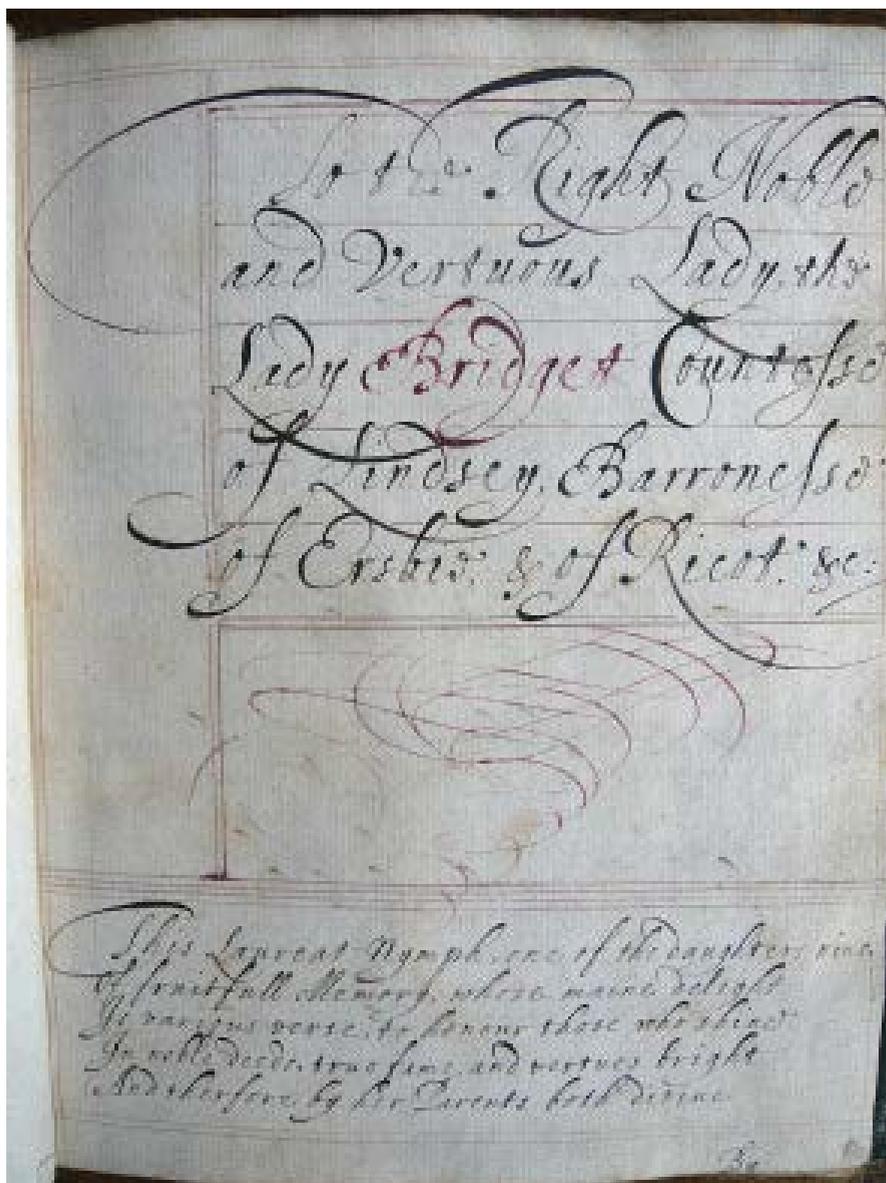


Fig. 2 - Title of the collection's opening poem to Bridget Bertie, countess of Lindsey, f. 5r

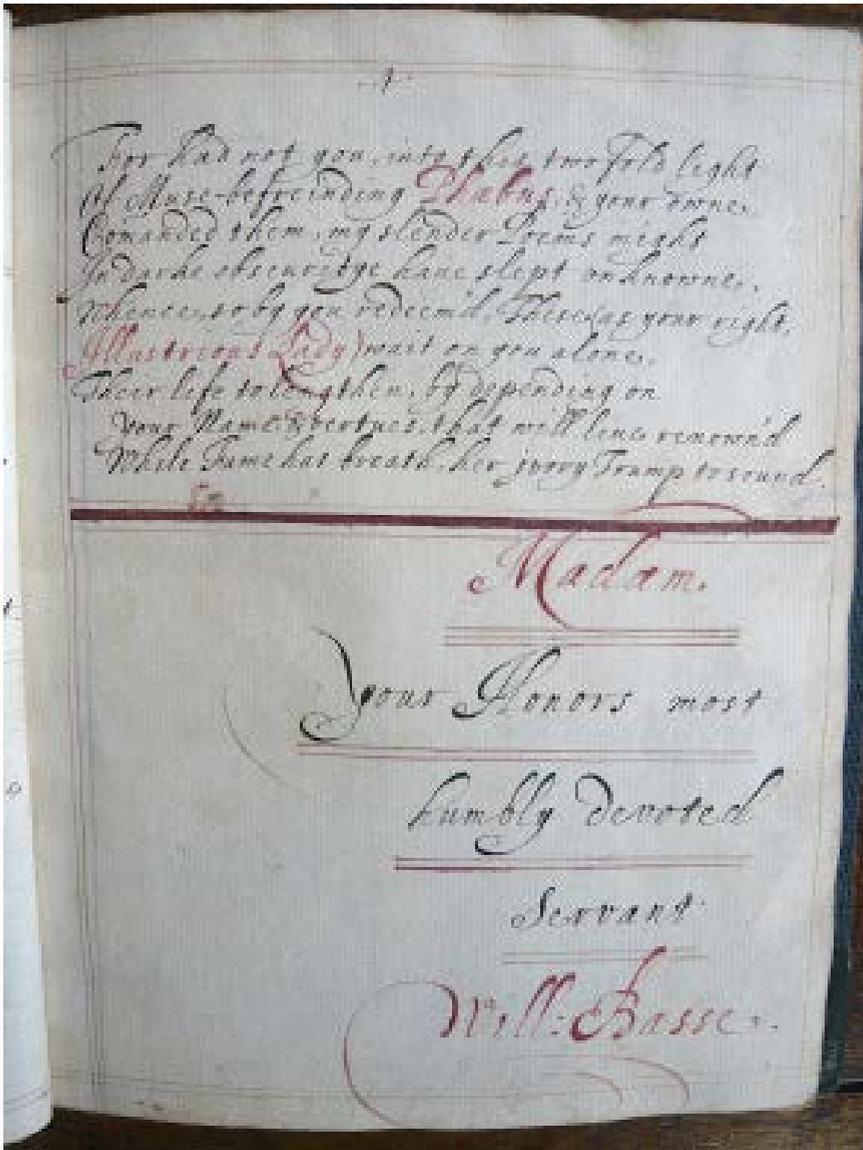


Fig. 3 - Subscription of the collection's opening poem to Bridget Bertie, countess of Lindsey, f. 6r

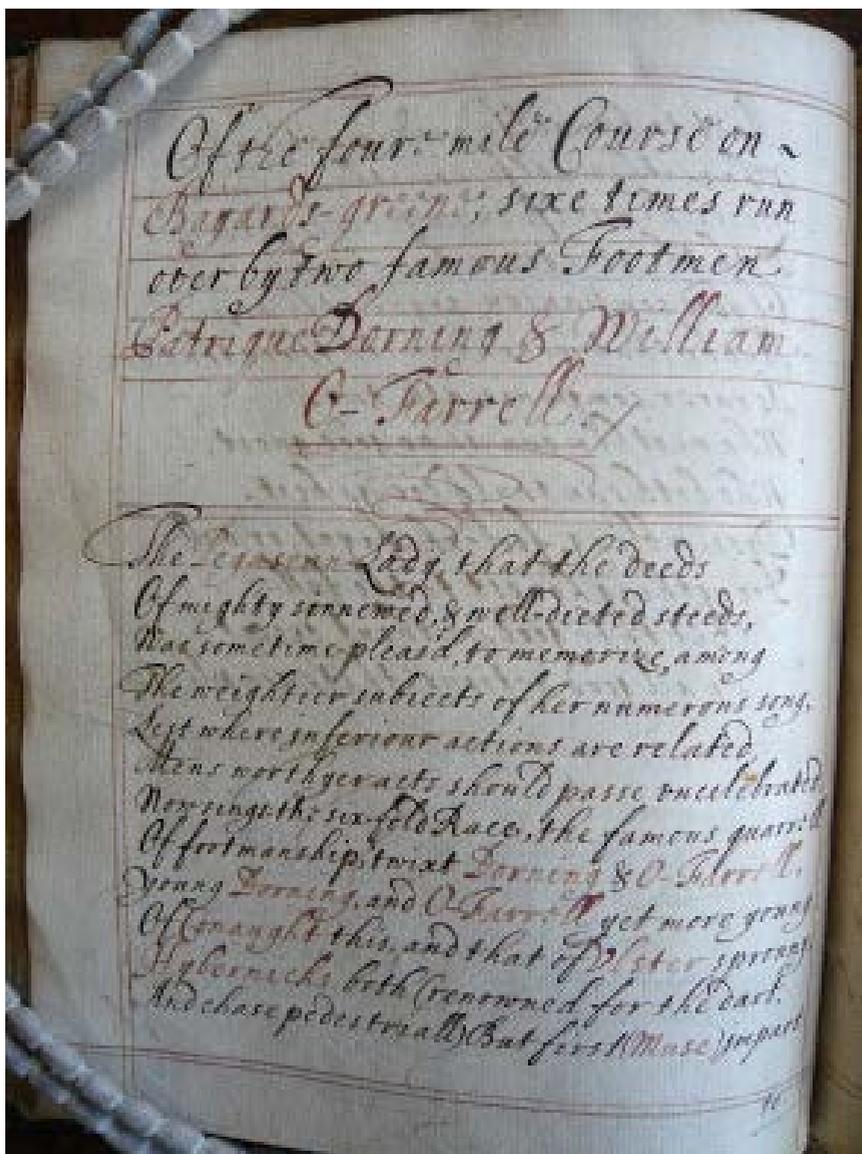


Fig. 4 - Title of the collection's final poem, describing 'the two famous Footmen Patrique Dorning & William O-Farrell', f. 50v

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Household Scribes and the Production of Literary Manuscripts in Early Modern England

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Abstract

In early modern English households, literate servants such as tutors, chaplains, stewards, secretaries, and ladies in waiting were well positioned to assist their employers in the assembly and copying of verse miscellanies, anthologies, and other literary manuscripts. Looking at several literary manuscripts, some with known servant contributions and others that suggest the participation of household retainers, the essay explores the likelihood that literate servants often performed scribal tasks above and beyond their formal job descriptions, even serving as scribe for their employers' hobbies and leisure activities. Although copying was an arduous task, servants appear to have viewed these duties not simply as part of their job but also as gift exchanges, as appeals for promotion or patronage, and as a means by which they might gain access to manuscript literature and literary circles. Studies of early modern letter writing have called attention to many of the copy tasks of literate household servants, but the integral role of literate servants in the collection, copying, and preservation of literary manuscripts deserves much more attention.

Keywords: Copyist, Household, Manuscript, Scribe, Servant, Verse Miscellany

In early modern English print culture, the names of publishers and printers appeared with regularity on title pages, where they earned book producers both credit for their labors and, occasionally, blame for a work's content. The standardization of producer attribution allowed the print industry to lead buyers to book stalls and to regulate the members of its official company, the Stationers. Although not every apprentice working the press was acknowledged in a publication, many of their names are nevertheless discoverable in the company's extensive records. As D.F. McKenzie notes, the Stationers' Register and other print industry documents 'probably represent the fullest account by far of any workforce in Early Modern England' (2002, 554).¹ In the same

¹ See also Arber 1875-1894.



time period, manuscript production was a much more anonymous process. The copyists who contributed to early modern literary manuscripts, from the casual scribbler to the practiced secretary, were rarely identified in the manuscripts or in contextual records. As Peter Beal has observed, print and manuscript production formed ‘a kind of paradoxical inversion’:

The wider the audience or market for the product, and the more mechanized the technology of production, the more detailed and personalized the information given about its production. Correspondingly, the narrower the audience, the more specifically targeted it is, and the more personalized both the means of production and mode of distribution ... the less need be said about it. (1998, 18)

Beal’s formula suggests that one place to look for these anonymous literary scribes is in the households of manuscript collectors and owners. Especially in the case of literary manuscripts assembled for the enjoyment of their owners, the copyists were likely to have been literate servants, friends, visitors, and neighbors close at hand. The familiarity of these copyists may have rendered their names unnecessary. Yet there is another equally sound explanation for their anonymity. Since the collecting of manuscript literature was a socially fashionable activity, those assisting a friend or employer in the enjoyment of this hobby might have eschewed labeling their activities as a labor or claiming their work as printers and craftsmen did (*ibid.*).²

The trend in manuscript studies of late, however, has been to look in another direction for the identity of these anonymous scribes – at the possibility that literary manuscript production was a commercial affair. Two pioneering studies by Harold Love and H.R. Woudhuysen are often cited for having uncovered evidence of professional and commercial scribal enterprises in the early years of print, and Beal is likewise credited for his work on the professional ‘feathery scribe’, whose hand appears in a variety of manuscripts, including a few that are literary (Woudhuysen 1996; Beal 1998; Love 1998). It is perhaps ironic, then, that these scholars also offer so much evidence that manuscript production was frequently non-commercial, and that literary manuscripts, in particular, were often compiled from materials acquired through social networks and copied within the collector’s household or by means of *ad hoc* commissions. Love, for instance, uses the term ‘scribal publication’ to describe not just ‘author publication’ and ‘entrepreneurial publication’, but also the ‘non-commercial replication’ of manuscripts, or what he calls ‘user publication’ (47). The seeming contradictions in these studies have much to do with their breadth; they discuss a wide range of manuscript

² For more on the fashionability of collecting manuscript literature, see Marotti 1995. For discussions of the ambiguous social status of pen-men, see Beal 1998, 10 and throughout, and Goldberg 1991.

producers, and they compare practices across several decades. These studies are likewise attempting to give definition to a culture that produced very disparate products, from the university poetic miscellany to the subscription newsletter to the sought-after libel distributed widely as propaganda. Unlike the products of the print industry, the variety of manuscripts from the period were not produced or disseminated in any standardized way. Thus the studies by Beal, Love, and Woudhuysen document both professional and amateur manuscript production and prove invaluable for their many rich examples of household manuscript production, for their insightful analyses of the roles of secretaries and amanuenses in the household, and for their judicious admissions that, before the middle of the seventeenth century, there is little direct evidence that *literary* manuscripts were produced and sold on speculation.³

Mark Bland offers a helpful distinction between commercial and non-commercial manuscripts that allows me to situate household copyists amidst the many types of pen-men discussed by Beal, Love, and Woudhuysen. Even when non-commercial manuscripts were used to advertise one's skills or to woo a patron, 'their distribution through a network depended on connection, not coin' (2010, 83). Based on this definition, a collector's commission of a long project from a scrivener or the purposefully broad distribution of a manuscript libel would not count strictly as commercial. Most literary manuscripts fall into Bland's non-commercial category. Professional copyists were occasionally employed in making literary manuscripts, but literary manuscript production was initiated, more often than not, by would-be owners seeking to make and record social and literary connections rather than by entrepreneurial copyists.⁴

This broader notion of non-commercial manuscript production is particularly useful in exploring verse miscellanies and other literary manuscripts produced for personal use, and it allows me to take a step back from the

³ Woudhuysen suggests that scriptorium publishing may have existed before the Restoration, but also concedes that it 'may also be a particular feature of the Restoration' (1996, 19). Beal argues that the feathery scribe worked with a scriptorium, though only a few of his products were literary (1998, 104 and throughout). Beal also summarizes the problem of finding evidence of early modern scribal enterprises (1-30). Love explains that, although he is exploring organized scribal publication, 'it would be a mistake to assume too great a degree of regularity and too high a degree of organization in the procedure by which scribal texts were written, copied and communicated' in the period (1998, 32). More recently, Eckhardt has argued for a re-examination of 'amateur involvement' in the production of manuscript verse miscellanies with attention to household as an important locus for manuscript production (2009, 18-20).

⁴ Woudhuysen acknowledges that many of the period's surviving manuscripts appear to be non-commercial (1996, 145). His careful and qualified presentation of evidence is exemplified on pp. 25 and 157-158, where he notes that only a few verse miscellanies seem to be produced by known professional scribes, and when professional hands do appear in miscellanies, this is not necessarily evidence of a commercial enterprise.

direction of manuscript studies to reexamine the production of verse miscellanies within households. Those who undertook to assemble these manuscripts needed access to manuscript networks, leisure time for a hobby, and a good understanding of the pleasures and values of participating in these social practices. It is conventional to describe miscellany compilation as a 'coterie' activity, but such a label suggests that manuscript networks were comprised primarily of friends and family members of relatively equal class status, and it belies the broader participation of literate servants in literary collecting. The potentially substantive role of the literate household servant in manuscript production deserves much more attention, as does the possibility that servant-employer relationships may have been integral to the manuscript connections and networks that carried poetry from collector to collector. As I explore the likelihood that secretaries, tutors, chaplains, and stewards were the anonymous copyists of many literary manuscripts, I consider especially what it might mean for retainers to serve in this way, performing sometimes arduous tasks in the interest of their employers' hobbies. Many of these literate servants were not secretaries or copyists by definition, but their skills in using a pen were nevertheless tapped when the leisure activities of their employers required a scribe. Their *ad hoc* labors, which were to varying degrees professional but also non-commercial, and which situated them somewhere between members of a literary circle and professional scribes, help to resolve some of the contradictions in recent accounts of manuscript culture. By rebalancing just a bit the valuable evidence uncovered by scholars of manuscript production, literate servants emerge as core participants in early modern manuscript culture.

The observations in this article offer a subtle correction not only to research that explores commercial manuscript production in the age of print but also to those studies of coterie circulation where copyists, when they are acknowledged at all, have either been reduced to the status of hired scribes or absorbed into coterie circles as equals.⁵ The term 'coterie' is often intentionally artificial, a line drawn by critics around a set of individuals in order to examine something they have in common, whether an association with a particular court or patron, an affiliation with an educational institution, or participation in a literary exchange. The term is also used for characterizing

⁵ The seminal book on coterie culture, Marotti 1986, tends to see coterie circles as groups of equals and to absorb potential servants into this circle. See also O'Callaghan, who writes that 'convivial practices [such as verse exchange] were intended to facilitate social exchanges among the elite and affirm social identity, designating the participants as cultivated and learned men fit to participate in the structures of governance' (2007, 5). Other pertinent studies of coterie culture include McDowell 2009. Although class difference is addressed in these books in discussions of patronage and patronage circles, the potential centrality of high level servants and their employers to coterie culture is not examined in depth.

certain self-defining and self-idealizing early modern social and intellectual circles, and it is frequently employed in studies of friendship and sociability, where mutuality rather than service is the focus (see, especially, Trolander and Tenger 2007). Recent reevaluations of the term 'coterie' have argued that it obscures the actual social reach, complexity, overlap, and inclusivity and exclusivity of literary networks (see, for instance, de Groot 2006). Many recent scholars of manuscript circulation prefer to use 'literary community' and 'scribal network' instead of 'coterie', because these terms more readily capture the broad and flexible contours of working literary networks (see, for instance, Eckhardt 2009, 20; May and Wolfe 2010, 132-134).

My use of the term 'household' here is intended to build upon the idea of the broader literary network, even though a household is itself a somewhat circumscribed set of individuals, where participants, albeit of varying occupations and classes, share a sense of association and membership. By using 'household', I want to call attention to verse collectors' reliance on the proximity and convenience of literate household members and the easy reciprocity of favors that a household community allowed, though household members clearly had more extensive literary connections outside of this milieu that fed and were fed by the literary projects in the household. I am also using the term 'household' to better understand the shifting and ambiguous social positions of the anonymous literate servants who copied so many manuscripts for amateur collectors. Their employment as scribes functioned to both define their positions as servants and to enable them to broaden their own literary networks. As such, literate household servants occupy a unique position, not one that invites a fixed definition, but certainly one that invites more critical scrutiny.

Any of a number of household servants and retainers were probably called upon when a literary collector needed copy assistance. Mark Bland suggests that 'an employee who wrote regularly, such as a steward or tutor, might be asked to help with other transcriptions' (2010, 98). Woudhuysen cites the apt example of John Langley, a household steward and tutor who seems to have copied poetry for his master, Lionel Cranfield, the first Earl of Middlesex (1996, 84). Although evidence regarding personal secretaries is not plentiful, Woudhuysen has uncovered a few instances in which secretaries contributed to literary projects: Francis Bacon had retainers copy literature, Henry Wotton's secretary copied poems for Wotton or possibly for himself, and Rowland Woodward copied John Donne poems for his employer (1996, 83-84). The literary copying done by John Rolleston, William Cavendish's secretary, has also earned a great deal of attention (see, for instance, Kelliher 1993; Eckhardt 2009). We know of several cases in which family members assisted; Sir John Harington's daughters copied poems into British Library Manuscript Additional 36529, perhaps as academic exercises or for their own entertainment, but also perhaps as a form of service (Heale 2010, 150-155). Scriveners were sometimes commissioned for large projects, but it is doubtful that members of scribal professions such as law

clerks and scribes played a major part in copying literary manuscripts.⁶ And one cannot forget that many collectors ‘served as their own secretaries’ – this phrase is quite common – purposely assuming the role of literate servant for reasons of efficiency or as a gesture of humility and intimacy.

Although it would be advantageous (in the absence of names) to be able to generalize about those copyists who entered literary texts into early modern manuscripts, it is significant that they are hard to type. They come from many different professions, backgrounds, classes, and situations, and they make use of their copy skills in different ways, too.⁷ Competing models of service in the period probably contributed to the diversity of the scribal labor pool. One finds some literate servants, such as Francis Bacon’s chaplain William Rawley, enjoying long-term service to one family, and music tutor Thomas Whythorne, working with shorter-term contracts. I discuss both of these servants below. Still other servants accepted piecemeal jobs on a regular basis. My essay does not delve into critical arguments about the emergence of contractual service and cash wages, except to observe that competing models of service in the period seem to have afforded collectors more variety but also fewer regular sources of scribal labor.⁸ In other words, would-be manuscript owners had several places to turn to when they needed a copyist, but none of the options was consistently practical, reliable, or available. The diversity and ambiguity of potential manuscript copyists could be said to characterize post-print manuscript culture more generally; as print became the more speculative commercial industry in the sixteenth century, the scribal profession, which could include university-educated government clerks and also common scribes, lost some clarity. A growing number of university men seeking employment, increases in literacy in the general population, and the gravitation of career scribes to legal and governmental copying diversified (perhaps even watered down) the pool of copyists available for leisure projects. Would-be owners of manuscript literature, for reasons of convenience and perhaps for lack of a ready industry, sought help from whomever was willing and close at hand.⁹

What this disparate group of copyists seems to share is that the copying of *literature* was not their primary occupation. Only in the cases of scholars hired by antiquarians and amanuenses hired as retainers might literary copying be an everyday responsibility. Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos argues that service contracts

⁶ Woudhuysen 1996, 62, 145, 157. See the chapter ‘Producers’ for the possible contributors to literary copying (29-87).

⁷ A number of studies observe that servants are not a unified class. See, for instance, Weil 2005, 2-4.

⁸ For pertinent arguments about early modern service, see Burnett 1997; Evett 2005; Rivlin 2012.

⁹ For a more detailed discussion of the difficulties of enlisting scribes in post-print England, see North 2011.

in early modern England were often informal, and other scholars have observed that servants regularly performed tasks outside of their primary duties (2008, 59). R.C. Barnett offers an example from 1581, when William Cecil hosted a dinner for a visiting embassy from France and employed his secretaries as interpreters and serving men (2012, 7-8). While on diplomatic duties in Venice, Henry Wotton engaged his chaplain in translating King James's controversial *Premonition to all most Mighty Monarchs* (1609) into Italian (Wotton 1907, I, 466). In her study of English noble households before 1600, Kate Mertes notes that high level servants were often tasked with responsibilities outside of their formal contractual titles. These duties were often managerial or secretarial, because employers needed servants they could trust for matters involving money, diplomacy, and correspondence (1988, 21-25, 42-43, 47-48). The late fifteenth-century gentlewoman Elizabeth Stoner employed several gentlewomen as companions, though one of them also functioned as her amanuensis (*ibid.*, 43). Although Mertes' focus is earlier than most of my examples here, the points that she makes about Tudor household service remain applicable. Job descriptions do not seem to have defined the true responsibilities of trusted literate servants in a household.

The flexibility of high-level servants makes it difficult to determine under what terms, with what recompense, and with what sort of agency copy labor might have been performed. Negotiations were rarely if ever recorded. The unusual duties of household servants could be evidence that they were at the mercy of their employers' whims, or conversely, that they used their positions to enjoy a leisure activity and to participate in a system of favor and gift exchange. Literature often functioned as an appeal to patronage or as a gift in itself, and it is possible that the production of literary manuscripts was not considered work in the narrow sense, but rather, as an exchange of favors. The diverse groups of copyists who assisted with literary manuscripts also share something else, a direct connection with the would-be owner of a literary manuscript. The fact that owners negotiated *ad hoc* for scribal labor means that they were often closely involved with the manuscript production process and with the enlisted scribes. Although such collaboration between collector and copyist does not make the relationship an equal one, it argues that scribal labors were possibly rewarded through patronage, reciprocal favors, or through the activity itself rather than through payment.¹⁰ By way of contrast, when works were sent out to be copied by a scrivener, records are much more plentiful, as the early seventeenth-century letters of Henry Wotton attest (Wotton 1907).¹¹

¹⁰ Woudhuysen notes that manuscript owners rarely record how they acquired a manuscript or what they paid for it (1996, 51).

¹¹ See, for example, his promise to send a work out to be copied for Lord Zouche (Wotton 1907, II, 255). In another letter to Lord Zouche, Wotton claims that a work sent out to be copied is not yet finished (II, 288).

In the following pages, this essay analyzes more closely some of the available examples of household servants participating in the copying of early modern literary manuscripts. My investigation asks not only what role these servants played in the production and transmission of literary manuscripts, but also how the service of literary copying defined their status in the household, positioning them as employees at the beck and call of their employers, as participants in the exchange of favors, as contributing members of a literary community, or some combination of these possibilities. In gathering examples and background, I have surveyed several different kinds of evidence – household accounts, familiar and official letters, diaries and memoirs, prefaces to printed works that discuss a text's history, and literary manuscripts themselves. In my secondary research, I have tapped studies of household and secretarial service, work on manuscript transmission and collection, research on patronage and gift exchange, and histories of letter writing and transmission. I owe a great deal to H.R. Woudhuysen, although our conclusions differ, and also to James Daybell, whose study of letter-writing connects household servants and *ad hoc* scribal labor most convincingly (Woudhuysen 1996; Daybell 2012). Most studies say little about the relationship that household servants had to the scribal labors they performed, partly because direct evidence of their participation is so scarce. I have tried to cobble together a few tentative answers here and, when evidence does not allow it, to point to questions that are worth asking.

Although we have the names of very few of the scribes who copied literature into early modern manuscripts, the music tutor and composer Thomas Whythorne offers us an invaluable exception (Whythorne 1961). The relationships that he documents in his autobiography between literate servants and their employers offer one of the most intriguing pictures of the broad responsibilities of retainers and how their literacy was tapped. Whythorne (c. 1528-1596) served in numerous noble households during his career, most often as tutor but also as a serving man and once as a financial agent while his employer was abroad. His difficulty in negotiating the flirtations of some of his mistresses and fellow servants only highlights the ambiguous status of a literate servant. As a music tutor especially, he participated in the leisure activities of the households, writing poetry, composing, and performing music on a regular basis. His conversations with his employers were often social and friendly. On the other hand, he seems to have been very much at the mercy of some of his employers, hoping desperately for the security of an annuity, and moving from job to job when the fortunes or favors of his employers changed. He also exhibits an awareness of the social hierarchy, both in instances when he proceeds with caution in responding to the advances of a mistress, in instances when he should scold an adult pupil but does not, and also in instances when he challenges the superiority of fellow servants who are hoping to climb higher than him. His position is clearly one in between class categories.

The complexity of Whythorne's status is typical of educated servants in elite households. In examining the correspondence of household secretary Edmund Molyneux and the Sidney family for which he worked, Lynne Magnusson observes that the well-born Molyneux occasionally suffered from Philip Sidney's curt rebukes but also enjoyed the sincere affections of matriarch Mary Sidney and favors from patriarch Sir Henry Sidney nearly equal to those he awarded his sons (1998, 803, 813). Early modern servants, Magnusson explains, 'were not drawn from any single social class or status group: a very large proportion of the population was employed as servants at some stage in their lives, including those deriving from high-ranking families, most often for a transitional period during youth or early adulthood' (803-804). She identifies serving-men as belonging to the more privileged set of retainers who had daily access to their masters and joined them in their 'employments and pastimes' (804). Secretaries and tutors appear to have enjoyed an even higher status, if Molyneux and Whythorne are typical examples. Early in his career, for instance, Whythorne is hesitant to take a position that requires him to work as both serving man and music tutor:

A skoolmaster I did not mislyk, but to be A serving kreatiur or serving man, it was so lyk the lyf of A water spannel þat must be at kommaundement to fetch or bring heer or karry þar, with all kynd of drudzery, þat I kowld not lyk of þat lyf. (1961, 37)

Out of necessity, however, he takes this position. As he gains experience and respectability, he is able to negotiate the terms for one stint as a music tutor and insist that he have the status of a friend rather than a servant (94). Whythorne's privileges also seem to have varied according to the status of his employers. In the household of a privy councilor, he seems to socialize with the servants, and in less elite households, with the householders themselves. In his capacity as music tutor, he shared his poetry and music with his employers on a regular basis and shared in their leisure activities to some extent (95).

The evidence for Whythorne's participation in literary copying comes primarily from his description of his first position, in the household of author John Heywood, though we can assume that he occasionally performed similar services in other households. As Heywood's 'servant and skoller' (13), Whythorne was immersed in a literary environment. When Heywood was preparing to publish various pieces of his work, including lyrics to be sung, a book of English proverbs, and a dramatic interlude, it was Whythorne's responsibility to make fair copies (13-14). These facts suggest that Whythorne's primary responsibilities were as amanuensis to Heywood, though he also served as Heywood's pupil, his 'skoller', in music and poetry writing. As an amanuensis, Whythorne had access to much of Heywood's literary output, and he copied many items by Heywood a second time into his own miscellany, a manuscript now lost. About Heywood's compositions, he writes:

befor þe wer published I did wryt owt for him, or had þe yvs of þem to read þem. and I hav þe copiez of most of þem in A book at þis present of myn own wryting. (14)

Whythorne also helped Heywood with his own collecting of others' works, copying poetry by Henry Howard, the earl of Surrey, and Sir Thomas Wyatt, among other items (14). He acknowledges what he gained from reading the items he was copying, 'I a<ft>erward gav my self to imitat and follow þeir trads and devyses in wryting <a>z okkazions moved me' (14). Indeed, Whythorne includes many of his own compositions in his autobiography and details with whom he shared his poems. Although his service to Heywood was more scribal than his later positions, it is very likely that Whythorne's skills as a copyist were tapped on numerous occasions as he worked as a tutor, musician, and financial agent. Certainly, the fact that one employer first hired him as a tutor and then later as his personal financial agent demonstrates that employers would take advantage of whatever talents a literate servant brought with him and that formal job descriptions were not adhered to strictly (136). Although he was probably paid by Heywood for his copy labors, Whythorne later uses composing and copying his own works in gift exchanges with both friends and employers (45, 66, 100-102, 120). His intrigues with various women account for some of the gifts he gives and receives, but they also illustrate the mix of social and professional obligations that defined his service. Whythorne's employment in several sixteenth-century households was never very simple. Perhaps it is his tendency to dramatize the personal in his autobiography, but each household seems to bring with it a new negotiation between his formal duties as tutor and the challenges of the other services he is expected to perform.

Anne Southwell's manuscript miscellany (Folger Shakespeare Library V.b.198), compiled in the 1620s and 1630s, bears witness to the name of another household servant who assisted with literary copying. Numerous hands are represented in this collection of poems, letters, receipts, and miscellaneous materials. Southwell's own distinct hand can be seen correcting fair copies of her own work, revising, and composing. Her second husband, Captain Henry Sibthorpe, also contributed to the manuscript and owned it at her death. The other copyists, some of whom produced fair copies of Southwell's works or entered miscellaneous poems and other items, are not identified directly in relation to their literary entries. Still, there are close similarities between the hands that copy these entries and those of several witnessed rent receipts and agreements near the back of the manuscript (ff. 71-72). Samuel Rowson, for instance, appears to have been a member of Southwell's household from at least 1632 to 1636, the dates of the receipts that he copied and witnessed.¹² Southwell lived in Acton, Middlesex, from

¹² Victoria Burke also guesses that Rowson and others were household servants (2002, 95).

1631 until her death, and this may be where much of Rowson's copying took place (Klene 2004, xxi). His participation during these years is confirmed by Jonathan Gibson, who dates various sections of the Southwell miscellany and calls attention to Rowson's presence after 1632 (2010, 217-221; 2012, 89). The fact that Rowson served in the capacity of a witness and scribe may indicate that his primary duties in the Southwell-Sibthorpe household were managerial or secretarial. He was nevertheless also willing to copy literary texts on several occasions, and when one looks only at the leaves of Southwell's miscellany that have not been tipped in, Rowson emerges as one of the most important scribes in V.b.198's compilation.¹³ Although his hand varies, making certain identification difficult, he probably copied over two dozen leaves of the manuscript. Rowson's hand is found entering poems such as 'Nature, Mistris off affection' (f. 11v), poems attributed to Anne Southwell (f. 22r) and a bestiary toward the end of the miscellany (ff. 68r-v). As Gibson warns, the entries in the Southwell manuscript were not copied sequentially or chronologically, so it is not possible to determine if Rowson's copy duties spanned as many years as his witnessing duties (2012, 88-94). Still, the possibility is intriguing. Rowson's entries are scattered throughout the manuscript, and although he may have copied them in different places as an organizational strategy, changes in ink and in the character of his writing suggest that he did not enter all of the items at once. The multiple and relatively short stints offer further proof that Rowson resided in the Southwell-Sibthorpe household; a collector with half a dozen poems and short prose pieces to enter into a miscellany was unlikely to seek a professional copyist, especially if the household was large enough to include literate servants.

Rowson's potentially extended participation in the production of this literary miscellany also argues that he was able to enjoy the manuscript as a reader and not simply as a hired hand. He may have made the decision to cluster the poetry near the beginning of the manuscript and the prose near the end (Gibson 2012, 89). His interest in the politics of continental Protestantism may be reflected in the two elegies for Gustavus Adolphus and one for Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia, that he copied in the same general section of the manuscript (ff. 22r, 24r-v). On the other hand, these elegies may simply follow from the preceding elegies on Southwell's acquaintances that were entered in a hand somewhat similar to Henry Sibthorpe's. Poems attributed to Anne Southwell appear in both of these stints, and it could be that Sibthorpe began a designated set of entries only to hand the pen to Rowson. We cannot know for certain whether Rowson offered his copy services for the pleasure of accessing

¹³ Gibson observes that folios 16r-23v make up a booklet added to the main manuscript before Rowson began his contributions. The addition of this booklet precedes the tipping in of leaves containing some of Southwell's poetry (2010, 218-219).

the literature that Southwell and Sibthorpe wrote and acquired, for the favors it might earn him as an ambitious servant, or because it was somehow part of his duties in the household, but some mix of these possibilities seems most likely. Whether for service or for pleasure, Rowson's participation in the literary manuscript production at Acton was potentially significant. As a household copyist involved in the compilation of this manuscript at different times over several years, there is every reason to think he may have helped with the circulation and acquisition of verse and prose items, with the selection of entries, and with more editorial tasks. Whatever the extent of his participation in his employer's manuscript projects, it is unlikely that Rowson was simply a hired copyist performing a prescribed task with no real investment in the use of the manuscript. Rowson's broader investment in the Southwell-Sibthorpe household is evident in his mixed duties. If literate servants were flexible enough to take on literary scribal duties, then they were also flexible enough to make more of these scribal duties than a scrivener would.

It may be no coincidence that some of the best evidence of scribal service in households comes from manuscripts owned by women. Many elite literate women made greater use of secretaries for small projects, because their less practiced handwriting made such tasks more laborious. A woman of the middling classes, however, was probably even more inclined to seek copy assistance. Ann Bowyer, a draper's daughter who compiled a personal manuscript in the first decade of the seventeenth century, copied some but not all of the poems, wise sayings, and miscellaneous items in Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 51. One of the other hands in the manuscript probably belongs to a household member who is learning to write (Burke 2001, section 12). But a third hand appears to be a competent copyist, perhaps a tutor and maybe even a literate apprentice. On folio 7r, Bowyer copies 10 ½ lines of Donne's 'A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning'. Another hand with a sharper quill takes over immediately after Bowyer enters the word 'trepidations' (Burke 2009, 60-62). It would not make sense for Bowyer to hire a scrivener to finish so short a poem. What we might be seeing here is a collaboration of sorts among household members, whereby Bowyer can both request a favor from a servant or family member near at hand and share a personal interest in the same gesture.

The change of hands and the pause at 'trepidations' tempt one to read this division of labor in the context of the poem's message. The two lovers anticipate physical separation but take consolation in their spiritual unity, exemplified by the expanse of gold leaf the goldsmith's hammer produces and the feet of the drafting compass that must separate to create a perfect circle. Yet the division of labor in this poem may not be intentional at all. Bowyer might have tired and left the poem for a friend to finish. It is just as plausible that she was interrupted, for she has paused mid-line with the rhyme unresolved. If something in Ann Bowyer's life competed with her desire to possess this poem – a younger sibling, another labor, or even the copyist who finishes the

poem for her – she would not be alone. The majority of compilers of personal miscellanies had competing obligations. We may only get a glimpse of them in poems like Bowyer's 'Valediction', but other responsibilities may have significantly influenced the choices compilers made. The fact that collecting manuscript literature was a time-consuming hobby argues that hours had to be carved out of busy days to work on a manuscript. The reliance on household scribes in this situation makes a lot of sense. Literate servants would be near at hand when a collector was interrupted. Manuscripts with many changes of hand may offer evidence that servants, too, were interrupted, and that some miscellanies were pieced together a few items at a time as household business allowed. Not surprisingly, quite a few manuscript miscellanies exhibit the pattern of shared labor found in Bowyer's manuscript. In considering servant-employee collaboration in leisure activities, it might be profitable to ask not only whether an activity counted as leisure for the servant but also whether the master or the servant controlled the time spent on an activity.

Interpreting the relationships between scribes and manuscript owners is mostly speculative, but there are logical inferences that can help us understand the production and social uses of these collections in the household. Long stints in a single, neat hand may point to the commission of a professional copyist or to the enlistment of a dedicated servant for a specific, extended task, thus taking that servant away from other duties. Short stints entered at different times in different hands argue that the miscellany compilation was a shared leisure activity in the household, but also one subject to interruption, time constraints, and perhaps a slow stream of source texts. The significant presence of the owner's hand, as a scribe and not simply as a corrector, also signals a household endeavor, and the collector's hand generally offers evidence about his or her control over the copyists. In the Elizabethan sections of the Arundel Harington Manuscript, Sir John Harington has copied the first few lines of several poems or sets of poems, but left the greater part of the labors to other copyists (Hughey 1960, I, 32-33; II, 276, 301, 303). A poem beginning 'And thinkes thow I have nowght to load', a fragment of a university libel, shows the work of seven different copyists, beginning with a title inscribed by Sir John (Hughey 1960, II, 276). Although we do not know for certain that Harington's assistance came from a household servant, it seems likely. The small projects that Harington began – the longest of which is a sequence of twenty-one Constable sonnets – would not necessarily merit a professional commission (Hughey 1960, I, 336). Harington had several secretaries in his large household, and a number of literary manuscripts originating with Harington and his father have survived. Harington's control over the entries in the Arundel Harington Manuscript may indicate that he was working with inferiors rather than with friends, though the university libel has the markings of a collaboration. The more typical division of labor, found in the instances when Harington begins poems, strikes a reader as quite different from the one in the Bowyer manuscript, where the copying

might better be described as shared. This does not mean that the Harington copyists did not enjoy the task at hand, but, with a few exceptions, they seem to have been more at the mercy of the collector than other scribes were.

Harvard MS Eng. 703 offers another example of a verse miscellany in which the divisions of labor within the manuscript itself point to the employment of household scribes. This collection of verse and prose belonged to Henry Cholmley and was compiled between 1624 and 1641 (Beal 1980, 1987, II, 44). It contains several poems by Thomas Carew, other fashionable verse of the early Stuart years, and poems associated with Cholmley's friends and family (de Groot 2006, 196-199). The stints by most of the copyists are relatively short, and the manuscript is marked by several changes of hand. A hand identified as Henry Cholmley's copies more poems than any other, with two longish stints at the beginning of the miscellany. The dozen or so subsequent copyists are much less prolific. There is a cluster of five poems by Thomas Carew in a single hand on folios 29-31, and this is a typical entry. The Carew sequence makes its subject the cruel mistress, describing the temptations the lover faces and the complaints he voices as he deals with her disdain. The most familiar of the group, 'Know Celia, since thou art so proud', functions in this cluster as a response to the two complaints that precede it. In 'Know Celia' the poet threatens to 'uncreate' Celia, whose 'killing power' he gave to her in the first place (Eng. 703, f. 30, ll. 14, 7). Carew is not identified as the author of the group.

The copyist of this cluster is also anonymous, though unlikely to be a scrivener or industry professional. With Cholmley's dominant presence in the manuscript, the short additions in other hands are more likely to be the work of household members. Someone near at hand was enlisted or volunteered to enter the Carew poems, which either Cholmley, his source manuscript, or the scribe himself recognized as a neat thematic cluster. In this case, the scribe might have been a friend or relative. The fact that Cholmley has added a subscript below a poem on folio 19, 'by my brother Sr Hugh Cholmley', may be evidence that Henry Cholmley's brother was involved with the manuscript's production. Jerome de Groot (2006) has identified several other members of Cholmley's circle from historical sources and references in the manuscript itself, though de Groot does not look beyond the elite members of the coterie or consider the household more broadly. Cholmley's neighborhood connections were extensive, but there are simply too many hands in the manuscript to grant them all to Cholmley's brother and friends. The practiced hand that adds several fashionable poems by Henry Wotton, Ben Jonson, and others between folios 31v and 37v may be that of a secretary, for instance, as is perhaps the hand that adds a tongue-in-cheek prose exchange between Mr. Chudleigh and Sir Nicholas Selwin accusing and defending a woman of administering a potion of hate to an admirer (Eng. 703, ff. 43-49). Smaller stints of one or two items are also common, and are typical of a manuscript compiled over time.

In Harvard MS Eng. 703, one again finds a poem split between two copyists. ‘Snatched from our longing, hoping eyes’ is an elegy on the 1629 death of King Charles’s newborn son (ff. 40-41). The hand that begins this elegy is the same hand that copied the Carew cluster earlier in the manuscript. The second hand belongs to Cholmley himself. The fact that the Carew hand appears again in the same poem with Cholmley offers further proof that this copyist was a member of Cholmley’s household. In comparison to Sir John Harington’s method of having secretaries finish his poems, and Ann Bowyer’s instance of handing the pen to another household member, Cholmley seems to have accepted the pen from his copyist. It may even be the same pen. In the section of the poem that he copies, Cholmley leaves a purposeful space between his sixth and seventh lines. We know that Cholmley’s spacing is deliberate, because he does not divide any of the other lines of this poem into stanzas or otherwise leave spaces. This gap suggests that he might have intervened in the copying of this item because of uncertainty about two lines in the middle of the verse. Perhaps the lines were illegible or missing in his source text, and his copyist sought his assistance. Cholmley’s solution was to leave room for two lines on the manuscript leaf:

how could fresh innocense endure
and ayre our sinns made so impure

though shelterd in a glorious wombe
he hasts from thense in to a tombe (f. 41, ll. 17-20)

The forty-eight lines of the Harvard version do not necessarily seem incomplete, but a thirty-two line version in Bodleian Library Ashmole 38 indicates that epitaphs of different lengths were in circulation.

Even though Cholmley finishes rather than starts the epitaph for the infant prince, the divisions of labor seem to point to his editorial agency. He took charge of a problematic poem and made a decision about how to account for lines he thought might be missing. Cholmley may also have been planning to proofread and correct this section of the manuscript at a later time. Like many owners of verse miscellanies, Cholmley double checked the work of several copyists, correcting mistakes and adding titles or subscripts. On folio 50, for instance, Cholmley inserted a missing line into a poem entered by a third scribe. Sometimes corrections such as these are evidence that an owner is proofreading the efforts of a professional scribe, but probably not in this case. The items entered by the two copyists on folios 41 and 50 of the Cholmley manuscript are very small contributions, not projects one would send out of the house to have completed. Cholmley is almost certainly correcting two members of his household. If they are literate servants, Cholmley’s editorial agency can be read as a sign of his social advantage, even in the collaborative enjoyment of a hobby.

The manuscripts compiled by Southwell, Bowyer, Harington, and Cholmley each offer us a different picture of the lines between professional and amateur and the relationship between master or mistress and servant, yet all of them seem to have been produced with household labor. Although the work of scribes was considered a menial labor by some, unworthy of a nobleman, the fashionable practice of collecting and recording manuscript literature was pursued nevertheless by compilers with means and leisure. The hand copying that went into producing manuscripts was difficult work, but because handwriting was also associated with intimacy, authenticity, cultured tastes, good government, and the immediacy of a social exchange of gifts, even the most elite wielded the pen on occasion (Goldberg 1991, 109-170; Daybell 2012, 86-87). Inherent in the practice of collecting manuscript literature are many class paradoxes. It was an activity that involved the master-collector in the details of labor and production, and it was an activity that gave servants a chance to read, gather, and trade manuscript literature that had not reached print. The exchange of products and services in the production of literary manuscripts in the household seems to have been modeled on favor and gift exchange rather than on other service models, though the collectors of several of the miscellanies maintain their editorial control. Although the evidence is scarce that might tell us exactly what agreements existed between collectors and copyists, one might imagine a spectrum, whereby very ambitious copy projects required a commission and monetary exchange, while the modest rhythm of household verse collecting allowed masters and servants to negotiate informally and to share a cultural fashion across class lines. Very elite households could employ their literate servants for major projects, too, which means that some professional-looking manuscripts in a single hand may still be the work of a household servant. We cannot be certain that servants enjoyed scribal labors, but the fact that Whythorne and others took advantage of such labors to collect manuscript literature for themselves argues that the mutual interest was at least part of the reward.

Those secretaries, chaplains, and tutors who were themselves literary collectors offer another perspective on the functions of literate servants. For the servant-collector, employment in a well-connected family granted him access to elite manuscript networks. This was certainly the case for Thomas Whythorne while he worked for John Heywood in the middle of the sixteenth century. In the Elizabethan period, the same could be said for Henry Stanford, who served as tutor to the Paget family and chaplain for the Carey family and whose miscellany preserves a surprisingly rich collection of late Elizabethan courtier verse (May 1988; North 1998). One finds another excellent example of a servant-collector in Thomas Manne, who was amanuensis to Henry King in the early seventeenth century and who compiled his own collection of poetry (British Library MS Additional 58215), in which King and his

circle are prominently represented (Hobbs 1992, 82-86).¹⁴ Collector-servants who copied literary manuscripts for their master or mistress may have viewed the access this task afforded as an expected perk. The fact that we have so few records of payments or contracts for service is perhaps evidence that copy labor was defined differently from other types of labor; it was the exercise of a servant's talents and good will in the interest of mutual pleasure with the promise of future and less tangible rewards. This alternative definition of copy labor may have been particular to the copying *in* households. It would certainly not apply to the copying of literary manuscripts by scribes or clerks for a commission, even if the would-be manuscript owner was deeply involved in the project.

Another high level servant offers us a sense of how these less tangible rewards might have worked. William Rawley, who served Sir Francis Bacon as a chaplain and secretary, was a household retainer whose ambiguous responsibilities allowed him to take full advantage of the access to literary culture that his employer afforded him. Bacon must have been impressed with Rawley, for he offered him many favors and recommended him for several positions, both before and after his disgrace. Rawley remained with Bacon until Bacon's death and later edited many of his works (Stewart 2004). It is clear from Rawley's later investment in Bacon's works that he treasured the intellectual atmosphere in Bacon's household. In a 1657 preface to Bacon's *Resuscitatio*, a collection of Bacon's short works, letters, and papers to which Rawley added a biography, Rawley describes the type of service he provided to Bacon and how it prepared him to become Bacon's chief early editor:

Having been employed, as an *Amanuensis*, or dayly instrument, to this *Honourable Authour*; And acquainted with his *Lordships* Conceits, in the composing, of his *Works*, for many years together; Especially, in his writing time; I conceived, that no Man, could pretend a better Interest, or Claim, to the ordering of them, after his Death, then myself. (Bacon 1657, sig. [(a)3])

Given that Rawley accepted positions as chaplain to both Charles I and Charles II after Bacon's death, one might question whether Rawley's formal duties in the Bacon household were initially scribal or spiritual. In spite of his claim to be Bacon's amanuensis in the preface to *Resuscitatio*, on the title page, Rawley identifies himself as 'Doctor in Divinity, His Lordships First, and Last, CHAPLEINE. Afterwards, CHAPLEINE, to His late Maiesty'. Rawley chose the more prestigious of his job titles in advertising himself to his general readers. The scribal responsibilities that Rawley undertook for Bacon are framed here as labors of love, tasks that he took on because of his own interests in his employer's intellectual projects.

¹⁴ See also the British Library Manuscript Catalogue entry for BL MS Add. 58215.

Not only did Rawley edit Bacon's work, he also assembled and hand copied his own miscellany, a collection of court anecdotes, epigrams, short poems, jests, recipes, and other odds and ends. Lambeth Palace Library MS 2086 appears to have been compiled between 1620 and 1640, while Rawley worked for Bacon and after.¹⁵ Although the manuscript does not contain the wealth of contemporary poetry that other collections do, it illustrates the social access afforded by service to a high-level courtier. Rawley's anecdotes mention Sir Walter Raleigh, Philip Sidney, Fulke Greville, Margaret Clifford, Lucius Cary, and King James, not to mention Sir Francis Bacon. Many of the anecdotes are told from the point of view of someone close to the figures mentioned, as if such stories were overheard and traded at court or in the elite household initially before reaching a broader audience. The emphasis is on sharp wits, retorts, and one-upmanship. Folio 31r is a typical leaf, containing an older, popular epigram by John Heywood, an excerpt of a libel against reputed sycophant Richard Corbett, and an anecdote about Bacon and Fulke Greville:

Mr Bacon, and Mr Foulk Greuill striued to giue each other *the pre[ce]*
 dency: said Mr Greuill, good Mr Bacon goe you first, you are a
 Reader: Mr Bacon answered; Nay, good Mr Greuill, goe you
 first, you are a writer. (Lambeth Palace Library MS 2086, f. 31r)

This anecdote, with its attention to the ambiguities of status could be said to reflect Rawley's own shifting position as servant. Greville flatters Bacon by referring to his title as reader, or lecturer in law. Bacon chooses to hear the more mundane meaning of 'reader' and gives Greville precedence for being an author, a position that is not based on social status but one that rather accrues respect in relation to a literal reader. In editing Bacon's works, Rawley could use his literary services in the Bacon household to give credibility to his publications, but he still resorted to his more prestigious position as chaplain to kings when identifying himself on the title page. Given Rawley's clear interest in poets and luminaries, and given that his manuscript strikes a reader as a personal record book rather than a show piece, it may be that Rawley collected the literary works of the authors he knew in another manuscript. It is hard to believe that Rawley was satisfied with only the quips and epitaphs that he gathers in the Lambeth manuscript. Whether there are other Rawley manuscripts extant or not, William Rawley is a clear example of a household servant whose literary duties stretched beyond his formal duties as chaplain and gave him access to both the works of his employer and to his employer's social and intellectual circles.

¹⁵ A full description of this miscellany is available through *Scriptorium: Medieval and Early Modern Manuscripts Online*, <<http://scriptorium.english.cam.ac.uk/manuscripts/full-description.php?ms=Lamb2086>>, accessed 15 January 2015.

As Woudhuysen also reminds us, dozens of early modern authors began their public careers as personal or governmental secretaries, Edmund Spenser and John Donne among them, so secretarial status did not necessarily make a servant a passive participant in literary culture – quite the opposite (Woudhuysen 1996, 79). Secretarial skills and connections allowed poets and collectors alike to tap into literary networks as both collectors and authors. The fact that poetry writing was used to advertise a university graduate's employability probably explains why so many poets took secretarial positions. Looking at this situation the other way around, however, may also be beneficial. The fact that so many authors sought employment as secretaries may mean that they found some literary satisfaction in such positions, too, and that the positions cultivated their literary talents.

In tying up this examination of the household servants and their participation in literary manuscript production, it is helpful to consider two other types of documents that can teach us something about scribal labor in the household: family letters and household accounts. Letter writing was a central activity in literate households, and wealthy correspondents often relied on secretaries to compose, take dictation for, and copy letters. Other household servants performed these duties, too, when needed. High level retainers served as messengers when business required discretion and agency, and even in the case of more mundane correspondence, household servants were employed as messengers (Mertes 1988, 122-124). The world of epistolary exchange has been fairly well documented and it does not need to be repeated here.¹⁶ What the culture of letters shows us is the proximity of copyists in the household, the *ad hoc* nature of their duties, and their readiness to write and copy at a moment's notice (Daybell 2012, 76). Letter writing was often performed under time constraints, with messengers waiting to depart or urgent news that needed a quick answer. A literate servant was only useful, in these cases, when he or she was near at hand. James Daybell suggests that women were especially likely to turn to their household secretaries or other literate servants under this sort of pressure (2001, 59-60). Given that letters were one of the central means by which poems were traded among collectors, secretaries in literary households would almost certainly have helped with the transmission of literary texts sent with correspondence, and it is likely that they also helped to recopy material received with an epistle into the more permanent repository of the anthology or miscellany. One could argue that poetry collecting had much more in common with epistolary culture than it did with print culture. Personal and political news and private sentiments could be expressed in both letters and poems, and poems, like letters, often

¹⁶ See, for instance, Mitchell and Green 2003; Schneider 2005; Daybell 2012; Stewart and Wolfe 2004.

refer to their own transmission. Most importantly, however, both poetry collecting and letter writing were activities based on reciprocity and exchange.

Household accounts are also extremely helpful in documenting the presence of literate servants in the household, though one rarely finds evidence of payment for literary copying. The absence of such records may be a clue as to how literary copy labor was perceived within the household, for quarterly wages for literate servants, costs of pen and paper, payment to messengers, and supplies for schoolmasters are found in abundance.¹⁷ Household accounts suggest that servants regularly handled pen and paper. At the level of household clerk, they kept financial records, copied legal documents, paid bills and collected income from loans and rents. Other servants delivered letters, procured paper and quills, and sought out books for their master or mistress. In the households of antiquarians, historians, and scholars, servants often performed research and reading for their employers (Hammer 1994, 167). Even if more literary scribal labors are not recorded in household accounts, business-oriented copy tasks are sometimes set down. The notorious Elizabethan bibliophile, Richard Stonley, who, according to Joad Raymond, stole government money to finance his book collecting, kept household records in a diary, now Folger Shakespeare Library V.a.459-461 (2003, 5). In one record, Stonley notes that he paid a law clerk to have copies made as part of some of his legal business (V.a.459, f. 23r). In other account records, Stonley paid wages to his clerk (possibly a chaplain) and his wards' tutors (V.a.459, f. 5v, f. 21v). He likewise paid for a ream of paper (V.a.459, f. 33v), and for books purchased outside the home. He records book purchases almost every day. While there are no payments recorded for copying literary manuscripts, it is hard to believe that a bibliophile would not have produced a few. An inventory of his books after his arrest includes two paper books into which he may have intended to copy manuscript literature (Hotson 1949-1950, 60).

Household accounts do occasionally document the labors and costs that go into leisure activities, especially hunting, hawking, tennis, and gambling. The entertainments provided by musicians and players are also tallied in accounts. In an interesting Henrician example, the Earl of Northumberland's chaplain was granted a scribe to copy out actor's parts if he agreed to provide the household with interludes (Percy 1770, 44). Such records give us a sense of the way that the maintenance of leisure activities was counted among the business of the household, though not necessarily the labors of retainers in behalf of those leisure activities. As was the case with Cecil's dinner party, where his secretaries served the visiting dignitaries, the flexibility and broad

¹⁷ I have drawn this information from a number of household accounts, including Folger V.a. 459; Percy 1770; Adams 1995. See also Jones 1918.

usefulness of literate servants was often their main attraction. The canny servant would cultivate this flexibility by performing duties outside of his job description that nevertheless demonstrated his talents and opened up opportunities for him to educate himself and make connections. It is these labors that go unrecorded in household accounts, but all of the raw materials are in the accounts, and indeed, in the household – the paper, the pens and ink, the appreciation for arts and entertainment, and the literate chaplain or tutor.

The anonymity of the copyists who labored to produce literary manuscripts in the age of print has, I believe, contributed to a critical neglect of their importance. These silent scribes offer a stark contrast to the printers in the Stationers' Company, who advertised their names as an industry standard. I have tried to read the silence of manuscript producers and the scarce records of their service and payments as a kind of evidence in itself. The absence of names may be indication that copyists saw their efforts as an opportunity rather than a burden, a chance to participate in an elite cultural fashion. The absence of payments to these household scribes may define much literary copying as favors in a system of gift exchange rather than as commissioned service. These assumptions risk idealizing scribal labor, however, and oversimplifying the role of the literate household servant. It is just as likely that the *ad hoc* nature of literary collecting required constant negotiation of duty and task, status and agency, and favor and recompense. Still, there is no doubt that literary copy labors brought the servant into direct contact with an employer and provided a superb opportunity for the servant to show off his or her cultivation and to gain access to some of the most fashionable and sought-after literature of the period.

It is wise to keep in mind that scribal labor was still a labor. Servants could devote a great deal of time and effort to these projects, judging from the length of many miscellanies. Collectors devoted considerable labor to their collections, too, even in the act of proofreading and correcting the copyist's entries. I have suggested that the opportunity to share in a leisure activity might have attracted the literate servant to literary copying. The contrary may be true as well. When literate servants were enlisted to help produce literary manuscripts, they might very well have appreciated that their employer was laboring, too, often alongside of them, thus ennobling a task that could be laborious and even menial in a scrivener's shop. The editorial agency granted to servants in such situations probably varied greatly, with the proximity of the collector in the household offering some benefits and freedoms but also some restraints. The importance of literate servants to early modern manuscript culture does not lie exclusively in their agency as copyists, however. It also lies in their roles as readers and collectors themselves. When literate servants begin to trade literary texts and collect their own manuscripts, they share and extend the connections that their employers established. They may even broaden their employer's scribal network with their own connections and sources of literature. Sooner or later, these literate servants may have

servants of their own assisting with scribal projects, sharing and extending their connections again. Since the line between collector and servant is often a temporary or situation-specific one, who is to say that the servants rather than the collectors are not the more important links in the scribal networks that enabled early modern manuscript culture?

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Servant Advisers: The Curious Memoirs of the Duc de Sully

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Abstract

The article seeks to understand some of the cultural work done by servants in the early modern period. By means of a case study, I suggest that gentleman servants may have played an important role in correcting and coaching their masters on manners and civility, a notion which expands Elias' account of the 'civilizing process'. I draw on the unique memoirs of the seventeenth-century French noble Maximilien de Béthune, Duc de Sully, a text which Sully wrote as if from the narrative stance of his servants. Focusing on unpublished early versions of the memoirs begun shortly after Sully's expulsion from court, I examine the complex relationships Sully posits between himself and his gentleman servants, who are presented as narrating Sully's life story while giving him pointers on better behavior. My analysis highlights the importance of the servants' maleness and their less threatening lower status in creating a narrative alter-ego through which Sully could think through personal shortcomings and explore the possibility of improving his manners. By showing that servants were intrinsic to the ways in which nobles thought about self-improvement, I seek to include them in the history of manners and to lessen the elitism sometimes associated with Elias' concept of the civilizing process.

Keywords: Civility, Maximilien de Béthune, Memoirs, Servants, Sully

1. *Introduction*

Over the historical *longue durée*, service in the West went from being a relationship to a profession (McBride 1976; Biow 2002; Bray 2003, 209-210). Domestic servants in early modern Europe enjoyed a highly specific privilege: that of prestige-granting closeness to their masters. They would have recoiled from the assumptions of today's maids and housekeepers who, often by common accord with those they serve, arrange to clean homes at precisely the times when the family is out of the house and no contact is required.

If historians have grasped the distinctiveness of earlier service cultures and noted the comparative familiarity that early modern households struck



up with their servants, there has been less attention to what this closeness has meant, to the impact it had on larger cultural constructs and forms of exchange. Servants have long been recognized as agents of physical labor; their specifically *cultural* work has been less thoroughly explored. By means of a case study, I would like to contribute to rectifying that imbalance by suggesting that the cultural work of servants mattered considerably in early modern France, in particular in relation to that country's history of manners. Drawing on one seventeenth-century nobleman's suggestive memoirs, I would like to position servants as overlooked facilitators of what we now understand as the civilizing process.

To consider servants as vehicles of civility matters is to shift the very tenor of the concept of civility, to re-package Elias' famed notion as something less elite than we often assume it to be. To be sure, Elias *does* describe the rise of European politeness as an effect of increasing social heterogeneity. His key concept of interdependence maintains that early modern nobles, bourgeois, and sovereigns were becoming increasingly entwined and reliant upon one another, with courts mattering less as founts of top-down elite culture than as hubs of cross-class contacts through which new norms were being forged (1978, 235, 425). This said, when Elias depicts warrior nobles being tamed by absolute monarchs, when he describes bellicose *grands* being cut down to size by 'civilizing' court rituals based on shame and peer rivalry, we are presented with a process that seems eminently public, male, and elite. Later scholars have rightfully added to Elias' work by calling attention to the cultivation of civility in the mixed-class, mixed-gender setting of literary salons (Lougee 1976; Goodman 1994; Gordon 1994), but stopped short of asking what kinds of further training uncouth Europeans may have needed or received behind the scenes. Even Elizabeth Goldsmith, who provides an excellent study of France's early modern cultivation of politeness through conversation, and who clearly grasps the position of French *politesse* at a crossroads *between* aristocratic culture and a larger 'grand monde', nonetheless falls back on the descriptor 'exclusive' in the title of her book (1988). The use of the term risks foregrounding elitism and losing the social nuance that Goldsmith's study in fact contains.¹

For his part, Elias expresses interest in servant figures such as the *intendant* or estate manager, but ultimately stops short of giving servants a specific place in his work. Writing in *The Court Society* that 'The court people themselves do not talk much about these serving hands that bear them ...

¹ Edmé Boursault, the dramatist whom Goldsmith discusses in her final chapter as a popularizer of aristocratic codes of conduct, was also a secretary. In *Ésope à la cour*, a Boursault play which Goldsmith discusses at length, the didactic hero and model of conduct is a savvy, ethical servant: Ésope the slave. All English translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

and so in what follows we shall not have much to say about them', Elias effectively dismisses servants, overlooking these go-betweens who would have had tremendous first-hand knowledge of both noble and bourgeois manners, as well as – I shall suggest – the access and trust needed to help both groups shape those manners (1983, 45).²

To rectify this omission we first need to establish a few preliminaries. First, in order to think about pre-modern servants as potentially having desirable qualities to transmit (in particular, heightened emotional self-control and self-awareness), we must bear in mind that domestics were not always as lowly as they sometimes seem, and that 'service' had contradictory meanings. To be sure, servants (or at least those sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French servants I have studied) were often associated with the opposite of civility – namely, coarseness, sexual license, drunkenness and gambling. Male servants were known for violence, and contact with domestics was sometimes argued to be debasing (Le Pelletier 1604, 19-20; Gutton 1981, 133, 140-146, 150, 156). On the other hand, service was also a major idiom and ritual of refined sociability. Nobles and ambitious bourgeois competed for the chance to serve their social betters, and one does not have to delve very far into collections of early modern correspondence to find genteel letter-writers signing off as 'your humble servant'. Moreover, the elaborate system of 'putting out' noble and upwardly mobile bourgeois children to serve in higher-status houses made service a form of prestigious education (Motley 1990).³

While the 'honorific' service performed by a page, a royal lady in waiting, or a gentleman companion all strike us as very different from the seemingly more 'real' and physical work of a scullery maid, a cook, or a lackey, it is important to recall that even noble servants had real responsibilities, obligations and pay (Michon 2011, 159, 287). In addition, as Alan Bray has pointed out, the system whereby nobles treated access to their bodies as 'gifts' of friendly nearness meant that high-status favorites, whose service we now think of as purely ceremonial or honorific, may have in fact been putting in long hours of careful and quite physical ministrations (2003, 140-176). As Bray suggests, emptying a noble's chamber-pot, passing down food that had been touched by him or her at table, and providing night-time attendance as a lady-in-waiting or a gentleman-of-the-bedchamber were all prestigious, public signs of noble closeness. We need to realize how extensively different kinds of low and high service, involving both menial and ceremonial tasks, shaded into one another if we are to comprehend the range of what 'serving' comprised and how service spanned across codes of manners.

² See Elias 1983, Appendix II, for his section on *intendants*.

³ Montaigne too describes the pageboy system as 'escoles de noblesse' (schools for nobility); see 'Sur des vers de Virgile' (1965, 3, 883-884).

We can also better grasp servants' purchase on civility if we realize the scope they had for making conduct matter. It is all too easy to imagine early modern domestics as stiff, obsequious figures weighed down by brocade liveries. Period sources bespeak something richer, more loquacious, more filled with exchange. Many servants, both noble and non-noble, developed extremely close relationships with the masters and mistresses they served. Louis XIV was known to have deeply cherished some of his non-noble valets, and the country gentleman Gilles de Gouberville wrote of his delight at being able to spend a rainy day at home reading the *Amadis* romances out loud to his servants (Chartier 1987, 154; Da Vinha 2004, 354-355). Close, personal interaction would have allowed servants to become familiar with their masters' conduct and may have emboldened them to speak out about it. As Montaigne wrote,

Mon valet me peut dire: Il vous costa, l'année passée, cent escus, à vingt fois, d'avoir esté ignorant et opiniastre. Je festoye et caresse la verité en quelque main que je la trouve, et m'y rends alaigrement, et luy tends mes armes vaincues, de loing que je la vois approcher. (1965, III, 924, trans. Frame 1958, 705)⁴

Montaigne here constructs the servant as a plausible – if hypothetical – corrector, presenting the valet as knowledgeable and anchoring that knowledge in contact with the master's day-to-day behavior.

A similar kind of corrective stance is posited in the set of texts I will focus on here, the memoirs of Maximilien de Béthune, Duc de Sully. While Sully's writings and life story can only play a small part in elucidating relationships between masters, servants, and manners, that part is a significant one. Like most men of his station, Sully had an entourage of both noble and non-noble servants. There was the *maître d'hôtel* Étienne de La Font, Sully's childhood teacher La Brosse, as well as more multi-purpose gentleman servants such as Samuel de Morély-Choisy and Jean de Maignan.⁵ These men accompanied

⁴ My valet could say to me 'It cost you a hundred crowns twenty times last year to be ignorant and stubborn'. I give a warm welcome to truth in whatever hand I find it, and cheerfully surrender to it and extend my conquered arms, from as far off as I see it approach.

⁵ For more on the difficulty of determining who is and is not a servant, see Gutton 1981, 11-15. For Sully's ties of friendship and service/clientage, see Barbiche and Dainville-Barbiche 1997 (in particular Annex II). My discussion of the manuscript versions of the memoirs will cite, where possible, the two-volume selection edited by David Buisseret and Bernard Barbiche (Sully 1970, 1988); I have also worked with the relevant manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. See Sully 1970 and 1988 – the Buisseret and Barbiche edition – 3:2, 123 for some of the names of servants belonging to the first generation of gentleman familiars mentioned by Sully. We can also piece together a second generation of servant-subordinates, a team of administrative assistants who served Sully during his years as finance chief. These men include the Arnould brothers; Noël Regnouart; Charles Duret;

Sully through the remarkable years of his life, enduring the horrific military campaigns of France's wars of religion, and long lean years in which they received little recompense, but settling at last into the comforts that came as by-products of royal favor when Sully's own chosen 'master', Henri de Navarre, ascended the throne.

Manners were to figure as particularly important in this picture in that Sully, for the most part, sorely lacked them. According to contemporaries, he had a gruff demeanor and a tin ear for style. One source describes his clothes as outdated, and Sully designed his Paris residence with a clunky medieval staircase in the middle of what should have been a graceful courtyard.⁶ It was even claimed that in his retirement Sully liked to walk around the Palais Royal swathed in gaudy diamond chains, flashy baubles said to have gone out of style a quarter-century before.⁷

Sully's position had always been vulnerable. As the only Protestant to whom Henri granted a major state office (that of finance minister), his support network was tenuous, and his famously gruff behavior did little to recommend him. After the king was assassinated in 1610, Sully's rash, uncooperative ways all but ensured he would not be supported by the rising stars of the new regency, and his memoirs, which he embarked upon shortly after his fall from power, begin by expressing the wish that his behavior can be re-tooled in order to win him a comeback at court.

Barthélemy de Savorny, sieur de La Clavelle; Benjamin Aubery, sieur du Maurier, and Jean de Murat. While Sully was clearly close to them, it is important to remember that when Henri IV died most of this second generation of aides left Sully's orbit and allied itself with the new regency. Sully's feelings of betrayal are overtly thematized in the memoirs, which try to grapple with both the meaning of loyalty and where it could go wrong. The Arnaulds are mentioned in manuscripts such as Ms. Fr. 10311 and 10312, but on servant names the 1638 print edition is the most specific; see, for example, the reprint *Mémoires des sages et royales économies d'estat* (Sully 1837, II, 86-87). I will cite Michaud and Poujoulat's edition (Sully 1837) as the most readily available version of the 1638 edition.

⁶ See Michaud and Poujoulat's concluding material ('Sully, n'ayant rien changé à sa manière de s'habiller, trouva le Roi entouré d'une foule de jeunes courtisans qui, malgré la présence du monarque, eurent l'impolitesse de rire de sa tournure étrange...' (Sully 1837, II, 417; Sully, having changed nothing in his manner of dress, found the king surrounded by a crowd of young courtiers who, despite the presence of the monarch, were so impolite as to laugh at his [Sully's] strange attire). The architectural detail was pointed out to me on a guided tour of the Hôtel de Sully during the Journées du Patrimoine, 2005.

⁷ 'Ce bonhomme, plus de vingt-cinq ans après que tout le monde avoit cessé de porter des chaines et des enseignes de diamans, en mettoit tous les jours pour se parer, et se promenoit en cet equipage sous les porches de la Place Royale, qui est près de son hostel. Tous les passans s'amusoient à le regarder' (Tallemand des Réaux 1960, I, 50-51; This good fellow, more than twenty-five years after everyone had stopped wearing diamond chains and adornments, wore them every day to dress up, and went walking thus attired under the porticos of the Palais Royal, which is near his residence. All the passers-by amused themselves looking at him).

These reflections, preserved in the early manuscript versions of Sully's memoirs, provide unusually poignant insight into how an early modern nobleman thought about civility. For Sully, anger-management and emotional self-control were not things that had come to him naturally as a result of years of competition with court peers. When Sully needed to confront the bellicose ways and hot temper that had helped capsized his career, he did not seek insights from polished social superiors or even social equals. He did not mention conduct manuals, nor did he seek guidance in a salon. Instead, Sully thought and wrote about civility as something he hoped would come from his male servants, whom he constructs in the memoirs as informative, frank, and insightful. It is this role that I would like to explore in detail. While Sully's memoirs are *not* a reliable source on how servant-familiars actually behaved, they reveal how a male French noble thought and even fantasized about servants' insight and knowledge. In particular, we can see how Sully, when faced with the unsettling prospect of needing to alter his manners, seems to have welcomed the idea of input from less-threatening, lower-status males whose assumptions about him differed from those held by nearer-status peers and court competitors.

2. *Servant Memoirs*

Domestics pervade Sully's memoirs in ways both obvious and elusive. First and foremost, servants are the memoirs' narrators, but they are not the authors of the text. In a move that has perplexed and frustrated generations of readers (Marbault 1837, 22, 55), Sully wrote his memoirs himself, but chose to narrate them from his servants' point of view. The servant-narrators who appear in the manuscripts are sometimes given names, and these names correspond to real individuals who worked in Sully's entourage, but there is ample evidence to suggest that Sully wrote the memoirs himself and merely set up the servants in his text as puppeteered voices (Jung 1855; Perrens 1871; Pfister 1894; Barbiche and Dainville-Barbiche 1997, 378-387). The domestics thus speak through a kind of ventriloquization, seeming to reach out to their master as though recounting his life story back to him, and addressing Sully in the second-person 'vous'.

The reliability of this narration has long been discredited, and readers have rightly pointed out the ways in which Sully uses servant-narrators to lend an appearance of third-party objectivity to exaggerated accounts of his exploits and achievements. This is particularly true with respect to the 1638 print edition of the memoirs, which Sully had printed, at his own expense, when he was a very old man and concerned to leave behind a legacy which would be complete and favorable. In the earliest, purely manuscript versions of the memoirs on which I will focus here, however, Sully was writing soon after the king's death and at a time when he had not yet given up on the

possibility of reviving his career (Barbiche and Dainville-Barbiche 1997, 376). Accordingly, the servant narrators are made to play a multi-dimensional role, one which includes cajoling and coaching Sully as well as praising and historicizing him.⁸

When placing Sully's narrators in context, it is important to keep in mind that servant or quasi-servant memorialists and historians were not unheard of at the time. Drawing on sources from Renaissance Italy, Eric Cochrane describes early modern writers of history as falling into three categories: 'lawyers' (jurists and humanist statesmen), 'patricians' (a group which in France better corresponds to retired sword nobles who settled down to write their memoirs) and, finally, 'secretaries' (1981, 61). With regard to the last of these, Cochrane means specifically persons of 'modest origins' (58) who acquired humanist training and took up history-writing as an attempt to prove their erudition and employability.

In France, too, secretaries engaged in a range of erudite writing. We might think, for example, of Étienne du Tronchet, secretary to the Maréchal de Saint-André and to Catherine de Médicis, who published Petrarchan poetry and a widely popular manual on Italianate letter-writing (Sullivan 1931). Another man of letters, Bertrand Du Haillan, used his position as secretary to Henri, Duc d'Anjou to write an entire history of the dukes (1573). When Henri ascended the throne, Du Haillan came to be named *historiographe de France*, and wrote a more encompassing *Histoire de France* (1580-1585), but the title page lists his function as the King's financial and personal secretary before mentioning his role as national historiographer.⁹ This affiliation between secretaryship and history-writing also extends to the (distinct but inevitably related) genre of the memoir, which was employed by figures like Vincent Carloix and Guillaume de Maurillac in their biographies of the masters whom they served.

Given these considerations, Sully was not being wholly implausible in setting his servants up as memorialists, and there were other benefits to boot. Secretarial authorship fell in keeping with what many sword nobles increasingly wanted from the genre of the memoir. In an era in which writing was increasingly coming to connote specific kinds of educational and professional training, noble memorialists of the sixteenth century frequently distanced themselves and their memoirs from those of the rising *robin* intelligentsia, even those whose career histories included (as was increasingly

⁸ In keeping with its greater preoccupation with Sully's legacy and the impression he was leaving behind, the 1638 print edition also mutes the servants as individuals, lumping their voices into a single, collective (and seemingly more authoritative) 'nous'.

⁹ 'Par Bernard de Girard, seigneur du Haillan, conseiller du roy, secretaire de ses finances, & de sa chambre, & historiographe de France' (By Bernard de Girard, lord of Haillan, counselor to the king, secretary of his finances, and of his bedchamber, and historiographer of France).

the case) important works as ambassadors, counselors, and financial managers. ‘Sword noble memoirs’ thus developed as a socially self-aware genre that took occasional jabs at non-military robe nobles. Sword nobles writing in this vein developed distinctive tics and disclaimers, often beginning their works with a conspicuous refusal of eloquence, what Marc Fumaroli calls ‘cet idéal de *vera et pura narratio*’ (1998, 222). Announcing their intention to write in a low and ‘naïf’ style and on the basis of personal, first-hand experience, noble memoirs tend to locate part of the value of their histories in an unfussy demeanor, supposed closeness to the truth, and deliberate distance from bookish compilations.

As we shall see, narration by servants tends to follow along similar lines. In her description of the rise of an ‘epistemic’ or ‘bystander’ model of witnessing in early modern French writing, Andrea Frisch points to the example of Rabelais’ character Alcofrybas, ‘the *serviteur à gages* [hired servant], a witness who is meant to be imagined primarily as the human-sized companion of the giant whose chronicle he composes’ (2004, 67). For Frisch, servants become witnesses and narrators whom French writing associates with stylistic accessibility and, to a large extent, with trustworthy first-person reporting. Guillaume de Marillac, a secretary who wrote a memoir for his master, the blood prince Charles de Bourbon, took pains to stress his direct, personal nearness to the prince, noting that he served him, ‘from his childhood until he passed’ (1605, 213). When Mme de La Fayette wrote her memoir about and with the princess Henriette d’Angleterre, she specified precisely when she had first come into contact with the princess and the nature of her access to her (1967, 2-3). Though Sully was imagining and ultimately fabricating his servant narrators’ stance and style, he nonetheless drew on similar kinds of associations, positioning his narrators as plain-speaking eye-witnesses.¹⁰

In addition, Sully may have understood that third-party servant narration could shield him from criticism, facilitate exaggeration of his military exploits and statecraft,¹¹ and lastly, lend his memoirs – by definition a subjective,

¹⁰ This move was probably also aided by examples like Philippe de Commynes’ *Chronyque et histoire*. An advisor and retainer of Charles the Bold and Louis XI, Commynes offered his readers an example of dignified French-language history writing that could capitalize on prestigious subordinate roles in state service. Frequently published in the sixteenth century and beyond, Commynes’ work showed early modern French nobles how to write memoirs from below and how to do so without compromising a noble identity.

¹¹ Texts such as Vincent Carloix’s memoir of the Maréchal de Vieilleville (1838 [1757]), and Thomas Du Fossé’s life of Louis de Pontis express admiration for these men, and insist on granting them lively life stories. In their accounts of these men’s exploits, both on the battlefield and at court, these memorialists frequently render their subjects larger than life. In this sense, both of these memoirs, with their outsiders’ perspectives on men who come to look like heroes, anticipate the memoir genre’s increasing intersection with the seventeenth-century novel, in both its heroic and historical dimensions. See Pontis 2000.

biased genre – an appearance of *gravitas* and objectivity. As Simone Bertière notes, speaking specifically of non-first-person memoirs,

A la fin du XVI^e siècle et au début du XVII^e siècle, la rédaction des mémoires ... témoigne d'une volonté d'entrer dans l'histoire par la grande porte ... Les mémorialistes, qui se sentent en même temps dépendants et rivaux des historiens, cherchent à se substituer à eux et croient parfois bien faire en s'appropriant leurs pratiques narratives, notamment la forme impersonnelle. (Quoted in Kuperty-Tsur 1979, 73)¹²

The use of a secretarial voice and of third-person narration could thus inflect a set of memoirs with the respectability and truth-value often associated with history.

3. *Constructive Criticism*

These factors were all-important for Sully, and yet it is clear that the servant-narrators he injects into his text operate on several other levels as well. The narrators are a highly affective presence; they are also presented as instructive and constructively critical. Indeed, from the earliest pages of the memoirs, the (fictive) secretary-narrator who opens the text points out distinct and substantive shortcomings in Sully. Noting that the stakes are high, for if the ousted minister cannot get himself back into power the price to be paid will be high, the narrator points out the core reason why his master is disliked:

[vostre esprit] seroit tenu de tous pour admirable ... s'il avoit un peu plus de patience et moins d'impetuosit , et s'il n'estoit estim  pour mespriser tous les autres esprits a son respect, ne considerant pas avecq une moderation convenable et tousjours bienseante a ceux qui sont constituez en dignit , qui s'entremeslent des affaires publiques et qui ont a traicter avecq toutes sortes d'esprits et de personnes. (1970, I, 6)¹³

These remarks are no mere overture to plain-speaking. Rather, they identify debilitating faults: scorn for others, lack of patience, moderation and seemliness. This list of criticism situates the servant as a vehicle of knowledge, showing that Sully was willing to write about his retainers as acceptable authorities on social interaction and conduct.

¹² At the end of the sixteenth century and at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the writing of memoirs ... bears witness to a wish to make a grand entrance into [the genre of] history ... Memorialists, who simultaneously feel dependent on and rivals of historians, seek to take their places and sometimes believe it's good to adopt their narrative practices, notably impersonal forms of speech.

¹³ [your mind] would be considered admirable by all ... if it had a little more patience and less impetuosity, and if it wasn't held to scorn all other minds, not thinking with the kind of moderation that is appropriate and always seemly to dignitaries, who deal in public affairs and who have to deal with all kinds of minds and people.

Later, the narrator develops this line further still, telling Sully in almost aphoristic terms that ‘il est plus a propos de s’accommoder [à la diversité de ces esprits] que de les vouloir reformer a vostre sens’¹⁴ and urging the fallen minister to accommodate, rather than pummel down, minds which differ from his own. The narrator quickly tempers this boldness with roundabout expressions of praise, suggesting that Sully misunderstands other minds because his own is so remarkable, but the closing words of the passage once again underline the damage caused by Sully’s touchy manner: ‘[ces esprits] sont par vous mesprisez et leurs conseilz rejettez’ (1970, I, 6).¹⁵

These remarks, part of a prologue which immediately precedes the account of Sully’s childhood, establish this servant-narrator (and several others who are made to follow) as constructive critics, figures who will judge, steer, and gently correct Sully in the course of telling his story. That such free-speaking involves a degree of risk is suggested by this early narrator’s affirmation of loyalty, in which he cautions Sully that his remarks have been ‘dict par forme d’avertissement venant d’un loyal serviteur, et non pour vous blasmer ny pour vouloir faire le censeur de vostre vie’ (1970, I, 6).¹⁶

Subsequent narrators adopt similar stances, offering stories that at once remind their subject of past events and humble him. One, for example, recalls a war-time incident in which Sully installed a mine which at first failed to explode, and then exploded with an excess of violence (1970, I, 356). In another tale, a narrator chides Sully for having been stubborn (‘opiniastrez’) when he and several comrades insisted on pulling over a tub which they believed was filled with wine, but which instead coated them with manure:

Et vous, Vaubrot et Aventigny vous estants attachez a une grande cuve a vin, et opiniastrez a la renverser, vous fistes tomber sur vous cinq ou six barriques remplies de fumier, soubz lesquelles vous fustes tous trois embarassez, et eusmes toutes les peines du monde a vous en retirer. (1970, I, 162)¹⁷

Clearly, this is not a text from which Sully always emerges covered in glory, or even with clean pants.

Varied in their subject, the at-times unflattering images which the servant-narrators offer often coalesce around the issues of social interaction, self-

¹⁴ ... it is more appropriate to accommodate oneself to [the diversity of others’ minds] than to want to re-shape them to your way of thinking.

¹⁵ [these minds] are, by you, scorned and their advice rejected.

¹⁶ ... said as a warning coming from a loyal servant, and not to blame you nor to be a critic of your life.

¹⁷ And you, Vaubrot, and Aventigny, having grabbed on to a big wine tub, and [being] determined to turn it over, you dumped on yourselves five or six barrels of manure, under which you were all three encumbered, and we had all the trouble in the world getting you out.

discipline and conception of self that are central to what Elias understands as the civilizing process. In the prologue quoted from above, the servant highlights ‘impetuosité’, lack of ‘moderation’ and inadequate ‘bienveillance’ or seemliness in Sully’s treatment of others; all are key aspects of the self-discipline and calibrated politeness that Elias found to be so difficult for the early modern sword nobility to achieve.¹⁸ When we see Sully repeatedly getting into quarrels, or hear the views of his childhood tutor, who found him ‘un peu trop prompt a blasmer ceux qu’il voyoit estre trop tardifz a comprendre ce qu’il proposoit’ (1970, I, 16),¹⁹ we know this forebodes a lifetime of trouble in the mixed-crowd setting of the court.

In the prologue it is not just impoliteness, but also a disproportionate sense of self that earns disapproval from the servants. Sully’s stubbornness and rigid attachment to his own ideas are made to contrast with the urbane flexibility of his fellow statesmen, persons who likewise ‘ont a traicter avecq toutes sortes d’esprits et de personnes’ (1970, I, 6).²⁰ Unable to share this breezy adaptability, Sully emerges from his servants’ descriptions of him as talented but blinkered. Intriguingly, the memoirs themselves are offered as an antidote to this problem, a form of full immersion in others’ thoughts and perspectives. The narrator-scribe who is imagined receiving memoirs handed down from other servants is staged presents them to Sully as products ‘de l’imagination de l’autruy’ (1970, I, 4; of the thoughts of others). In part, this phrase offers a gesture of self-defense (the servant is meant to seem worried about how Sully may respond to the text, and therefore as presenting himself primarily as a scribe rather than an author). However, the decision to summarize and present the text in terms of otherness and of other minds clearly resonates with Sully’s grudging, anxious admission of inadequacy in this respect.

For Elias, the civilizing process had to involve at once the mind, the body, and the body politic, translating new habits of emotion into new political subjectivities, and vice versa. Sully’s servant narrators further this process most concretely when they place Sully in context, cautioning the minister that his skills and originality do not allow him to set his own rules. Accounts of bungled negotiations and reproaches from royal and social superiors serve to remind the fallen duke that he is, and has always been, dependent on and subject to others.

¹⁸ For a similar remark even quite late in the memoirs, see the observations of several narrators in Ms. Fr. 10312, 171, and Sully 1837, III, 389, ‘comme vostre naturel est franc et libre et soudain, et quelquefois un peu trop pour vostre profit, vous ne vous peustes empescher de dire ...’ (since your nature is frank and open and sudden, and sometimes too much so for your own good, you couldn’t refrain from saying ...).

¹⁹ ... a little too hasty to criticize those whom he saw as too slow at understanding what he was suggesting.

²⁰ have to deal with all kinds of minds and people.

A widely-read study by Jonathan Dewald (1993) has suggested that early modern nobles shared common, unsettling experiences of modernity, selfhood, and striving. This said, readers of Sully's memoirs may find little to suggest that this shared experience led to enhanced mutual understanding or exchange of advice among fellow nobles. In a sense, Sully had no shortage of potential interlocutors. His career brought him into contact with some of the most important men and women of his day. Moreover, Laurent Avezou has shown how eagerly contemporary satire engaged with his foibles, mocking his gruffness, his temper, his iron hand (2001, 47-59). In the memoirs themselves, Henri IV's mistress Gabrielle d'Estrées is made to say that 'tant de gens se plaignent [de lui]' (1988, II, 282; so many people complain [about him]). The interesting question, then, is why, out of all his many colleagues and the even wider range of his critics, Sully chose his personal servants as the friend-correctors to take most seriously and to enshrine in his text, and whose words he himself must have mulled over repeatedly during the long process of writing his memoirs from *their* point of view.

To broaden our sense of Sully's writerly and social choices, we may note that in the memoirs he appears alongside important fellow statesmen – De Sancy, Bellièvre, Villeroy – as well as military leaders. We see men of higher status, such as the Connétable de Montmorency, and nearer equals, like Henri de Schomberg, who shared with Sully an active military background, an interest in finance, and enough personal compatibility (it was rumored) to have attracted Sully's wife as a lover (Barbiche and Dainville-Barbiche 1997, 637). Even fellow Protestants, such as the Duc de Bouillon, and persons specifically marked in the memoirs as 'friends', such as Jacques Davy Du Perron and Pierre Séguier, are quickly passed over and fail to gain solidity in the text.²¹ Sully worked with these men extensively, and both his own writing and external sources allude to confrontations with them which cannot have failed to offer some kind of socio-professional feedback. Why is it then that none of these peers nearer to Sully in role and status are given meaningful voices in the text? Why are so many reproaches from the court reduced to a murmur, and what does Sully's memoir, for all its fabrications, nonetheless reveal about his preferred sociology of correction?

²¹ See, for example, the reference to Du Perron as Sully's 'singulier amy' (1970, I, 364; singular friend), even though he appears in very few other places. Pierre Séguier (the 2nd) appears once as a dinner guest at Sully's home (*ibid.*, 327-328), but never thereafter. The Duc de Bouillon is mentioned as having taunted Sully in his youth, and emerges in several places as an ambitious leader, but is not developed further. While the servants associated with Sully's early years are largely Protestant, one of the most important, Étienne de La Font, the first servant who is mentioned by name in the memoirs, and who is presented/imagined as the coordinating force behind the project, was Catholic. Later *protégé*-friends (such as La Clavelle and Duret, who served under Sully in the royal finance *bureaux*) were Catholic as well; the same is true of (Bishop) Du Perron. Thus, while one should certainly consider religion as a factor which shapes Sully's social network and his receptivity to others, it does not seem to have played a determining role.

4. *Past vs. Future*

Two factors emerge clearly. First, whether rightly or wrongly, Sully attributes to his peers nearer in status a tendency to view him as anchored in the past, and therefore as insensible to correction. For example, when the memoirs show Sully beginning to come to prominence on the king's finance committee, the text presents his fellow courtiers as opposing his rise because they believe Sully can never throw off his brash military background:

Tous vouloyent ... persuader [au roi] que vous n'entendiez ny n'entendriez jamais rien [à la finance], ce mestier estant de trop difficile discution et intelligence pour un esprit impetueux comme le vostre, qui ne vous estiez jamais meslé que de porter une harquebuse, endosser un harnois et faire l'estradiot, susciterent tous les princes et grands, et notamment M. le Connestable ... pour ... aller faire des plainctes [au Roy]. (1988, II, 107)²²

In their emphasis on Sully's static mentality and their denial of a future tense ('n'entendriez jamais rien'), both Sully's noble robe rivals and the 'princes et grands' are shown as understanding the future minister solely in terms of his military past, rather than as a work-in-progress. Intriguingly, through their posited thoughts we find one of the main criticisms levelled by the servants – the idea that Sully is 'impetuous', that he reacts too quickly. Here, however, this criticism constitutes only one current in a broader flow, and the point of the passage is not to correct Sully, but to ironically foreshadow how wrong these naysayers will turn out to be. Though the Connétable and his friends are presented as understanding the difference between an aggressive warrior and a courtly finance chief, Sully as author portrays them as blind to his present and potential administrative skills.

To find this view placed in the mouths of fellow sword-elites is interesting, and not surprisingly, Sully has it recur in the mouths of *robins*. The realm's leading statesman, for example, the Chancelier de Cheverny, is represented as complaining when Sully arrives late to a meeting: 'Monsieur, monsieur, il y a longtemps que nous vous attendons, le Roy croit que vous soyés des plus dilligents, et neantmoins vous venez quasy tousjours le dernier' (1988, II, 178).²³ By reproaching him for lack of diligence and consideration for others, Cheverny

²² Everyone wanted ... to persuade [the king] that you didn't understand and would never understand anything [about finance], this profession being too difficult to discuss and grasp for an impetuous mind like yours, which had never dealt with anything but carrying a harquebus, embracing the profession of arms and being a cavalry man, they incited all the princes and great nobles and notably M. le Connétable [a top military role] ... to ... go and complain [to the king].

²³ Sir, sir, we've been waiting for you for a long time, the king believes that you are among the most diligent [of his men] and nonetheless you almost always arrive last.

is shown as projecting an image of Sully as unable to apply himself to his job, lacking the self-discipline and courtesy needed to get himself to the meeting on time. The reader, however, knows that Sully has invested deeply in presenting himself in precisely the opposite terms, offering us, and at times Cheverny, scenes of late-night book-keeping, endless report-writing, careful saving and household-management, scenes which help constitute *the* organizing figure for his career and indeed for the memoirs – the *CEconomies*. To be sure, we also learn of Sully hiding some aspects of his ‘diligence’, for example, the elaborate (and in many ways shameful) commercial horse-trading with which he admits financing his early years as a gentleman-soldier and his participation in the religio-civil wars (1970, I, 125). Nonetheless, as author, Sully suggests that he had offered his peers enough proof of compunction for these acts to have merited more support from their corner.

For Sully to have been seen by others as static, or as a remnant of the past, would have been especially distressing in the light of what exactly was implied in ‘civilizing’ a sword noble. For an elite military male to admit that he needed new forms of manners and clout was to admit that the old ways were no longer good enough, that his family had failed to give him a proper education, that his social standing was shaky and perhaps had never been quite up to snuff. Low standing and inadequate upbringing are aspects of the ‘pastness’ confronted in the process of Sully’s self-improvement, aspects he accuses his social peers and near rivals of dwelling upon too much.

On this score, the memoirs construct Henri IV’s sister, Catherine de Bourbon, as a particularly unwelcome corrector. When Sully appears before her on an embassy, Catherine is shown critiquing the statesman’s ‘impertinent’, ‘insolent’ speeches, and as insisting

[que] des affaires tant espineuses et difficiles ... debvroient estre traictées par gens d’autre condition que de petits gentilshommes comme vous, de qui le plus grand honneur est d’avoir esté nourry de jeunesse en nostre maison, et que tous les vostres en ayent tousjours esté serviteurs, et de vous estimer capable de reigler ceux qui sont sy proches parents, lesquelz s’accorderont tousjours à la fin. (1970, II, 80-81)²⁴

Reproof for impolite behavior here mingles with suggestions that nothing better can be expected of a ‘little gentleman’ such as Sully, whose family can claim no greater honor than that of being servants to Catherine’s own. The memoirs present the royal sister as viewing Sully’s behavior as beyond all hope of remedy, and wishing that she could replace him with a noble of

²⁴ [that] such thorny and difficult matters ... should be handled by people of another condition than little gentlemen like you, whose greatest honor has been to have been brought up in your youth in our household and to have your family be [our] servants, and [it has been part of your greatest honor] for you to judge yourself capable of managing those who are such near relatives, who will always come to their own agreement in the end.

higher standing who will act more appropriately. In this perspective, Sully's family identity is damning; he cannot escape it, and Catherine's speech, ending as it does with the cutting affirmation that 'near relatives' will always sort things out for themselves in the end, draws a firm line between Sully's (comparatively) low parentage and the exclusive, self-regulating royal family which does not need his arbitration.

5. *Female vs. Male Correctors*

This genealogically-focused condemnation of Sully as a 'petit gentilhomme' who does not deserve correction is one which the memoirs present as particularly painful for Sully; he has the servant narrators report that he became ill, that the criticism cut to the quick ('[cela] vous tenoit un peu au cœur'²⁵ [1988, II, 82]). However, this explosive encounter between Sully and Catherine is also important in that it echoes a truly primal scene in the memoirs, an anecdote about a violent mother and the child whom she beats. This Sully tellingly places at the beginning of the memoir proper, where it introduces his account of his childhood. Perhaps still smarting from his adult run-ins with powerful women, including the conflicts with the regent that led to his dismissal, Sully emblematically opens his text with a scene of female aggression, a scene which also leads back to the topic of servants. It is a boyhood evocation of a mother outrageously beating her child. Presenting himself as watching this violence from the street in the company of his tutor, Sully describes his boyhood self as piping up:

Ma mie, vous estes une mauvaise femme de battre avecq telle furie vostre enfant et de le vouloir envoyer a l'escole a coups de pied et de poings; sy c'estoit moy, vous me tueriez plustost que j'en fisses rien. Mais je m'assure qu'en le caressant et persuadant par raison il vous obeyroit plus que vous ne voudriez, car la nature l'y oblige et pour mon regard j'en userois ainsi. (1970, I, 8)²⁶

As the first of the memoir's self-contained anecdotes, the encounter with the 'bad mother' marks the text as a work profoundly concerned with the *process* of correction. More importantly perhaps, it also signals Sully as a writer opposed to women and attuned to male servants as his preferred agents of self-improvement. Only sentences later, young Sully's tutor is said to have learned from his pupil's

²⁵ '[it] went a bit to the heart'.

²⁶ My dear, you are a bad woman to beat your child with such fury and to want to get him to school by means of kicks and punches; if it were me, you'd kill me before I'd do anything. But I'm sure that by coddling him and persuading him with reason he would obey you even more than you wish, for nature obligates him to and for my part I'd do it thus.

remarks and successfully changed his own methods of correction. The text thus singles out male servants as effective and gentle advisors.²⁷ Anticipating the memoirs' construction of Catherine, and later Marie de Médicis, as women who chastise Sully in rage and derision rather than by means of kindness or persuasion, this *leitmotiv* of the harsh female corrector signals gender as an important factor in Sully's sociology of counsel: he would prefer to be reproved by a man.

As we look back on the minister's life and his representation of it, we see that Sully very rarely situates himself in activities organized by women. Although he does describe the festivities at the 'Printemps de Nérac', an important civilizing episode for the Protestant military elite, and one that was inspired and led by women (Viennot 1993, 122), Sully offers no further instance of being involved in this kind of female-led sociability. Despite living through the heyday of Paris salon activity, Sully remained wholly apart from this *milieu*. Sully's aversion to hearing out female correctors is particularly clear in the conflicts the memoirs stage between Sully and Henri IV's wife, and in passages such as that in which Sully is shown rebuffing criticism from his own second wife, Rachel de Cocheilet (Barbiche and Dainville-Barbiche 1997, 427). While the memoirs obviously on some level lend an ear to Catherine de Bourbon – the remarks attributed to her in the account of the 1596 embassy are granted more space and detail than almost any other failed negotiation scene – Sully clearly re-visits them with pain, and half-dismisses their speaker by means of misogynist stereotypes.

6. *Banking on the Future*

In writing in this fashion, Sully calls our attention to an over-looked niche in early modern masculinity and manners: the men who perhaps could have been won over by female civility, but who clearly never made it. So why does Sully imagine that correction from servants might be more effective and less painful? Are the servants set up as replacements for civilizing women? Is their status difference effeminized? Or does Sully make them function in different ways altogether?

²⁷ The passage most specifically applauds one of Sully's childhood *précepteurs*, Liberge, who is said to have been listening when the boy Sully pipes up and corrects the 'bad' mother. Liberge, having previously stood in a relation of 'desgout et aversion' (disgust and aversion) to his pupil, gleans from the boy's words a new and gentle way of guiding him. Applying the new method, he finds that '[elle] reussit tant heureusement' ([it] succeeded so readily) and Sully comes to show great 'assiduité' (assiduity) of body and mind (1970, I, 8). Obviously, this anecdote locates the ultimate source of proper correcting within Sully himself, thus leading us back to the upper nobility as the fount of propriety. However, insofar as the author clearly admits his own inadequacy in schooling himself, the celebration of Liberge remains important.

In turning to these crucial subordinates, it is worth noting that while aristocratic women, incredulous *grands*, and jealous statesmen are shown as viewing Sully primarily through the lens of his past, he imagines his servant-narrators as understanding him in terms of the future. Indeed, the servants are made to express worries when Sully falls temporarily out of favor, or when they see his unproductive behavior as holding him back; they claim that they want him to advance, and have banked on his skills in bringing a long work-in-progress to fruition.

In many respects, this makes perfect sense. The servant-narrators who emerge early in the text appear in the role of personal retainers, a kind of role which implied hitching one's career to the success of someone else. Real servants of this kind would have had every interest in viewing their master as a long-term investment, someone whose prospects were still unfolding. Near-contemporary advice manuals, such as Callière's *La Fortune des gens de qualité*, urge the would-be gentleman servant to make his choice of master carefully on the basis of what the latter can *become*, rising indefinitely or remaining 'useless', building 'true friendship' with his familiar, or crushing the servant's good will under humiliating subjections (1668, 175, 203, 211, 237-238). Forecasts and conjectures of these kinds may explain why it made psychological sense to Sully to people his memoir with servants, why the anxious statesman turned to an image of *them* when he wanted to think not only about his past but also about his future and prospects of self-change. Viewed through other social lenses, the prospect of a comeback to court might have seemed abrupt, or even demeaning; a cheap bourgeois turnaround in a man who had been brought up to construct his identity in terms of martial honor. Yet such desires could not improperly be attributed to servant familiars. In the social logic which the memoir both reveals and defends, servants already understand their masters as malleable.

At the outset of the text, one narrator's remarks clearly establish this servant orientation toward the future. With Henri IV dead and Sully ousted from his job, the narrator is made to express concerns about his master's declining prospects. These worries may seem purely self-interested, the sighs of a social climber dramatizing a wish for personal gain. To be sure, Sully was only too aware that gentleman servants *did* have ambitions and interests of their own. However, bitterness at this is concentrated near the end of the memoir; for much of the text, Sully makes his servants' orientation toward the future a source of reassurance. As the ousted statesman constructs his fantasy team of familiars, he nearly always mingles their careerism with kindness.

In the pages which relate the statesman's falling-out with Catherine de Bourbon, for example, the servant who recounts the episode adds that he gave advice to his master, keeping Sully mindful of his future while offering gentle consolation. Having listened to Sully rant, lament, and tentatively decide to hold firm in the face of the threat of being dismissed by the king, the servant is made to explain that

Ayant escouté attentivement tout ce discours, je le louay en moy-mesme, vous consolay autant que la dextérité de mon esprit m'en donna de moyen, et vous confortay par toutes les raisons I je me peus adviser à suivre vostre resolution. Aussy à la verité eust-il bien fasché à tous nous autres qui vous suivions (vous tenants sy proche d'avancer vostre fortune, et par icelle la nostre) de veoir flestrir le verd de noz esperances par un despit precipité. (1970, II, 89)²⁸

The servant is here clearly constructed as someone concerned about his own professional future, but this concern comes only at the end of the passage. The narrator's initial, primary focus is on his master. In harmony with the principles of correction idealized early on by the child Sully, the servant employs kindness ('vous consolay', 'vous confortay'), and appeals to Sully's reason as he tries to steer him in the right direction. Moreover, the careful phrasing of his words absolves the servant completely of any suspicion of slavish obedience. The domestic is said to have praised Sully's speech to himself ('je le louay en moy-mesme') *before* advising his master to follow through on the ideas expressed in it; he is thus, if only fleetingly, granted a capacity for independent judgment and allowed an interior mental space of his own. It is through having independence attributed to them that the servants come to be imagined as seeing and understanding Sully in ways different from those in which he sees himself. They thus become consolatory figures in a fantasy fleshed out through writing, one in which Sully imagines that he is not alone, and that he enjoys supporters able to pull him back into *their* vision of his unfolding career.

Most astonishing in this vein is the memoirs' construction of another servant as quite literally clairvoyant. This man, La Brosse, is said to have 'le diable au corps' (the devil in his body) and is shown over the course of the memoirs to successfully predict Henri's coronation and Sully's rise to become 'un des plus estimez personnages du royaume' (1970, I, 16).²⁹ Nominally one of Sully's childhood tutors who goes on to serve him in later life, this 'sorcier de maistre' (1970, I, 128; sorcerer-master) exemplifies the memoirs' larger investment in servants as figures of independent vision. In coming to resemble a 'maistre', this servant and his predictions are shown as acting as a guiding force for both Sully and the king (1970, I, 92). Pushing the future *surintendant*

²⁸ Having attentively listened to this whole speech, I praised it within myself, [and] consoled you as much as the dexterity of mind allowed, and comforted you by all the means that I could think of to follow your resolution. Also, in truth, it would have upset all of us who were following you (considering you so close to advancing your fortune, and with it, ours) to see our green hopes wither from a sudden disappointment.

²⁹ 'one of the most esteemed personages in the realm'. Several factors link La Brosse with Sully's Protestant faith; the former is said to be raised at the court of Renée of Ferrara (notoriously a Protestant); the memoirs also specify that La Brosse studied theology 'pour estre ministre' (1970, I, 16; to become a minister).

to look ever forward, to take in the big picture and, even in moments of self-doubt, see himself as the foremost follower of the man who will be king, La Brosse is shown to shape Sully through affirmation of his merit.

This emphasis on forecasting and futurity may in part be attributed to Sully's Protestant faith, which emphasized predestination and predetermined inner worth. Of course, Sully also represents himself as bringing a great deal of hard work to the realization of his destiny. However we understand these patterns, the memoirs suggest that Sully wanted to implicate his servants in his success. He understood domestics' orientation toward the future as having real social value. The problematic vision of self-improvement as taking place in solitude, the vision which injects gloom into so many dramas of upward mobility, is here circumvented by imagining servants as sharing the work of correction and self-shaping.

Though early modern and present-day thinking on friendship has tended to see 'interested' advice as a grievous fault in amical ethics, Sully appears to be more than willing to accept his servants' ambitions when they run parallel to his own. 'Interested' servants who hope to advance along with and through Sully are cast as sources of support, whereas *ressemblant*, 'disinterested' peers who are in fact in competition for the same resources and prestige are clearly cast by Sully as unwelcome. While formal theories of Renaissance friendship often privilege sincerity, and typically ally this trait with status peers while condemning subordinates as the agents of base flattery and untruth, it is ironically servants who can sometimes turn out to be the more sincere. The subordinate who puts his ambitions up front and then offers whole-hearted support can perhaps more truly serve the master's best interests than can a peer whose interests *seem* independent, but which in fact pose a threat.³⁰

In developing these favorable connotations for Sully's retainers, the manuscript versions of the *Economies royales* reach out to these men as figures who might help their master reduce his class-determined shame about the need for self-improvement. Of course, as we shall later learn, Sully does not change at root, but it is by feeding himself this kind of cheering, non-schismatic advice, drawing on men whom he imagines as pledged to his side, that he is able as memorialist to contemplate scenes of past criticism, and to mull over the prospects they may still offer.

³⁰ See for example, the early narrators' statements about including negative information about Sully even though he may be displeased. In this sense, it seems to me that (early modern and more recent) theorists of friendship overlook certain possibilities when they construct peers as 'disinterested'. One peer may not seek a handout or payment from another, but he/she still has interests at stake. In early modern texts peers at court more often appear to be at cross-purposes, or cross-interests, rather than to lack interests altogether.

7. Collaborative Writing

If Sully's servants are thus shown to hold a vested interest in their master's future, and are represented at one remove from 'genealogical' modes of thinking, the memoirs also grant them an additional form of advisory appeal. This concerns the particular mode and material form through which they are shown to steer their master. Whereas detractors such as Catherine, the chancelier de Cheverny, and the marquis de Villars are all represented as upbraiding Sully aloud and in public, the servants are made to engage in forms of written exchange that are more endearing, bi-directional, and intimate. Placed at a crossroads in the history of domestic service, the servants are military retainers who follow Sully into battle, and in some cases hold 'traditional' household roles such as that of the *écuyer* (squire) Maignan (1970, I, 95). However, they also reflect nobles' growing need for secretarial and administrative service. Some, like 'Baltazar', are explicitly described as 'your secretary' (1970, I, 532), and Sully's tutor La Brosse is said to have training in 'theology', 'medecine', and 'mathematics' (1970, I, 16). Beyond this, all of the servant-narrators are accoutred with hallmark trappings of paper and pen. They are shown writing reports, copying letters, assembling the memoirs themselves. They embody writing as a task, but also as a form of social union.

Indeed, the servants are represented as reaching out to Sully with requests, recalling past cooperation, and imploring Sully's help in correcting and polishing off the memoirs. In this they revisit and prescribe collaboration, letting the memoirs entreat the superseded statesman to share in work which he matters once more. In staging himself as a figure solicited into writerly collaboration, Sully as author creates for himself a fantasy of being wanted, needed, and immersed in a pleasurable paper-chase, a friendly swirl of circulated texts. This imagined pleasure, I would argue, helps counter the pain of self-improvement, making the memoirs nudge Sully toward two distinct kinds of revision: worrisome self-correction, but also more the mundane correction of texts, an act which seems reassuring, familiar, laced with shop talk: in short, something deeply satisfying for the tender bureaucrat that Sully still was.

This said, it is not just anyone who could be plausibly posited as an eager co-participant in such labor. In this sense, the servants are crucial, offering a cast of characters tied to writing as a *craft*. Rightly or wrongly, they are shown to have a much better grasp of the affective materiality of writing than Sully's more lofty fellow statesman.³¹ Indeed, the servants represent their writerly work as both technically pleasurable and amicably savored. I would argue that these imagined scenes of collaborative writing constitute for Sully a major attraction to the memoir project and to the premise of non-first person narration. Though

³¹ Henri IV is presented as an exception to this pattern; despite the latter's status, Sully prefers to imagine and represent the monarch as someone who enjoys exchanging texts, even ones, and who amicably archives the two men's correspondence.

Sully may have in part felt threatened by the idea of correction, the narrators' simultaneous performing of the functions of secretaries conjures up more stable and endearing associations.

Idealized as companions of the pen, the servant-narrators allow Sully to both anticipate and revisit fondness as refracted through the act of writing. At their most basic level, the memoirs do this by staging themselves as a gift, and a monumental one at that. Positing decades of devotion on the part of their servant-compilers, the chronicles begin with Sully's childhood and are said, however implausibly, to have been handed down from domestic to domestic 'depuis votre premiere jeunesse jusques au mois de mars 1611 que vous quittastes tout a faict la court' (1970, I, 2).³² Long in the making, this gift then appears as one meant to charm the master who receives it.

Moreover, the text declares that it aims to please through its style. The servants apologize for accounts that prove 'un peu long' (1988, II, 126; a bit long), excising 'de trop longue deduction' (1970, I, 58; too long passages) and hoping that he will find agreeable their final choices of content and scale: 'nous prions vous ... de l'avoir agreable' (1837, I, 373). Even more amical are those anecdotes and stories which seem designed to entertain, with one of the servants regaling Sully with the tale of a disguised pig and a funeral procession, 'affin d'entremesler tousjours mes memoires de quelque conte pour vous aprester a rire' (1970, I, 166).³³ Another recollects 'un conte pour rire que le Roy vous fist [où je me trouvay present]' (1970, II, 337-338).³⁴

These prompts to laughter play an important role in the tone of the memoirs, and participate in an imagined system of exchange. Sully presents himself in the text as showing favor to the servants by letting them in on information, sharing the details of his life that comprise the memoirs' narrative thread. Presenting the servants as privileged recipients of physical closeness, Sully also shows himself as disclosing information, passing on confidential news, or even letting some servants read and handle his mail: 'vous me faisies cest honneur que de me celer fort peu de tels secrets' (Ms. Fr. 10311, 160).³⁵ Having received this 'honneur', this servant-narrator goes on to mark how he repaid Sully's confidence, detailing the scrupulous way in which he handled

³² from your earliest childhood until the month of March 1611 when you left the court altogether.

³³ to always intersperse my reports with some story to make you laugh.

³⁴ ... a story to make you laugh that the king told you [where I was present]. See also 1970, I, 278, where the narrator recounts 'Il vous arriva lors aussy une petite fortune, que vous me permettez de vous ramentevoir, pource qu'il y eut de quoy rire et de quoy profiter tout ensemble ...' (A good thing happened to you then, which you'll allow me to recall because in it there was matter both for laughter and for gain ...).

³⁵ ... you did me the honor of concealing very few such secrets, one narrator is made to exclaim, clearly constructing his relationship with Sully as one of confidence and favor, something more than perfunctory service. See also 1970, II, 171.

the secrets and letters entrusted to him, 'que vous me commettiés seul pour reduire en ordre et en liasses avec leurs cottes et dattes dessus' (*ibid.*).³⁶

Call numbers and dates allude to an intricate grammar of grouping and filing, an emerging science of text-management which here takes on new meaning as an expressive language of devotion. Ever self-referential, the memoirs highlight their own materiality and their (staged) process of formation, inviting the reader to understand the narrators' continual allusions to copying, filing, and wading through source documents not just as the trappings of historico-textual authenticity, but as 'proof' of the servants' commitment to their master. The work of ordering, dating, re-copying, and compiling is represented as a labor of love, or more properly, service friendship, one which makes use of the emerging specialties of humanist information-management to enact a keen and respectful regard.³⁷

This investment in writing affirms, but also nuances, arguments made by Lorna Hutson, who has identified the textualization of friendship as a critical moment in amity's Western history (1994). Examining male-male relations in the wake of the humanist cultural turn, Hutson posits a transition. She suggests that vaguely medieval bonds dependent upon a system of material pledges between a master and his 'fee'd man' later give way toward a system in which relational credit and trust are understood as being conveyed through more textual means. For Hutson, these later bonds come to be both defined and de-stabilized through the exchange of persuasive texts, and through the performance of service tasks which were 'no longer exclusively signified by the activities of hunting, hawking, fighting and waiting at table ... [but were now] more likely to consist of some activity connected with the organization of knowledge into texts: intelligence-gathering, secretaryship, scholarly reading, tuition, diplomacy, stewardship, surveying' (1994, 88). In a sense, the *Economies royales* affirms this turn toward writing. However, rather than defining themselves through either group or mode (hawking and fighting *versus* secretarial pursuits), Sully's servants appear richly engaged in both.

Moreover, in contrast to Hutson's findings, the amical appeal of writing in the *Economies* has little to do with persuasion. For Hutson, persuasion takes shape (or attempts to take shape) as a tonic which helps 'restore' between friends some kind of solidity and assurance, markers of value such as were formerly enjoyed through friends' exchanges of money and other material tokens (3-7). In the work of Sully, on the other hand, exchanges of texts are themselves material as much as rhetorical. Here amical meanings are made

³⁶ ... that you conferred to me alone to get them in order and in bundles with their call numbers and dates on them.

³⁷ See for example Blair 2003 and 2004. Warren Boutcher's (2006) use of the term 'knowledge services' is also relevant here.

available through simple acts of sharing and recounting, editing, pruning and manipulating of texts as oral and physical objects. The servants are made to suggest that by neatly ordering and compiling the memoirs, they express closeness to and coordination among themselves and with their master. In this way, the existence of a well-ordered text enacts 'credit' and devotion in a manner quite distinct from that offered by rhetoric and flowery professions of friendship.

8. *Conclusion*

However much the post-career, semi-isolated Sully enjoyed imagining himself back in the company of his servants, however much he relished the thought of receiving their writing and counsel, this thought-experiment appears to have failed in its purpose of bringing about his desired jumpstart in civility. Sully's attestable *lack* of a courtly comeback prevents us from ending our tale with news of a snappy reversal. The duke pursued various projects in his retirement, but he never resumed the *surintendance* or regained any meaningful power at court (Barbiche and Dainville-Barbiche 1997, 337-401). As mentioned earlier, the much-revised print edition of his memoirs he eventually brought out moved substantially away from the theme of self-improvement. This is, of course, unsurprising, given his age at the time: he was nearly eighty when the text hit the presses, well beyond the age for a 'comeback'. Perhaps the former statesman had always been wrong in supposing that his behavior could be changed by words which were not in fact new insights generated by 'l'imagination d'autrui' (the minds of others, but simply a schizophrenic refraction of his own divided voice).

This said, however badly the memoirs failed as an attempt at self-coaching, they remain a compelling, detailed witness to early modern servants' importance to their masters. In both their recollection and their regret, Sully's memoirs speak of his desire for his servants' company and advice, his choosing to imagine himself still having them as a team working alongside him in a forward-looking perspective in which his manners still mattered. Surrounded by cultivated women and polished court rivals, Sully does not appear to have connected well with either of these existing – some would say more 'typical' – channels of civility. Instead, gentleman-servants appear to have offered an alternative social ambience within which Sully could think through matters of conduct without feeling either threatened or dishonored.

We may conclude with a pertinent little tale on the topic of civility: the title episode of Giovanni Della Casa's *Galateo*, a seminal courtesy manual that was translated into French as early as 1562. In the story, a bishop receives a visit from a count whose manners are perfect save for one damning flaw: the latter smacks his mouth when he eats. When the bishop feels moved to point this out to the count, he realizes he cannot do so directly, and instead

dispatches one of his gentleman-servants, Galateo, to proffer the embarrassing critique (1609, 54; 1988, 11). Perhaps, like the characters in this episode, Sully may have sensed criticism from a peer to have been off-putting, and that the proper transmitter of such observations was in fact an underling male.

While the memoirs ultimately tell us little about how Sully actually *treated* his retainers, they nonetheless show that he was willing to construct and acknowledge them as savvy, perceptive figures who could be usefully tapped for their knowledge of the behavioral codes he needed at court. These constructs urge us to continue looking for further sources that detail servants' behavioral coaching and the kinds of bridge-building roles they may have played as purveyors of cross-class knowledge. It may be easier to imagine masters as polished and self-sufficient, but Sully's memoirs present a more vulnerable picture, suggesting that underlings may have played crucial roles in supplementing masters' knowledge and in generating self-awareness.

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Servants on Stage

All's [Not] Well:
Female Service and 'Vendible' Virginity
in Shakespeare's Problem Play

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Abstract

The article examines the economics of female service in William Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well*, paying particular attention to the role Helena plays as mistress to the Widow Capilet and Diana. Such a focus reveals that what lies at the heart of *All's Well* is not only, as previous scholarship has suggested, a battle between the sexes but also an intense focus on class and money. By examining both the ties between women and the ties between men that Helena forges and strengthens, I demonstrate that issues of economics and self-interest govern not only male-female relationships but also those between women. In particular, such attention highlights the role that service – conceived of as both economic and sexual – plays in driving the action and the 'problem' of *All's Well*.

Keywords: *All's Well That Ends Well*, Feminist Criticism, Gender, Service, Shakespeare

1. *Introduction*

Until recently, the protagonist of *All's Well That Ends Well* failed to inspire the kind of critical admiration that the plucky, cross-dressing heroines of Shakespeare's other comedies (Viola, Portia, Rosalind) enjoyed.¹ Instead, Helena was derided by eighteenth-century critics as 'cruel, artful, and insolent' (Lennox 1753, 192) and dismissed as 'untrue to her sex' by nineteenth-century scholars for her 'unwomanly' actions, particularly her pursuit of a man so much higher than her in rank (Lounsbury 1908, 390). Frederick Boas, who coined and applied the term 'problem play' to *All's Well*, summed up one

¹ S.T. Coleridge (1907, 83) and G.B. Shaw (Wilson 1961, 7) were lone admirers. This article is an expanded and revised version of a paper discussed at the Shakespeare Association of America conference (Boston, 5-7 April 2012).



traditional view when he wrote that Helena ‘lacks the superb air of distinction which stamps Shakespeare’s heroines. She is, to say the truth, in the eyes of a generation unfamiliar with the feudal doctrine of service, a trifle *bourgeoise*’ (1900, 351-352).² Helena’s determination to lose her virginity and her bawdy sparring with Parolles only added to the offense.

Small wonder, then, that feminist criticism of the late twentieth century found in Helena and the Florentine women a cause it could champion, for the dismissals of Helena appeared predicated on the belief that sexually desirous women were ‘bad’. For Carolyn Asp and others, Helena’s agency was inextricably linked to the play’s classification as a ‘problem play’ (Asp 1986, 48; see also McCandless 1997, 37).³ As Lynne Simpson noted, ‘Feminist studies celebrate [Helena] for actively pursuing the male love object, a gender reversal of the norms of patriarchal courtship’ (1994, 174). Helena, in these readings, provided a model of female agency; moreover, the interactions between Helena, Diana, and the Widow emblemized the power of women’s close relationships to resist male dominance. In the past decade, however, scholars have queried the reflexive assumption that Helena poses a threat to the status quo: for Jean Howard, ‘to read Helena as a protofeminist self-actualizing heroine’ is to misread Helena, whose ‘actions ... shore up patriarchal structures’ (2006, 44). Most recently, these questions have found their most provocative and exciting expression in Kathryn Schwarz’s work on Helena’s ‘constant will’ and ‘conservative motives’ (2011, 107). For Schwarz, the intensity of Helena’s ‘conservative’ pursuits ‘disables conventional distinctions between passive conformity and active impropriety’ (111), and thus, contra Howard, lays bare the fault lines of patriarchal structures.

Focusing on the central yet overlooked place service holds in *All’s Well*, this article builds on the work that feminist scholarship has done to query our assumptions about the play, examining two intertwined threads previous criticism has not adequately addressed in its quest to locate the problem of *All’s Well*: the tendency to overlook the crucial roles money and class occupy in the play, and the tendency to romanticize the relationship between Helena, the Widow Capilet, and Diana. In an essay on the homoeroticism of Shakespeare’s comedies, Julie Crawford cautions queer scholarship to remember that ‘the fear of readings that are distasteful to us ... can shut down reading practices’ (2003, 140); such a warning would seem equally

² Boas characterized *All’s Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Hamlet* as ‘Shakespeare’s problem-plays’ because ‘the issues raised [within the plays] preclude a completely satisfactory outcome’ and thus resist the generic confines of either tragedy or comedy (1900, 345).

³ For more on *All’s Well* as a problem comedy, see Kastan 1985; Gleed 2007; Rawnsley 2013.

relevant for feminist critics. Readings of *All's Well* that move to 'recuperate' Helena by praising her for pursuing her desires and for forging close female relationships miss two important features of Helena's agency: it depends on her financial standing, and it comes at the literal and figurative expense of other men and women.

As I will show, criticism of *All's Well* has turned a blind eye to the negotiations between Helena and the Florentine women, insisting on seeing the bonds between these women as ties of friendship rather than of finance. In a statement typical of these readings, David Bergeron writes of the 'new solidarity with other women' that Helena finds when she 'gets linked with the Widow of Florence and her daughter Diana, two crucial characters for determining Helena's social identity and providing her with narrative options' (2007, 111). What this reading misses is that what gives Helena 'narrative options' and 'determines her social identity' is not friends but *money*. Helena does not 'get linked with' the women – she employs them as her servants. Moreover, it is the sacks of gold and other markers that she is 'great in fortune' (3.7.14) that Helena is able to produce – presumably bestowed upon her by the King and the Countess – that give her the 'options' to travel to Florence, to buy the Widow and her family a meal, to enter into contract with them, to buy a bed-trick, to return first to the Court and then to Rousillon, to get a message to the King, to enable Diana to post bail, and, ultimately, to claim Bertram as 'doubly won' (5.3.314).⁴

To redress the critical tendency to separate women's relationships from their finances, this article examines female traffic in two of the key economies of the play, service and marriage, and the correspondent commodities, people (service) and virginity (marriage). By highlighting the economic dimensions of *All's Well*, in particular the role Helena plays as a mistress to the Widow and her daughter, Diana,⁵ I show that Helena is not a passive victim of patriarchy who finds nurturing and egalitarian sisterhood with the Florentine women. Instead, Helena is a woman keenly aware of both her own financial situation and that of those surrounding her, fluent in the market value of virginity, and masterful at getting what she wants.⁶

⁴ All references to *All's Well That Ends Well* are from Snyder 1993.

⁵ Such attention to the role of women as household managers builds on the work of Korda 2002 and Wall 2002, as well as on Frances Dolan's work on the mistress-servant relation (1994).

⁶ By focusing on these relationships, this essay adopts what Dympna Callaghan has described as 'post-revisionist feminism', which examines women's complex role as 'excluded participants' within early modern culture (2007, 6-14). I draw also on Karen Newman's discussion of the role women play in the traffic in women (1990), as well as Melissa Sanchez's recent work on the fantasy that female friendship is inherently compassionate and caring (2012).

What Helena wants, however, does not necessarily align with what feminist criticism has wanted Helena to want. As Schwarz has argued, feminist scholarship has declared Helena a ‘disorderly woman’ while failing to notice that she is disorderly precisely because of the force of her ‘conservative motives’: ‘that she seeks legitimate endorsement of a socially sanctioned bond tends to slip the mind’ (2011, 107). Schwarz’s work on Helena’s pursuit of Bertram offers a useful corrective to feminist work that has idealized Helena; I build on this critique by attending to Helena’s pursuit of relationships with other women. Examining the homosocial ‘socially sanctioned bonds’ that Helena forges and strengthens, I demonstrate that issues of economics and self-interest govern not only male-female relationships but also those between women. Such attention highlights the role that service – conceived of as economic or sexual or both – plays in driving the action of *All’s Well*. Moreover, attention to Helena’s self-interest exposes the aspects of the play that do not fit comfortably with feminist ideals of mutuality and egalitarianism, from fantasies of topping and (ab)use, to the packaging of people as commodities, to the play’s insistence that asserting individual agency comes at the expense of another individual’s or group’s agency. Helena is not, as Boas claimed, ‘a trifle *bourgeoise*’ – she is *thoroughly bourgeoise*, as are the concerns of this play.

2. *Class Fantasies*

At the heart of *All’s Well* is not only, as previous scholarship has suggested, a battle between the sexes but also an intense focus on class and money. While critics have noted the ways in which Helena’s desire for Bertram is hindered by their class disparity, in particular how unusual the play’s drastic class-crossing is in Shakespeare’s canon (Frye 1983, 48), less attention has been paid to the ways in which her desire for him is predicated upon that very difference. Helena’s first expression of her love for Bertram meditates on their social rank and the consequent impossibility of their love:

’twere all one
That I should love a bright particular star
And think to wed it, he is so above me.
In his bright radiance and collateral light
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.
Th’ambition in my love thus plagues itself:
The hind that would be mated by the lion
Must die for love. ’Twas pretty, though a plague,
To see him every hour, to sit and draw
His archèd brows, his hawking eye, his curls
In our heart’s table – heart too capable
Of every line and trick of his sweet favor.
But now he’s gone, and my idolatrous fancy
Must sanctify his relics. (1.1.87-100)

As Julie Crawford has noted, this passage is not just about Helena's love for Bertram but 'also concerned with social ambition'⁷ (2011, 41): but what if, to push Crawford's point further, the 'ambition in my love' is in fact what generates that love? In her declaration, Helena repeatedly describes Bertram in positions that place him either at a remove from or 'so above' her. Inverting the gender roles associated with chivalric romance, the maiden, rather than the knight, composes the blazon (Bloom 2010, 15-16). What would normally be the subject (Bertram) becomes the object, and yet, as subject, Helena demands to be placed in the object position.

Helena's assertion that 'the hind that would be mated by the lion / Must die for love' takes on a new meaning if understood in this context. The syntax of the sentence seems relatively straightforward: 'the hind', a female deer, is the subject, 'that would be mated by the lion' its appositive, and 'must die for love' the main verb clause: yet the imperative and agent-less action of the sentence – 'the hind must die' – is so strong that it threatens to hide the rich perversity of the hind's desire. The hind 'would be mated' by the lion; it is not the lion that desires to mate the hind. 'Mated' here seems to carry both of its contemporary denotations: 'to render powerless; to overcome; to defeat; to kill' (*OED* v1) and also 'to marry; to take or give in marriage; to match with; to equal' (*OED* v3). The prior sense of the word is what we would expect a lion to do to a hind – namely, kill it – while the latter sense of the word is what Helena professes as her goal – 'to wed' Bertram. Although 'to mate' does not acquire its sense of 'pairing animals for breeding' (*OED* v3 - 5a, b) until the nineteenth century, the way Helena uses 'would be mated', particularly her labelling of the hind's desire as 'for love', connotes copulation as much as it does marriage. Such an interpretation is furthered by the sense that 'die' carries of sexual orgasm, *la petite mort*.

The image of the lion 'mating' the hind – overcoming and rendering her powerless, while matching and marrying her – not only suggests a sexual union but also foreshadows precisely the experience that Bertram and Helena (pretending to be Diana) will recount after their night together.⁸ As Bertram

⁷ Moreover, as Snyder notes, the additional meaning of hind as 'servant or menial' further emphasizes the 'disparity of rank on the chain of being between the valorous king of beasts and the timorous hind' (1993, 1.1.93n).

⁸ To explain the bed-trick more fully: Helena, through an arrangement with Diana and the Widow, has Diana agree to a night with Bertram. Unbeknownst to Bertram, the woman he will spend the night with will be Helena, not Diana; Bertram fails to realize the difference in the dark, believing the 'yet maiden bed' he 'conquer'd' (4.2.57) was that of the woman he wants (Diana) not the woman he was forced to wed (Helena). The bed-trick enables Helena to satisfy the terms under which Bertram said he would recognize Helena as his wife: she consummates their marriage, removes the jewel from his finger, and is thus able, when she arrives in Rousillon pregnant and bearing his ring, to claim Bertram as 'doubly won' (5.3.314).

and Diana arrange for their encounter, Diana instructs Bertram to remain lying 'but an hour' after he has 'conquered my yet-maiden bed' (4.2.57-58), and Helena, who takes Diana's place in the 'maiden bed', muses after the fact that men can 'such sweet use make of what they hate' (4.4.22). As Helena's repeated invocations of Bertram's superior status and her pairing of 'sweet' with 'use' suggest, the desire to be mated with (married to) Bertram is bound up in a desire to be mated by (overcome by) Bertram. Rather than the line being, for David McCandless, an expression of a 'passive ... "feminine" posture' (1997, 39) or, for Susan Snyder, a 'despairing withdrawal' in striking contrast to Helena's 'energetic plan to follow Bertram to Paris' and cure the King (1988, 67), the analogy speaks of a desire for a sexuality that is sado-masochistic and derives its pleasure from its capacity for annihilation.⁹

Helena, in fact, actively and continually expresses a fantasy of being topped by Bertram. She conceives of her relationship to Bertram in terms of service – which is, in fact, its basis – but inflates the nature of her obligation. A 'gentlewoman' of the Countess, 'bequeathed' (1.1.38; 1.3.101) to the Countess by Helena's father, Helena constitutes one of the many servants who make up the Countess' household. Yet, instead of seeing her service as circumscribed by bonds of domestic labor, Helena imagines what she renders as if it were a feudal duty (see Boas 1900, 350). When the Countess tells Helena, 'I am a mother to you' (1.3.137), Helena resists, insisting on the class difference between herself and Bertram:

The Count Rousillon cannot be my brother:
I am from humble, he from honoured name;
No note upon my parents, his all noble.
My master, my dear lord he is, and I
His servant live and will his vassal die. (1.3.155-159)

The most obvious reason why Helena does not want Bertram to be her brother is that she wants him as her husband; a sibling relationship posits her desired union as incest. Yet her insistence on their difference verges on the obsequious and depends on degrading her own lineage. Helena here asserts her 'humble ... name' and 'no note upon [her] parents', yet the Countess, Lafew, and even the King make much of her father's name, and Helena herself uses it to her advantage when she comes to cure the King. Indeed, so great is the note upon her father that, when the King says, 'I knew him' (2.1.100) she responds, 'The rather I will spare my praises towards him. / Knowing him is enough' (101-102). While such protestations to the Countess may read as humility, Helena's insistence that Bertram is 'my master, my dear lord' and that she

⁹ On masochism, see Bersani 1987; Sanchez 2012.

will 'his servant live and will his vassal die' bespeaks an overinvestment in a service relationship.

Crucial to Helena's formulation of her love for Bertram is her sense of his elevation above her. When she finally confesses her love to the Countess, she portrays her love for Bertram as a kind of (false) theology:

Indian-like,
Religious in mine error, I adore
The sun that looks upon his worshipper
But knows of him no more. (1.3.204-207)

Essentially reiterating her prior description of her love as 'idoltrous fancy', Helena now envisions Bertram's 'bright particular star' as the brightest of stars, 'the sun'. In whatever form Helena's analogies take, they consistently place Bertram above her: be he the sun, a star, a lion, her master, or her lord, Bertram is always on top. Moreover, in elevating their bond out of the domestic sphere and into the realm of *courtoisie*, Helena's desire for Bertram replicates the class discourse of the traditional sonnet sequence while at the same time subverting the gender norms associated with such love poetry (see Marotti 1982; Warley 2005). Where, for Petrarch, Laura – whose name puns on both *l'aura* (the air) and *la laurea* (the poet's laurels) – is both the unattainable, cold, yet dazzlingly brilliant star, and also the means for Petrarch's social elevation (since his sonnets to her bring him wealth and fame), for Helena, Bertram fulfills that role.

Helena's fantasy of loving what is above her collides with Bertram's refusal to love what is beneath him. Helena insists, even in marriage, on seeing her relationship to Bertram as one of service. When Helena turns to Bertram and asks to marry him, she frames the proposal in the language she had earlier used to describe her love: 'I dare not say I take you; but I give / Me and my service, ever whilst I live, / Into your guiding power' (2.3.103-105). Yet Helena's service is precisely what Bertram does not want.¹⁰ Bertram seizes on the domestic ties Helena alludes to, arguing such a bond makes a proposed marriage outrageous.¹¹ Keeping with the play's reliance on repetition and echo,

¹⁰ Later, when wooing Diana, Bertram will respond to Diana's charge that he 'owe[s]' his wife (Helena) 'duty' (4.2.12-13), that he was 'compelled to her, but I love thee / ... and will for ever / Do thee all rights of service' (15-17), to which Diana retorts, 'Ay, so you serve us / Till we serve you. But when you have our roses, / You barely leave the thorns to prick ourselves, / And mock us with our bareness' (17-20). Diana's charge proves true about the kind of 'service' she can expect from the Count, who will dismiss her as a 'fond and desp'rate creature' (5.3.178) and 'common gamester to the camp' (189) when she demands that he recognize her as his wife.

¹¹ On the complex and potentially threatening class positioning of servants in the early modern household, see Dolan 1994, 64-67.

Bertram's expression of the revulsion he feels towards marriage to Helena evokes Helena's earlier arguments to the Countess against seeing Bertram as her brother. Bertram suggests that marriage to Helena is unnatural because she is of his household – as his servant, she is too far beneath him in rank to be his wife, and, moreover, as his servant, she functions as an extension of his family (Weil 2005, 67).¹² Bertram protests the proposed marriage, answering the King's claim, 'Thou know'st she has raised me from my sick bed' (2.3.112), with the retort, 'But follows it, my lord, to bring me down / Must answer for your raising? I know her well: / She had her breeding at my father's charge' (113-115). Bertram's statement plays on the meanings of both 'breeding' and 'charge', emphasizing her inferiority to him and further suggesting that Helena is not so much a servant in his household as an animal, a complaint that echoes the bestial language Helena herself uses to theorize their class difference. Perhaps not coincidentally, 'to serve', beginning in the sixteenth century, was also used to describe the male animal's act of 'covering' a female in sex (*OED* v1.52).

But while for Helena, being 'the hind that would be mated' is thrilling, for Bertram, matching with his servant holds no appeal. Bertram's reminder that Helena was raised 'at my father's charge' works, like the Countess' repeated description of Helena as 'bequeathed' to her, to concretize service ties as commercial relationships. That Helena 'had her breeding at my father's charge' suggests not only the Count of Rousillon's command over Helena's parents but also his financial responsibility for them (*OED* charge n10a). This reality of domestic service, in which bestowing permission to marry (and thus permission to procreate) constituted the prerogative of the master or mistress, is glimpsed, comically, in Lavatch's request to the Countess to marry Isabel (a request, it should be noted, that the Countess does not grant – and that Lavatch eventually withdraws). Yet while Bertram's rejection of Helena may seem distasteful, it is not inaccurate – from a legal standpoint, as maid to and possibly ward of the Countess, Helena is essentially a commodity of the Rousillon household.¹³ Bertram, however, is also a servant: as the King's ward and vassal, he is powerless to refuse the King's command that he marry Helena. Helena and Bertram's marriage highlights the limits of seeing female agency as a proxy for gender parity, for Helena's agency comes at the expense of Bertram's, as it will later come at the expense of Diana's. The irony of their marriage is that, in promising to raise Helena up to Bertram's status, the King creates a situation that neither Helena nor Bertram wants: she does not want to be raised, and he does not want to be brought down.

¹² For more on parity in marriage on and off the early modern stage, see Giese 2006, 49-80.

¹³ This is also why she must secure permission from the Countess before she can go to the court. For a discussion of wardship as it pertains to both Bertram and Helena, see Reilly 2007.

3. *Helena's Household*

Refusing to consummate his marriage to Helena, Bertram deserts both his bride and King to fight the war in Florence; Helena, under the guise of pilgrimage,¹⁴ follows him to Florence, where she enlists two of the women she meets, a widow and her daughter, in a plot to win Bertram. Money is the key element to the relationship between Helena and the Florentine women, yet readings of this relationship have essentially disavowed its economic basis. Crawford sees the women as Helena's 'homosocial coterie' (2003, 153), while McCandless describes Helena's stay in Florence as a 'kind of secular nunnery', where Helena 'join[s] a confederacy of women who assist her' (1997, 49). Asp avers that Helena finds in Diana and the Widow 'the loyalty, support, and kindness of women' (1986, 59) and repeatedly characterizes their relationship as 'bonding' (55, 56, 59). Likewise, Snyder has written that 'what Helena walks into, and quickly joins, is a ... self-confirming friendship ... Solidarity strengthens Helena; it empowers Diana' (1988, 77); Bergeron, too, invokes the 'new solidarity with other women' that Helena finds in Florence (2007, 177). Such formulations conflate bonds of economic service with sisterhood and fail to do justice to the complex class negotiations between the women. Closer attention, however, to the interactions between Helena, the Widow and Diana suggests that the truisms of cultural feminism do not account for what we witness. If anything, as Schwarz's argument on *All's Well* would suggest, female characters can be just as invested in the systems of power as male characters are and may work hard to perpetuate patriarchal structures because, in fact, these structures work for them.

Like Helena, the Widow's actions are driven by social ambition. When the Widow first appears, she is in the company of her daughter, Diana, and their neighbor, Mariana, clamoring for a view of the marching troops. While Mariana cautions Diana to 'beware of them' (3.5.18), the Widow and Diana's admiration of the men, which fixates on Bertram's nobility, suggests just how *aware* the women are of the financial gain they stand to earn from Bertram's suit. The Widow later tells Helena that Bertram serenades Diana nightly and that, despite their best efforts, 'it nothing steads us / To chide him from our eaves; for he persists / As if his life lay on't' (3.7.41-43), but here we find Diana and the Widow 'persist[ing]' in their effort to spy the Count. The Widow urges Diana and Mariana to 'come' lest they 'lose all the sight' of the troops, only to lament 'we have lost our labor' when she realizes the men have 'gone a contrary way' (3.5.1-9). As the women 'labor' to see the soldiers, the Widow and Diana speak admiringly of Bertram; indeed, Diana's first words are in praise of Bertram: 'They say the French count has done most

¹⁴ For whether or not Helena's pilgrimage is genuine, see Maxwell 1969.

honorable service' (3-4), and her mother responds with reports of his military prowess. Only Mariana voices skepticism about Bertram, warning Diana to 'take heed of this French earl. The honor of a maid is her name, and no legacy is so rich as honesty' (11-13). In this quip, we perhaps glimpse why the Widow seems less determined to deter her daughter than Mariana does. The emphasis on Bertram's nobility – he is 'the French count', the 'French earl', he has 'done most honorable service' – and Mariana's invocation of the 'rich' 'legacy' Diana stands to lose also hints at the rich legacy Diana could claim from a liaison with the Count, whether as his wife or mistress. Perhaps for this reason the Widow vacillates between encouraging and discouraging Diana's interest in Bertram.

The potential boon Bertram's attentions present for the Capilet household is first and foremost on the Widow's mind, as she shrewdly calculates how to leverage Bertram's lust for her financial gain. Upon learning that her newest lodger, Helena, 'know[s] the [Count's] lady' (3.5.55), the Widow informs Helena of Bertram's interest in her daughter: 'this young maid might do her [the Count's wife] / A shrewd turn, if she pleased' (56-57). The Widow not only suggests that it is entirely up to Diana whether to sleep with the Count but also that Diana's actions would not affect Diana, her mother, or the Count, so much as they would the Count's wife. The Widow's understanding of the impact of Diana's actions on the Count's wife suggests that the Widow envisions a kind of female economy of exchange. This female economy works in multiple ways: the bed-trick plot relies on collaboration between women, and it is predicated upon an exchangeability of women that benefits women as well as men. Not all women, however, benefit equally from this exchange, for while the Widow here suggests that Diana may do as she 'please[s]', the Widow and Helena are in fact the agents of the transaction, and Diana their object. Finally, the Widow's formulation of the 'shrewd turn' her daughter could do to the Count's wife ironically anticipates the 'shrewd turn' that Diana will do for the Count's wife (Helena) and, of course, the 'shrewd turn' that Diana and Helena will do the Count. Together, these points add up to a plan that will enable the Widow, through cooperation with Helena and manipulation of Diana, to move closer to her former 'well born' estate (3.7.4).

What may come as a surprise is that, for the Widow, moving up the social ladder actually entails entering the service economy. An independent household manager (and possibly owner), the Widow abandons being the head of her own household in Florence for the opportunity afforded her and her daughter to become a part of the household headed by Helena. By forsaking the position of mistress of her own home for servant in the Count of Rousillon's household, the Widow makes a trade-off that stands to bring her and her daughter significant social and economic capital. In so doing, the Widow's transition from independence to dependence challenges the traditional *telos* about service, marriage, and financial security. While scholars have written about the flexible nature of the service economy in the Renaissance, they tend to focus on how

periods of service provided young men and women with the skills and capital needed to establish their own households (Goldberg 1992, 158-202; Burnett 1997, 129-132; Schalkwyk 2008, 20-22). The typical trajectory for service – what young men and women do before marriage – suggests that marriage is the end goal, and that service provides the means and money to achieve it. This plot is played out over again and again in comedy: the reward for dutiful service is marriage and independence.¹⁵ What the Widow's turn from merchant to servant suggests, however, is that the goal is not necessarily marriage or independence but rather financial security. Her actions add to the wealth of evidence found both in the historical record and in drama that attests to the tremendous weight women placed and were imagined to place upon financial considerations as they evaluated life decisions – whether for marriage, work, or interpersonal relationships.

Helena and the Widow immediately forge a bond, albeit united not in 'an instant friendship' (Weil 2005, 65) but in mutually beneficial self-interest. In what we might understand as the first instantiation of Helena as the Widow's mistress, Helena seizes on the information the Widow offers about Bertram's designs on her daughter and bids her hostess to invite Diana and Mariana to dine with them, not only pledging to pay for their meal but also suggesting that further remunerations are in store. Helena promises the Widow: 'to requite you further, / I will bestow some precepts of this virgin / Worthy the note' (3.5.95-97). From the start, Helena frames the service Diana and the Widow will perform in terms of financial gain, suggesting that the 'precepts' or orders Helena will give Diana provide additional recompense. By addressing the Widow in the second person, while referring to Diana as 'this virgin', Helena creates a distinction between the two outcomes of her actions: the 'virgin' gets the precepts, but the Widow reaps the rewards. Furthermore, Helena's language deploys social class in a way that highlights the difference between the women. The basic premise of her thought – that she should 'requite [the Widow] further' – positions Helena as the overly courteous benefactress and the Widow as her magnanimous host, when in fact the only 'requital' Helena owes the Widow is a fee for lodging. Such a rhetorical move is not unlike what Helena does with Bertram and the service she owes him, rhetorically transforming economic and domestic bonds with the language of courtesy and chivalry. The oddity of Helena's offering to the Widow is highlighted by the dissonance produced by her use of the formal 'you' rather than 'thee' to address a subordinate; Helena's word choice underscores the newness and strangeness of Helena's social position, as if she were unaccustomed to the language she can now speak

¹⁵ At least, we could say this about city comedy. For comedies that focus on the households of the nobility, the servants who marry remain within the household (for example, Nerissa and Gratiano in *The Merchant of Venice* or even Maria and Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night*).

of mastery – or, perhaps, Helena deliberately deploys language to flatter the Widow. Most importantly, Helena's offer of overcompensation for the service the Widow renders as Helena's hostess puts the Widow in a kind of debt to Helena, which the Widow and Diana can (and will) repay upon receiving the 'precepts' Helena 'bestow[s]'.¹

The connotation of 'precept' seems out of keeping with what Helena will tell the Widow and Diana, but it is notable that Helena describes what she will relay as 'precepts'. 'Precept' means not only a 'command' but often carries a religious connotation, such as a divine injunction or an order for moral conduct. Helena is careful to set up the illicit activity she plots in terms that present Diana's proposed conduct with Bertram as in keeping with the Ten Commandments, themselves often referred to as the 'ten precepts' (*OED* n1a). In addition to its religious connotation, a 'precept' also has forensic and fiscal applications: a 'precept' may describe a written legal order, issued by a legal authority (e.g. judge, monarch, sheriff); a written legal order for a payment; 'a document granting possession of something or conferring a privilege'; or 'a written letter of credit or similar document authorizing a payment to be made from funds' (*OED* n4a, b, c). In a sense, obeying the 'precepts' (as in command) that Helena 'bestows' upon Diana generates another 'precept' – the warrant for 'payment to be made from [Helena's] funds'. Helena's use of the verb 'bestow' further distances her from the Widow and Diana by implying that the 'precepts' she tells them of are in fact gifts. Of course, as Marcel Mauss (1966) has theorized, a gift is never just a gift and, in fact, demands the receiver 'recompense' she who bestows. This layered meaning of 'bestow some precepts' offers a microcosm of the complex negotiations between Helena, the Widow Capilet, and Diana, in that underlying what is presented as simply moral and friendly is, in fact, a shrewd economic transaction.

When we next see Helena and the Widow, Helena is in the midst of 'bestow[ing] some precepts', but noticeably absent from the dialogue is the 'virgin', Diana. Instead, Helena explains to the Widow how Diana can help her – and how, in turn, she can help them. The discussion between the two women, from the start of the scene, is a kind of coded financial negotiation; it is not, as Snyder writes, a scene of 'conference and mutual assurance among the women to remind us how important their solidarity is' (1988, 77). In response to the goods Helena produces and the story she has told, the Widow exclaims:

Though my estate be fall'n, I was well born,
 Nothing acquainted with these businesses,
 And would not put my reputation now
 In any staining act. (3.7.4-7)

The Widow takes pains to contrast her former 'well born' position with her current 'fallen' 'estate', while emphasizing that even in this diminished status,

she is not only above but also 'nothing acquainted with these businesses'. While 'these businesses' lacks a clear antecedent, the Widow draws a clear connection between Helena's proposal and 'staining act[s]', suggesting that the 'businesses' of Helena's proposal are tantamount to pandering. In this scene, the Widow highlights the impact Diana's actions will have not on Diana but on herself. This stands in direct contrast to the Widow's initial discussion of Bertram and her daughter. Earlier, the Widow relates that Diana might sleep with Bertram 'if she [Diana] pleased' (3.5.68), implying that the decision to have sex with Bertram was Diana's and Diana's alone. Furthermore, when the Widow earlier discussed Bertram's 'suit', she noted that it might 'corrupt the tender honor of a maid', but assured Helena that Diana 'keeps her guard' (3.5.71-73). In this initial discussion of her daughter and Bertram, the Widow lays both the responsibility and impact on her daughter: it is Diana's 'pleas[ure]', 'honor', and 'guard' that are at stake. But when propositioned by Helena, the Widow emphasizes the impact of her daughter's actions on herself: professing herself 'nothing acquainted with these businesses', she declares, 'I ... would not put *my* reputation now / In any staining act' (3.7.5-7; emphasis added).

But what if reputation means something different for the Widow than it does for her daughter? Yes, women's chastity was seen as inextricably linked with their reputation, but that does not mean that the Widow's 'reputation' is as bound up in '[un]stained' sexuality as is Diana's 'honor'. The word 'businesses' points to what may actually be at stake for the Widow if her 'reputation' is 'stained': her business. The Widow's livelihood depends on her lodgers and, given the reputation that inns and hostels had for being *de facto* brothels, it starts to seem that the 'reputation' the Widow does not want 'stained' is that of her 'businesses', not her body.¹⁶

The Widow elicits Helena's assurance that the Widow will not 'err in bestowing' the 'good aid that I of you shall borrow' (3.7.11-12), but Helena's words are not enough: the Widow requires more concrete (and non-returnable) collateral – money – and carefully calibrates her words and actions to maximize the payment she will receive. The Widow moves the conversation towards what kind of 'good aid' she will receive in return by reminding Helena of her wealth: 'I should believe you', the Widow demurs, 'For you have show'd me that which well approves / You're great in fortune' (12-14). The calculated hesitancy of the Widow's 'should believe' ups the ante, forcing Helena to show her hand and hand over the money:

Take this purse of gold,
And let me buy your friendly help thus far,

¹⁶ For the vulnerable nature of women's words, bodies, and the inextricable link to perceived chastity, see Stallybrass 1986; Gowing 1996.

Which I will over-pay and pay again
When I have found it. (3.7.14-17)

Helena abandons her earlier abstract verb of ‘bestowal’ and switches to the language of commerce, but the ‘friendly help’ is not purely ‘friendly,’ it is bought. Furthermore, Helena not only asks to ‘buy’ the Widow’s cooperation but also promises that, in return for that help, Helena will ‘over-pay and pay again’. After Helena explains what Diana is to do, still the Widow does not consent – instead, she simply acknowledges that she understands Helena: ‘Now I see the bottom of your purpose’ (28-29). Crucially, the Widow’s reply not only continues to withhold consent but also emphasizes the nefariousness of Helena’s plot. By stating that only ‘now’ can she ‘see the bottom’, the Widow stresses the dark, murky nature of Helena’s ‘purpose’, reinvigorating the Widow’s earlier charge of the jeopardy posed to her ‘reputation’ by ‘these businesses’ and ‘any staining act’. Again, Helena assures the Widow, explaining that her plan is ‘lawful’ (30) and that Diana will be ‘most chastely absent’ (34) at the appointed ‘encounter’ (32). Words carry less weight with the Widow, however, for Helena only secures the Widow’s cooperation by promising to deliver more money upon completion of the plan: ‘to marry her, I’ll add three thousand crown / To what is passed already’ (35-36). Not until this point does the Widow actually acquiesce: ‘I have yielded’ (36).

What the Widow has ‘yielded’ and Helena ‘buy[s]’ is, in fact, Diana – who, it should be noted, is entirely absent from the scene. For a ‘purse of gold’, ‘three thousand crowns’ and the further promise of more ‘over-pay[ment]’, the Widow rents her daughter out to Helena for the evening. Notwithstanding the money that physically changes hands in this scene (‘take this purse of gold’), critics, by reading Helena’s relationship with the Widow and Diana as one of friendship and camaraderie, rather than of service and commerce, have overlooked what the play stages before our eyes. So persistent is this resistance that even when critics acknowledge the financial dimension to the women’s relationship, they fail to follow the money. In the introduction to the Oxford edition of *All’s Well*, Snyder notes that the Widow’s help is secured with a ‘large bribe’ (1993, 6), but, when reading 3.7, she nonetheless romanticizes the bond between the two women. In a final push to convince the Widow, Helena exclaims:

You see it lawful then, then: it is no more
But that your daughter, ere she seems as won,
Desires this ring; appoints him an encounter;
In fine, delivers me to fill the time,
Herself most chastely absent. After,
To marry her I’ll add three thousand crowns
To what is passed already. (3.7.30-36; emphasis added)

Snyder points out, in her notes to the text, that the line in which Helena describes where exactly Diana will *not* be during the bed-trick ('Herself most chaste absent. After'), is metrically 'somewhat short' – one beat short of pentameter. Snyder posits that if the shortness is 'intentional, the pause would naturally occur after *absent*, as Helena passes over the actual *encounter* in agitated silence' (1993, 3.7.34n, emphasis in original). But what if the pause after 'absent' is not, as Snyder speculates, Helena's 'agitated silence' at the thought of the 'actual encounter' but Helena's pause as she waits for the Widow to agree to her plan? When the Widow does not immediately acquiesce, Helena then resorts again to 'buy[ing] ... friendly help', and promises the additional 'three thousand crowns'.

This money, in theory, goes not to the Widow but to furnish Diana with an ample dowry, but Diana's desires are never mentioned, and it is taken for granted by the Widow, Helena, and the King that Diana's greatest reward will be her own marriage. Diana, however, is far less keen to marry than those around her seem to notice. After Diana and Bertram arrange their 'encounter' and he leaves, Diana declares her intent to remain a virgin: 'Marry that will, I live and die a maid' (4.2.74). Her distaste for marriage goes unacknowledged by the other characters: in the exchange economy of the play, the only way to requite Diana is to marry her. Helena later assures the Widow:

Doubt not but heaven
Hath brought me up to be your daughter's dower
As it hath fated her to be my motive
And helper to a husband. (4.4.18-21)

The implication is that, without Helena, Diana would have no dowry; with Helena as 'helper', Diana will have the means to marry up and thereby recoup the losses of the Widow's 'fallen' estate. The 'nobly born' Widow may be able to 'nobly' marry Diana, creating a better life for both mother and daughter. What further complicates Helena and the Widow's plan to marry off Diana is that both women have experienced a change in fortune due to marriage. Helena, from 'humble ... name' (1.3.156), aided by the 'honor and wealth' (2.3.145) bestowed upon her by the King, marries a Count. The Widow, 'nobly born' yet reduced to renting rooms in her home to lodgers, seems to owe her 'fallen' estate to her condition of widowhood.¹⁷ Helena thus aims to recreate for Diana, in miniature scale, what the King has done for her.

¹⁷ For widowhood as a time of economic difficulty, see Brodsky 1986; Erickson 1993, 200-203.

4. *Diana's Service*

What Helena notably fails to recognize, however, is that Diana expresses no desire to marry, preferring to emulate her namesake. Indeed, the only desire for her future that Diana expresses is to remain with Helena. When Helena informs Diana that she must still 'suffer / Something in my behalf' (4.5.27-28), Diana responds:

Let death and honesty
Go with your impositions, I am yours
Upon your will to suffer. (4.4.28-30)

Diana's pledge to Helena and bestowal of herself – 'I am yours' – evokes the language Helena earlier used with Bertram. When choosing Bertram as her husband, Helena avers, 'I dare not say I take you, but I give / Me and my service, ever whilst I live / Into your guiding power' (2.3.103-105). Helena's pledge of 'service', with its pun on both domestic duty and sexual pleasure, finds a parallel in Diana's assertion that she is 'upon [Helena's] will to suffer', and, furthermore, echoes Helena's description of her position to her husband; Helena tells Parolles: 'In everything I wait upon his [Bertram's] will' (2.4.55).

In Diana's declaration, we also see a parallel grammar to Helena's fantasies of submission and self-abnegation. The most straightforward reading of the line, 'upon your will to suffer' suggests that Diana will do whatever Helena 'will[s]' or desires; a second, darker reading of the line foreshadows how Diana will suffer because of Helena's 'will'.¹⁸ Both meanings work together to infuse Diana's vow 'to suffer' with the masochistic energy that we see in Helena's fantasy of 'the hind that would be mated by the lion / Must die for love'. The similarity between the representations of Diana's desire for Helena and Helena's desire for Bertram demonstrates that relationships between women are not necessarily more egalitarian than those between men and women. Moreover, in presenting us with an erotics in which subject position, rather than object gender, defines desire, *All's Well* offers a counter-narrative to assumptions around heterosexuality and female desire, suggesting both the possibilities for and limits of female autonomy in fantasies of submission.

While scholars have turned to Helena and the Florentine women to locate egalitarianism in a play preoccupied by if not predicated upon difference, the female homosocial relations of *All's Well* do not seem to offer what critics have projected onto them. If what scholars seek is egalitarianism in relationships

¹⁸ The contemporary pun on 'will' and genitals further imbues Diana's declaration with a sexual charge. Shakespeare's 'sonnet 135' has inspired much discussion of the sexual meanings of 'will': see, for example, Fineman 1986, 242-296; see also Schwarz 2011 for readings of 'will'.

typically bound by uneven power dynamics, then they have been looking at the wrong gender, for if *All's Well* offers this potential, it is in Bertram and Parolles' early relationship.¹⁹ Whereas Helena longs, in all senses of the verb, to serve Bertram, Parolles refuses to see his relationship to Bertram as one of service, vehemently objecting to Lafew's repeated description of Bertram as Parolles' 'lord and master' (2.3.187, 243).²⁰ Instead, Parolles and Bertram speak a language of companionship and affection, marked by invocations of 'sweetness' and possessive articles.²¹ Immediately after Lafew informs Parolles of Bertram's marriage, Bertram enters, and Parolles greets him twice with the appellation 'sweet heart' (2.3.270, 272). For his part, Bertram calls Parolles 'my Parolles' (273) and bids him to 'go with me to my chamber, and advise me' (295). That Parolles turns out to be, in the words of Jean Howard, a 'bad friend' (2006, 55) has, perhaps, stopped us from hearing a discourse not unlike that which Laurie Shannon describes in her work on early modern friendship (2002). More to the point, the way Parolles and Bertram conceive of their relationship and the way service is imagined in a male homosocial context highlights what we do not see in Helena's relationship with Diana and the Widow. In particular, what is missing is the reciprocal nature of the affection: Diana is never once, for Helena, 'my Diana', nor does Diana provide counsel to her mistress.

What Diana provides is utility to Helena, whose interest in Diana, despite the desires of feminist critics, goes no deeper than self-interest. While Helena never rejects Diana's pledge, 'I am yours', Helena's response to Diana does not, in fact, respond to Diana's testament. Instead, Helena hurries them along, promising, 'All's well that ends well' (4.4.35). Helena appears no more concerned with Diana's actual desires than the other characters of *All's Well* are: Diana functions as an object trafficked to cement alliances, accrue capital, and demonstrate power – be it for Helena, the Widow, Bertram or the King. Contra Alexander Leggatt, who characterizes Helena's relationship with the Capilets as a restorative alternative to the harsh, patriarchal world of court, proclaiming, 'Helena, after being argued over by men, surrounds herself by women' (2003, 40), Helena belies any dichotomy between the rules that

¹⁹ Indeed, scholars often do not conceive of Parolles as Bertram's social inferior. See, for example, Howard, who describes Parolles as Bertram's 'friend' (2006, 55) and Michael Friedman, who describes Parolles as Bertram's 'mentor' (1995a 81); for more on Bertram and Parolles, see also Friedman 1995b.

²⁰ Parolles' resistance to the title of Bertram as his 'master' is part of an extended debate Lafew and Parolles have on Parolles' subordination to Bertram: Lafew insists that Parolles is the 'count's [Bertram's] man' (2.3.195) and Parolles protests his independence. The irony is that Parolles will end the play in Lafew's service, as Lafew instructs the deflated braggart, 'Wait on me home, I'll make sport with thee' (5.3.322-323).

²¹ See Masten 2004 on the rhetoric of sweetness spoken between men.

govern men and those that govern women. Indeed, Helena's deft negotiation of her world aligns her behavior more closely with the way scholars, notably Arthur Marotti (1982), Christopher Warley (2005), and Stephen Greenblatt (2005), have described early modern men operating in pursuit of political power and personal gain than her behavior conforms to the tenets of cultural feminism. As the interaction between Helena and the Florentine women almost immediately reveals, investment in patriarchal systems of power, particularly systems of class and wealth, cross gender lines. Like the courtiers Marotti, Warley, and Greenblatt variously describe, Helena demonstrates a profoundly economic and instrumental view of personal relations, carefully calculating the value of those surrounding her to maximize her own personal worth.

If Diana's desire really is to remain with Helena, then all does not end well for Diana, for no less than the King pledges to marry her off (conditional, of course, on her being a virgin). While Crawford has argued that the dowry Helena bestows upon Diana enables Diana to refuse the King's offer to endow her and to choose, instead, to remain with Helena (2011, 44-45), Crawford presumes an agency that Diana never has. Nothing in the play indicates that Diana will be able to refuse the King's marriage offer or that Helena will intervene on Diana's behalf (unless it is in Helena's interest).

Indeed, the reason no precedent exists to suggest that Diana will get her wish is that, in *All's Well*, consent to marry depends not on the will of the bride and groom but rather on that of their master or mistress. Of the four marriages proposed or enacted over the course of the play (Bertram and Helena; Lavatch and Isabel; Bertram and Maudlin; Diana and a French lord), not one of them takes place without the consent of the master or mistress of the bride and groom. The desires of the marrying couple are ancillary to those of their social superior: the King forces Bertram to marry Helena; the Countess defers Lavatch's suit to Isabel; and Lafew pushes the marriage between Bertram and his daughter, Maudlin, which first requires approval of the King. In *All's Well*, marriage is a top-down affair, a manifestation of the power that people have over one another.

5. *The Marriage Market*

Helena is acutely aware of the market value of virginity, and it is integral to her plans that both she and Diana are virgins. Helena points to her virginity as why the King should trust her and allow her to cure him, offering up her 'maiden's name' (2.1.170) as collateral; later, when presented before the young lords of France, she attests, 'I am a simple maid, and therein wealthiest / That I protest I simply am a maid' (2.3.67-68). As a physician's daughter who lacks the money and title required to match her with a member of the nobility, Helena locates her 'wealth' in her intact hymen. Her formulation is on point,

as the King later echoes Helena's emphasis on the value of her virginity. The King promises Bertram that he will create a 'counterpoise' (2.3.176) in Helena's estate, bestowing title and wealth upon her: 'if thou canst like this creature as a maid, / I can create the rest' (143-144). What the King cannot 'create' is Helena's maidenhead, and yet Helena's protest that being a 'simple maid' makes her 'wealthiest' is not quite true: being a virgin does not make her wealthy but, rather, allows her to be made wealthy.

At the play's end, Diana finds herself in a similar situation: the King pledges to Diana that, 'if thou be'st yet a fresh uncroppèd flower ... I'll pay thy dower' (5.3.327-328), but Diana's marriageability is not the only thing dependent on her virginity. Diana's entire utility to Helena is predicated upon being like the 'titled goddess' (4.2.2) with whom Diana shares a name.²² The first time Helena refers to Diana in conversation with the Widow, Helena calls her 'this virgin' (3.6.96), reducing Diana to her maidenhead and echoing Helena's earlier description of herself to the King as 'simply a maid' (2.3.68). As perhaps Helena already anticipates, Diana's virginity proves critical to getting Bertram to comply with the plot. When the Widow finally 'yield[s]' to Helena's plan, she tells Helena to 'instruct my daughter how she shall persevere' (3.7.40-41); presumably part of what Helena 'instruct[s]' Diana to do is to emphasize her maidenhead when negotiating with Bertram. By leveraging her virginity against Bertram's lust, Diana secures Bertram's ring, arguing, 'Mine honor's such a ring, / My chastity's the jewel of our house' (4.2.45-46). Confronted with this, Bertram capitulates, handing Diana the ring, performing exactly as Helena had earlier predicted he would when she tells the Widow that, 'in his idle fire, / To buy his will', Bertram will dispense with the family heirloom (3.7.26-27). Helena orchestrates their encounter so that Bertram believes he barter[s] his 'ring' for Diana's 'ring', with the classic pun on ring as vagina, when in fact he exchanges his ring for Helena's two rings – both the ring she wears on her finger, bestowed upon her by the King, and her maidenhead.²³

The reward – marriage – that Diana receives for 'keep[ing] a wife herself' and herself 'a maid' (5.3.330) suggests the obsessive and odd relationship that the play has with virginity, simultaneously the most important thing a woman can possess but must also dispense (Jankowski 2003). Helena, before she has fully formulated her plan to cure the King and win Bertram, asks Parolles, 'How might one do, sir, to lose it [virginity] to her liking?' (1.1.152-153). Parolles dodges the question: 'Tis a commodity will lose the gloss with lying; the longer kept, the less worth. Off with't while 'tis vendible' (1.1.155-156). This is the resounding sentiment of the play. Virginity is a 'commodity'

²² Parker 1992 writes on the punning of Helena's and Diana's names.

²³ On the erotics of the exchanged rings, see Ray 2007.

with a clear expiration date: as the King warns, a woman must be not merely an ‘uncroppèd flower’ but a ‘fresh’ one at that (5.3.327). Parolles’ injunction ‘off with’t while ’tis vendible’ not only highlights the good fortune Diana and Helena have to be virgins at the right place and time but also suggests Helena’s near inability to lose her virginity ‘to her liking’ and Diana’s seemingly certain failure to *keep* hers ‘to her liking’.

What makes virginity such a complex commodity is that, unlike the play’s other trafficked goods, virginity only bears its initial exchange value: it cannot be circulated. The relatively low value of female bodies that can be circulated (versus virgin bodies) is highlighted by Diana’s initial treatment at the French court. Dismissed by Bertram as a ‘common gamester to the camp’ (5.3.214), Diana immediately objects to the charge and offers proof against it:

If I were so,
He might have bought me at a common price.
Do not believe him. O, behold this ring,
Whose high respect and rich validity
Did lack a parallel. Yet, for all that,
He gave it to a commoner o’ th’ camp
If I be one. (5.3.189-195)

Diana must rely on external proof, provided by the ring, to demonstrate that she is not a ‘commoner o’ th’ camp’. The qualities she identifies in the object – its ‘high respect’, ‘rich validity’ and uniqueness – are antithetical to ‘common[ness]’ and to how Bertram describes her. Diana reasons that she cannot be a prostitute because, if so, he would have ‘bought me at a common price’, yet the value of the ring far outweighs the cost of a ‘commoner’, *ergo* she cannot be a prostitute. Bertram has an easy rebuttal that uses Diana’s invocations of economics against her. Acknowledging their dalliance, Bertram explains:

Her inf’nite cunning and modern grace
Subdued me to her rate. She got the ring,
And I had that which any inferior might
At market price have bought. (5.3.216-219)

Bertram points to the logical fallacy in Diana’s argument: she has assumed he is a rational actor in the market and thus whatever price he paid for her must reflect her true value. As Bertram clarifies, he simply overpaid. Indeed, Bertram formulates Diana’s financial savvy as further proof of her profession, able to use both her ‘infinite cunning and modern grace’ to ‘subdue [him] to her rate’. The juxtaposition of ‘infinite cunning’ and ‘modern grace’ adds a subtle insult to Diana, with ‘modern’ suggesting Diana’s ‘grace’ is characterized by ‘employing the most up-to-date ideas and techniques’ (*OED*

adj3a) and also 'everyday, ordinary, commonplace' (*OED* adj4): her 'cunning' is 'infinite' as she employs her *au courant* tactics to sell something – herself – for a far higher 'rate' than its ordinariness should command. As Bertram is quick to note, 'any inferior might / At market price have bought' Diana: the only crime Bertram is guilty of is that of being a bad bargainer.

There is no way for Diana to argue against Bertram, for all her answers lend credence to his accusations of her as 'common': socially inferior, publicly available, and cheap. Her inability to counter Bertram convincingly is not, however, just about the weight women's words have against men's, for class distinctions are critically important in this climactic scene. The charges leveled against Diana are as much about her social position as they are about her chastity. Bertram defends himself against Diana's statement that he promised to marry her by pointing out their class differences: 'Let your highness / Lay a more noble thought upon mine honor / Than for to think that I would sink it here' (5.3.179-181). Bertram emphasizes their disparity by noting the 'noble[ness]' of his 'honor' in contrast to Diana's, whom he describes first as a 'fond and desperate creature' (178) he merely 'laugh'd with' (179). Furthermore, by calling her a 'creature' and equating relations with her (be it sex or marriage) to 'sink[ing] it here', Bertram emphasizes Diana's low status, degrading her to a nearly sub-human level and evoking his earlier description of Helena's 'breeding at my father's charge'.

Diana's counter-arguments continue to get her into more trouble, and here, again, we see how critical class is. Frustrated by Diana's confusing answers to the King's questions, Lafew pronounces her a kind of verbal 'common gamester': 'This woman's an easy glove, my lord; she goes off and on at pleasure' (277-278). The King, unable to determine whether Diana or Bertram is telling the truth, threatens them with punishment: 'to prison with her, and away with him' (282). But whereas Bertram is merely taken 'away' (he was earlier sent 'away' in the scene only to be called back momentarily – evidently 'away' is not necessarily that far), Diana is not only sent 'to prison' but also will be executed 'within this hour' unless she explains how she obtained the ring (284). When Diana refuses to explain the ring's origins, the King repeats his charge, 'Take her away' (285), to which Diana replies, 'I'll put in bail' (285); however, an offer of money only serves to highlight her low social status. The King responds to her pledge by joining in calling her a prostitute: 'I think thee now some common customer' (286), as if the ability to participate in a cash economy were proof that a woman earned the money by sex. The irony of the statement is that Diana has, in fact, been bought and sold by the men and women around her, but she is no 'customer' in these transactions – she is what is being consumed.²⁴

²⁴ While the phrase 'common customer' is slang for 'prostitute' (*OED* 4b), 'customer' could also mean 'one who frequents any place of sale for the sake of purchasing' (*OED* 3a),

The state of being a virgin allows the virgin's body to be transformed into value: it is what enables the King to make Helena wealthy and to marry off Helena and Diana. It is also what transforms the virgin's words into value: scholars are quick to note the link between the potency of Helena's cure and her virginity.²⁵ Moreover, the credibility of Diana's accusations against Bertram is dependent on her perceived chastity. In contrast to all the money and bodies that circulate through service, pilgrimage, travel, marriage, war, and politics, virginity, unlike the glove to which Lafew likens Diana, cannot 'go off and on': once 'off', it is no longer 'vendible'.

6. *All's Not Well*

At the play's end, Helena's savvy marketing of not just her own but also Diana's 'commodity' of virginity 'while 'tis vendible' gets Helena what she wants – namely, to be both 'name and thing' of wife to Bertram – but it does not get Diana what she wants. What Diana seems to want is to remain Helena's servant and a virgin, neither of which she will be if she marries a French nobleman. Paying attention to both Helena's and Diana's desires invites us to examine Asp's formulation that, 'singular among the plays of Shakespeare's canon, *All's Well That Ends Well* is written out of the history of the female subject, and this history is the history of her desire' (1986, 48). I find this formulation productive: as the women of *All's Well* suggest, the 'history of the female subject and ... her desire' requires a female *object*, and therein lies the true 'problem' of the play. By focusing on the complex class and status relationships amongst the women, we can see how Helena, the Widow, and Diana are variously imagined to not only resist but also participate in, benefit from, and perpetuate patriarchal structures of marriage and the household. What makes the ending of *All's Well* not 'end well' is not simply Helena's (re)union with Bertram but also the way the play exposes the willingness of women to traffic in women – and in themselves.

Ultimately, this analysis challenges us to reconsider the problem of this play, suggesting that *All's Well* is a 'problem play' not because, to quote Asp, 'the frog prince remains a frog and the princess chooses to overlook his slimy skin' (1986, 48), but because of its refusal to romanticize the negotiations not only of heterosexual coupling, but also of female friendship and service. This is a play in which people are commodities, transferable objects that can be traded, 'bequeathed', and purchased 'at market price'. And yet the problem

a title which effectively describes both Helena and Bertram in the Capilet lodge, where they each 'purchase' Diana's services for the night.

²⁵ For the link between Helena's virginity and her curative powers, see Simpson 1994, 173; Howard 2006, 48; Floyd-Wilson 2013; Wall 2013.

is not, as Kastan suggests, that 'what should be freely given must be bought' (1985, 585), but rather that what should be bought is given and what should not be for sale is a prized commodity. As such, *All's Well That Ends Well* defies our expectations of comedy, insisting on laying bare the female-authored transactions it takes to get the conjugal couple to wed and to bed.

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Tranio Transformed: Social Anxieties and Social Metamorphosis in *The Taming of the Shrew*

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Abstract

The article discusses Elizabethan anxieties about the increasing fluidity of social status through an examination of the servant Tranio in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. It argues that Tranio's informed and willing participation in this social performance embodies the anxieties about social mobility held by members of the Elizabethan elite. In contrast to other figures of social metamorphosis in the play, Tranio's social transformation is temporary, even though, like Christopher Sly, he is transformed into a gentleman at the behest of his Lord. He must return to his servile status in the final act, however, not only because he can so successfully perform the role of master, but because he knowingly participates in his own social metamorphosis. The article suggests, in conclusion, that it is the servant's knowledge of his own performative power that makes him a threat in Elizabethan society.

Keywords: Class Performance, Servants, Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Tranio

Only, good master, while we do admire
This virtue and this moral discipline,
Let's be no stoics nor no stocks, I pray,
Or so devote to Aristotle's checks
As Ovid be an outcast quite abjured.

The Taming of the Shrew 1.1.29-33

1. *Introduction*

The Taming of the Shrew's overt attention to the proper performance of gender norms obscures anxieties about the increasing fluidity of social class in the early modern era, especially in relation to matters of public performance and social identity. In his first speech, Lucentio's trusty servant, Tranio, uses deferential language of service while simultaneously alerting the audience



to his gentlemanly education, as he differentiates between the potentially restrictive philosophy of Aristotle and the more liberal poetry of Ovid. Moreover, this particular comparison calls attention to Ovid in a way that recalls the Induction's allusions to the *Metamorphoses*, where Ovidian transformations figure prominently. As part of the Lord's practical joke at the expense of Christopher Sly, serving-men offer to bring the drunken tinker paintings of Adonis, Io, and Daphne frozen in the moments before their various transformations (Ind.2.44-55).¹ In the context of the play's missing closing frame, these images of mythic figures caught in stasis before their metamorphoses is especially apt; Sly, like the figures in the paintings, remains caught up in the Lord's joke, never to be returned to his lowly status as tinker, nor receiving the moral lesson his counterpart in the anonymous *The Taming of A Shrew* takes away from the experience.²

Tranio's social transformation within the play, however, has been left relatively under-interrogated.³ Like Christopher Sly, he is transformed at the behest of his Lord, but unlike Sly, Tranio comes full circle, returning to his servant status before fading into the background in the final act. How should we read his temporary transformation in relation to the play's other figure of social metamorphosis? Tranio's *informed* participation in his social metamorphosis, I suggest, necessitates his comeuppance at the play's closing because he so fully signifies the possibilities for resistance within the Elizabethan power structure of service. For the bulk of the play proper, Tranio performs the very act of social climbing that another Shakespearean servant, the much-maligned Malvolio, only imagines in *Twelfth Night*. It is therefore quite fitting that Tranio's name derives from the Latin preposition *trans*, meaning 'across'.⁴ He threatens social order precisely because he crosses social

¹ All references to *The Shrew* are from Dolan 1996.

² *The Taming of a Shrew* was entered into the Stationer's Register and published in 1594, while *The Taming of the Shrew* was first printed in the 1623 First Folio. Critics have long debated the two plays' relationship and order of composition, but most contemporary scholars agree that *The Shrew* is the source for *A Shrew*. For my purposes, the most significant departure *A Shrew* makes from Shakespeare's text is that it retains Christopher Sly's frame narrative. He comments throughout the play proper before ultimately waking from what he believes has been a dream and announcing his intention to use what he has just seen to 'tame' his own wife.

³ Tranio's social transformation is briefly mentioned by Holbrook 1994 and Schalkwyk 2008, while Evett 2005 presents a fuller analysis of Tranio's function in the play. The most comprehensive consideration of Tranio's social performance in the play, however, comes in Bailey 2007.

⁴ Malvolio's Latinate name suggests not only the servant's 'ill will', but also, perhaps, that his desire, from the Latin *volo*, is also *mal*, or bad. *OED*, s.v. 'trans-, prefix' (<<http://www.oed.com/>>, accessed 27 January 2015). Tranio is a common servant's name in Roman comedy. As others have noted, Shakespeare takes the *servus callidus* of Roman comedy as his

boundaries, successfully performing the roles of both servant and master. Elizabethan anxieties about the increasingly blurred boundaries between social strata thus imbue Tranio's performance of social metamorphosis with a transgressive power.⁵

2. Elizabethan Service and Social Class

Servants played a vital role within the social and economic power systems of early modern England. In *The World We Have Lost* (1965), Peter Laslett describes service in terms of its place in the life cycle of English people, as an institution impacting not only large numbers of English youth, but the families they joined as well. Keith Wrightson considers service as a part of a child's maturation, as 'preparation for an independent existence in an adult world' (1982, 113). Stefano Guazzo, whose 1574 *La civil Conversazione*, first translated into English in 1581 as *The Ciuile Conuersation*, highlights the institution's position in the social life cycle, asserting, 'I think it a matter impossible, that he should know how to play the maister wel, who never had maister' (1581, 168).⁶ To be a good master, one must experience life from the other side of the equation. In his foundational study of service in early modern drama, *Masters and Servants in English Renaissance Drama and Culture: Authority and Obedience*, Mark Thornton Burnett notes that twenty-nine percent of all households during the period had servants, and that many young Elizabethans would be servants for some part of their lives. He goes so far as to claim that such servitude was, perhaps, the most distinctive socio-economic aspect of Elizabethan society (1997, 1). This idea that people would act as servants for only a period of time – and that they may well move on to be masters in their own rights – underscores the social mobility of this

inspiration for Tranio. Like his Roman predecessors, Tranio's fidelity to his master Lucentio motivates him to commit acts of impersonation and trickery (Burnett 1997, 80). E.M.W. Tillyard notes how this clever slave figure is vital 'in promoting the action' of the earlier comedies (1965, 92); David Evert suggests Tranio is the playwright's 'fullest straightforward development of the New Comic wily servant' (2005, 65). For a fuller consideration of the clever servant figure in English literature, see Bruce Robbins, *The Servant's Hand: English Fiction from Below* (1986).

⁵ Earlier works on class distinctions in Shakespeare have dealt with the problem of anachronism in dealing with such a loaded term as 'class' in study of early modern texts. In particular, David Scott Kastan's 'Is There a Class in This (Shakespearean) Text?' (1993) acknowledges the potential difficulties of speaking of class in Shakespeare. Ralph Berry is content to use 'class' as a social marker in his foundational work, *Shakespeare and Social Class* (1988), while Peter Holbrook offers the terms 'degree' or 'social stratification' as more appropriate for the era (1994, 7).

⁶ In this and subsequent quotations from early English texts, I have modernized orthography.

distinctive social group. And, more problematically, as Amanda Bailey has suggested, much 'to the distress of their masters', many of those Elizabethans engaged in this sort of service embraced that liminality (2007, 52); they refused to shape their identities by their household positions.

Moreover, a servant occupied a dichotomous social space within Elizabethan society, simultaneously acting both as an employee and as a member of the master's family, or what David Schalkwyk describes as a 'combination of reciprocity and subordination in love' (2008, 7).⁷ The idealized image of servitude therefore casts the servant as what Thomas Moisan calls a 'quasi-mythic ... surrogate family member' whose identity was, in many ways, simply considered an extension of his master's (1991, 280). By performing their required duties with filial reverence, Elizabethan servants could successfully negotiate this social space in which masters were recognized as more than employers. However, this notion of the servant as surrogate family member hinged not only on the expectation of the master's complete authority, but on an idealized portrait of the master as both self-assured and paternal. William Gouge outlines the proper duties of a master in the eighth treatise of his *Of Domesticall Duties: Eight Treatises*, first published in 1622. Masters, he writes, must 'carry themselves worthy of their place, and worthy of that honor which is due to them, which may best be done by making themselves a pattern of such good things as in their place appertain to them' and 'do the things which they do towards their servants with authority' (Gouge 1634, 660). In households where the master fell short of this ideal, however, servants risked being put in the position of forcible submission to an irksome, wayward master. Petruchio's violent response to Grumio's word-play – indeed, Petruchio's treatment of all of his servants – exemplifies how such an imperfect master must rely on force, rather than the servant's loving subordination, to maintain his authority. (1.2.11-17).⁸ These masters' insecurities about their own unstable social positions in an increasingly mercantile culture led them to fear the dangerous mobility of their servants.⁹

Within the master-servant dynamic of Elizabethan England, power relationships became increasingly volatile. Social hierarchy reflected growing tensions between an outmoded feudal system and the rising orders

⁷ Schalkwyk's reading of Shakespearean service and love goes against the reading of the power imbalances within service found in Weil 2005.

⁸ Michel Foucault describes the life of such a servant as 'a constant, total, massive, non-analytical, unlimited relation of domination, established in the form of the individual will of the master' (1979, 137).

⁹ Ralph Berry reminds us that although the Folio's *Dramatis Personae* identifies Baptista Minola as a merchant, his only reference to that role indicates that he is not one (1988, 25). He tells Gremio and Tranio that he must 'play the merchant's part' in their negotiations for Bianca (2.1.318).

of capitalism. In particular, the mobility of lower classes, as represented by servants like Tranio, threatened the social status of the gentry, a class that existed in its own sort of liminal space within Elizabethan society. In *Shakespeare and Social Class*, Ralph Berry identifies ‘gentleman’ as ‘the key term in the stratification of classes’ in early modern England (1988, xii). To be a gentleman meant to be a member of the power-holding social minority, but it also implied ideas about proper birth, conduct, values, and education. More importantly, status as a gentleman involved a tension about self-definition absent from other levels of the social hierarchy. Unlike the nobility, who had class status secured by title, genealogy, and law, the early modern gentleman had ‘to assert himself against the usurper, against the inferior classes, against all manner of challenges’ (Berry 1988, xiii).¹⁰ Elizabethan gentry thus exercised power within both social and legal spheres to promote visual status markers in order to bolster their own potentially unstable social position.

3. *Clothes Make the Man: Sumptuary Legislation and Elizabethan Convention*

Sir Thomas Smith, whose *De Republica Anglorum* describes the ‘four sorts’ of men who comprise England, stresses the importance of visual markers distinguishing between the different classes of men: ‘As for their outward shew, a gentleman (if he wil be so accompted) must go like a gentleman, a yeoman like a yeoman, and a rascall like a rascall’ (1583, 28). We must pay particular attention to Smith’s parenthetical phrase here – ‘if he wil be so accompted’ – because it emphasizes the perception of others. For a gentleman to be ‘accompted’ a gentleman, he must dress the part in order to present a suitable ‘outward shew’. In other words, clothes make the man. Emergent anxieties about destabilization of the socioeconomic order are especially apparent in the relationships between dress and social status. Tudor sumptuary legislation was a legal attempt to maintain visible distinctions of social rank by mandating what fabrics and embellishments a person of a given social order was allowed to wear. Throughout Elizabeth’s reign, increasingly elaborate sumptuary laws emerged in direct response to the increasing social mobility of the middle classes. These Elizabethan statutes built upon earlier proclamations, including Henry VIII’s London proclamation of 1532, amending and revising earlier sumptuary laws according to the social climates of the times.

In an October 1559 proclamation, Queen Elizabeth’s Privy Council urged lords and masters to monitor their servants’ apparel, noting any ‘abuses of apparel’ committed by servants wearing materials, ornaments, or colors

¹⁰ Edmund Spenser’s claim that the purpose of *The Faerie Queene* is ‘to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline’ (1589), taken up as the central image of Stephen Greenblatt’s *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980), implies an element of artifice in the label, that it is possible to make oneself a gentleman through deliberate actions.

restricted to higher social classes and prohibiting any future abuses.¹¹ As the following excerpt shows, although it was unlawful for servants to wear restricted clothes, early Elizabethan sumptuary legislation made allowances that enabled servants to continue wearing the clothing they already owned, thus providing legal venues for what David Scott Kastan describes as ‘social crossdressing’ (1993, 104):

First as many as have any apparel unlawful for them to wear, and can without their loss leave the same, to leave it forthwith, and to be straightly charged that they procure no new ...

Item, order shall be taken and charge given by the Lords and Masters, that upon this reformation the malicious invention and froward nature of any servants, shall not devise any new fashion or sort of apparel, that should be as sumptuous as the former, though not contrary to the words of the statute, thereby seeking by fraud to avoid the pain of the law, with which perverse condition the wisdom of the Masters must mete, both to chastise such lewd servants, and to comfort such as will live in order and honest and comely manner. (Privy Council 1559)

Thus, in the mid-sixteenth century, servants were able to wear ‘unlawful’ garments only if they owned no suitable clothing that could replace the offending sumptuous articles. Such early proclamations allowed servants to wear restricted garments already in their possession, but they distinctly forbade future transgressions of sumptuary regulations.

As Elizabethan mercantile culture developed, however, the growing wealth of the mercantile middle classes blurred social boundaries of income and apparel, thus creating an increasingly mobile segment of the Elizabethan social order. This social mobility thus necessitated new royal statutes and allowances regarding appropriate apparel for increasingly fluid social classifications. Elizabeth I issued a proclamation ‘dispensing certain persons’ from earlier sumptuary restrictions in 1597. In particular, this statute allowed certain servants to dress more lavishly:

Also it is not meant for anything before expressed but that her majesty’s servants, and the servants of noblemen and gentlemen, may wear such liverycoats or cloaks as their masters shall give or allow unto them, with their badges and cognizances or other ornaments of velvet or silk to be laid or added to their said liverycoats or cloaks. (Hughes and Larkin 1969, 180)

This late-century proclamation suggests a growing need for the upper classes of Elizabethan society to distinguish not only themselves, but also their servants

¹¹ Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass address the complexities of sixteenth-century clothing legislation and practices in *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (2000).

from commoners, as well. As greater numbers of the non-elite classes could afford to keep servants, the apparel servants were legally entitled to wear became yet another way to reinforce an unstable social hierarchy. Within this changing social system, only those servants in elite households were entitled to wear such luxuries as velvet or silk, and they could only do so if authorized by their masters. However, as Bailey notes, wealthy householders continued to dress their liveried servants in lavish materials in order to proclaim their own status (2007, 52). Thus, sumptuary legislation could be – and often was – subverted by masters who sought to display their own social prestige by dressing up their servants.

Just as Elizabeth's sumptuary laws sought to restrict lavish materials and ornaments to members of the elite social classes, social convention dictated the dress traditionally worn by servants. For example, blue clothing was typically associated with servants and lower classes because blue dye, made from indigo, was inexpensive and easy to acquire. Because blue was commonly used for servants' clothing, the term 'blue coat' became a metonym for servant. Shakespeare refers to this traditional, nondescript dress of servants in the fourth act of *The Taming of the Shrew*, in which Grumio demands that Petruchio's other servants 'let their heads be sleekly combed, their blue coats brushed, and their garters of an indifferent knit' (4.1.64-66). Petruchio's servants play by the rules of Elizabethan sumptuary legislation and social convention, wearing both the color and the 'indifferent', or unremarkable, materials of service, even as their master makes a parodic spectacle of sumptuary tradition, as evidenced by his wedding clothes, comprised of 'a new hat and an old jerkin, a pair of old breeches thrice turned, a pair of boots that have been candle-cases, one buckled, another laced' (3.2.41-44). Notably, Biondello tells us, Grumio attends to his master 'caparisoned' like Petruchio's horse (3.2.57); although he may butt heads with his master in what Moisan describes as 'comic misprision' (1991, 276), Grumio consistently adheres to the sartorial conventions of servitude and ensures that Petruchio's other servants do so as well. Petruchio's status as a gentleman allows him to get away with such outlandishly tattered wedding attire, even though the other characters condemn his bizarre appearance,¹² for, as he tells Baptista, 'To me she's married, not unto my clothes' (3.2.107). Petruchio's wedding costume not only blurs social classes from above; it also highlights his sartorial choice as a social performance, as Tranio's subsequent response demonstrates: 'He hath some meaning in his mad attire' (3.2.114). Petruchio has chosen these clothes deliberately, even if those who witness his performance cannot interpret his meaning.

¹² Notably, Tranio's first comment upon seeing Petruchio arrive in his wedding ensemble is about his clothes: 'Not so well appareled as I wish you were' (3.2.80).

4. *Playing the Part: Social Crossing, Performance, and Tranio*

Sumptuary laws were grounded in the notion that clothing was a visual marker of the gap between social classes in an age when boundaries between gentility and lower classes were becoming increasingly blurred, and nowhere were these boundaries more blurred than in the commercial theaters. Schalkwyk notes that the ‘revelation that the difference between man and master may be no more than a fashionable cloak and an easily assumable mode of speech and carriage is the work of Shakespeare’s theater as institution’ (2008, 60). Following a 1572 Statute of Retainers, professional players were at least superficially contained within the structure of service, even if, as Kastan posits, their status as servants was ‘more as legal fiction than social fact’ (1993, 108). Michael Neill calls attention to the symbiotic nature of this fiction of service, claiming that players’ ‘liveried presence’ could bolster their patron’s reputation at public events just as ‘the fiction of “service” could be vital whenever they required protection from hostile authorities’ (2000, 19).

The *quid pro quo* relationship between patron and player thus fit uneasily within the larger structure of Elizabethan social status. Although players were technically liveried members of noble or royal households, in the commercial theater, they relied on ‘social crossdressing’ for their livelihoods:

Social cross dressing, legally prohibited on the streets of London, was of course the very essence of the London stage. Actors cross dressed with every performance, and although the early Tudor iterations of the sumptuary laws specifically exempted ‘players in enterludes’ from its edict, none of the Elizabethan proclamations restating them mentions this exemption. (Kastan 1993, 105)

Kastan’s observation highlights anxieties about how theatrical performances destabilized social identities in the late sixteenth century. Bailey furthers this argument, suggesting that *The Shrew* represents domestic labor itself as a ‘theatrical endeavor’ and that the household ‘is a space not unlike the theater’ (2007, 53). In other words, through his portrayal of master-servant relations in *The Shrew*, Shakespeare emphasizes that Elizabethan service is, at its core, a social performance.

Since Elizabethan sumptuary legislation emphasized the importance of clothing as a signifier of the social order, it is fitting that, within *The Shrew*, images of clothing typically call attention to displays of power relationships within Paduan social order. Lucentio’s proposal to Tranio that they switch places acknowledges that without outside markers of status, the two are indistinguishable:

We have not yet been seen in any house,
 Nor can we be distinguished by our faces
 For man or master. Then it follows thus:
 Thou shalt be master, Tranio, in my stead;
 Keep house, and port, and servants, as I should. (1.1.193-197)

They cannot be distinguished by their faces; therefore, with a simple change of clothes, they may change identities. ‘Thou shalt *be* master’, Lucentio tells his trusty servant; he is not simply to play the role of master, but to *become* him.¹³ Tranio’s destabilization of Paduan social order thus begins with an exchange of clothes. Shakespeare marks the beginning of Tranio’s performance as Lucentio through his attire: ‘Enter Tranio, *brave*’ (1.2.s.d.; emphasis added). He is finely dressed, and he has taken on the guise of a *brave*, a gallant, showy both in dress and in behavior.¹⁴ Exchanging the customary blue coat of his station for gentlemanly finery is Tranio’s first step toward performing the role of Renaissance gentleman; he can more readily assume Lucentio’s status and behavior once he is dressed – bravely – in his master’s clothes.

5. *The Dangers of Social Appropriation*

Adopting Lucentio’s status along with his clothes, Tranio engages in what Susan Baker labels ‘imitative disguise’, assuming the identity of another using ‘knowledge which is shared in advance by both the disguisers and those they delude’ in his impersonation. Baker contends that such disguises often ‘tend toward the exaggeration of caricature’ (1992, 306); however, for Tranio, exaggeration is vital to his success. Following his first disguised encounter with Hortensio and Gremio, this overstated gentility leads Gremio to exclaim, ‘this gentleman will out-talk us all!’ (1.2.238). Frank Lentricchia has argued that ‘unlike real estate, the language of privilege and authority is not the private property of any person or class. The linguistic symbols of authority ... are appropriable’ (1985, 79). Tranio quite effectively appropriates the language of authority; in fact, the key to his successful impersonation of Lucentio lies in his ability to ‘out-talk’ his rivals.¹⁵

It is Tranio’s way with words, coupled with a tendency toward exaggeration, that win Baptista’s consent for Lucentio’s marriage. As he and Gremio engage in a bidding war for Bianca’s hand, Tranio seeks to win Baptista’s approval, regardless of what he must fabricate as he makes his offer:

¹³ As Brian Blackley points out, this gesture requires an enormous amount of trust on Lucentio’s part because ‘in a literal sense he gives Tranio authority over him and all he owns, allowing Tranio temporarily to rule him’ (2010, 68). Gouge, however, condemns such trust on the part of a master, exhorting his readers that ‘They who in this kind so far debase themselves as to give their servants power over their own body, do make both themselves and their true lawful bedfellow to be despised’ (1634, 661-662).

¹⁴ *OED*, s.v. ‘brave, adj.’ (<<http://www.oed.com/>>, accessed 27 January 2015).

¹⁵ Bailey describes this behavior – Tranio’s need to out-talk his competition – as ‘braving ... a demonstration of verbal bravado that allowed one to simultaneously disguise and convey hostility’ (2007, 61).

Gremio, 'tis known my father hath no less
 Than three great argosies, besides two galliases
 And twelve tight galleys. These I will assure her,
 And twice as much, whate'er thou off'rest next. (2.1.370-373)

In his quest to win his master a bride, Tranio 'bears down Gremio with no pretense of finesse' (Tillyard 1965, 95). Moreover, as Evett points out, the items Tranio offers Baptista underscore the 'increasingly capitalistic nature of service' apparent in his 'bourgeois privileging of chattels over land as the determinant of wealth' (2005, 45). What Lucentio may realistically offer to secure his bride's future is irrelevant to Tranio. Instead, his primary intention is simply to win. In other words, at this point, Tranio is, to borrow Bailey's language, simply 'braving it'.

Blackley suggests that Tranio's 'best acting' comes during this exchange, noting that he 'has stretched the possibilities of his role to its greatest extent and won', even though his boldness and exaggeration have 'no doubt stretched his nerves just as tightly' (2010, 71). Likewise, Bailey claims that Tranio's negotiating strategy 'reveals an uncanny ability to manufacture the illusion of largesse', even if his exaggerations may cast doubt on his credibility (2007, 61-62). I contend, however, that Tranio's performance in this scene reveals the cracks in his lordly façade. He may know the rules of engagement and how to appeal to a gentleman's desire for financial improvement, but as a servant, he lacks the sense of social and economic urgency inherent within these negotiations. In making such grandiose offers to Baptista, Tranio gambles with the economic futures of both Lucentio and Bianca. His primary goal is simply to ensure his master's happiness by facilitating the marriage to Bianca; Tranio shows little concern or awareness for what happens after Baptista discovers his deceptions. Tranio's motivation – a desire to please his master – distinguishes him from the Renaissance gentleman's need for self-definition through social relationships (Berry 1988, xiii). His exaggerated claims thus mock actual gentlemen like Petruchio, who must approach marriage as a means of legitimizing power and increasing wealth. By so overtly appealing to Baptista's greed, Tranio also risks the potential consequences of Baptista or Gremio realizing his deception.

While the economic ramifications of Tranio's offers will have lasting impact on Vincentio's fortunes, from Tranio's perspective, the most pressing concern about his outrageous promises is that the 'supposed Lucentio' now needs to 'get a father' in order to guarantee his victory over Gremio (2.1.400-401). By recruiting another commoner to play Lucentio's father, Tranio willingly steps even further outside the boundaries of social propriety. Although he performs as gentleman under his master's orders, it is Tranio's decision to enlist the Pedant to play the role of 'supposed' Vincentio: 'If he be credulous and trust my tale, / I'll make him glad to seem Vincentio, /

And give assurance to Baptista Minola' (4.2.68-70). In this action, Tranio fully internalizes his role as Lucentio, going so far as to authorize another commoner's performance of social elevation. Whereas Lucentio's order to Tranio falls under the auspices of a master's caprice, Tranio's action is one of subversion, no matter the motivation. He assumes an agency for social transformation that he, a member of the lower classes, should not be able to claim.

Although Tranio's subversive performance as gentleman is at times overstated – though I would not go so far to say, as Bailey suggests, to the point of parody (2007, 62) – while impersonating Lucentio, he consistently dominates Bianca's other suitors. His ability to perform successfully as gentleman underscores the performative nature of class distinctions in Elizabethan society. As Amy Smith puts it, the concept of performativity presents 'a theoretical framework which allows that subjects can work from within the very power structures that bring them into being ... it is the repetition required by all "ritual social dramas" that makes agency and even cultural change possible' (2002, 290). Tranio performs as Lucentio using what he knows of gentlemanly behavior and status, but as he performs, he creates a new version of that social class, as shown in his successful, albeit naïve, exaggerations to Baptista. The dynamic nature of performance thus creates the possibility of change, and each scene in which Tranio acts as supposed Lucentio becomes a possible impetus for a critical reworking of the social order.

The more he internalizes his gentlemanly performance, the more Tranio manipulates the social conventions of Padua. In the opening scene of the play proper, Tranio plays the servant with appropriate reverence and affection, adhering to linguistic customs of social propriety by repeatedly addressing Lucentio as 'master' or 'sir' (1.1.25-41). Likewise, as he gains confidence in his performance as a gentleman, he employs the language conventions of the gentry, appropriating the linguistic symbols of authority. In particular, we see this with Tranio's use of *you* or *thou*. *You*, the stylistically neutral form, is typically used between equals or when addressing social superiors. In contrast, *thou* conveys a sense of familiarity, whether used intimately or out of hostility. As servant, Tranio only uses the neutral *you* in his conversations with other characters. Acting as gentleman, he uses the familiar form in response to Gremio's condescension:

GREMIO. Youngling, thou canst not love so dear as I.

TRANIO. Graybeard, thy love doth freeze. (1.1.330-331)

In using the familiar pronoun, Tranio simply follows the pattern that the gentleman Gremio has set in the previous line. Fittingly, throughout the rest of the play, Tranio directs his contemptuous *thou* only at Gremio. Gremio's

use of *thou* unwittingly invites a like response from the socially inferior Tranio. The grumpy old suitor thus indoctrinates the servant Tranio into the linguistic conventions of the gentry, further legitimizing (and problematizing) Tranio's performance by, ironically, making himself the target of the false Lucentio's derisive *thou*.

Tranio's performative acumen allows him to manoeuvre readily between his social status as servant and his assumed role as gentleman.¹⁶ In Tranio, Shakespeare presents a theatrical embodiment of the gentleman's anxiety about members of the inferior classes usurping his social power, about the possibility of these classes extending such performances beyond the confines of the theater and into the streets of England. This tension about the mobility of commoners that the cunning Tranio represents, however, arises precisely because of how the Elizabethan elite established the system of service. Specifically, by positioning servants in the liminal space between employment and family membership, masters forced their servants to straddle different social strata. Tranio can move fluidly between the classes only because his position as servant to Vincentio's family has given this son of a rustic sail-maker the skills – namely, a gentleman's manners and education – to do so.

Although this manner of service affords Tranio opportunities otherwise unavailable to a craftsman's son, it leads to Lucentio's 'intellectual dependence' on his servant (Moisan 1991, 282). The liminal space of Elizabethan servitude contributes to Lucentio's reliance on Tranio as a confidante, one whom he feels is 'as secret and as dear / As Anna to the Queen of Carthage' (1.1.145-146). Lucentio conflates the servant's dual roles within his household, drawing connections between his relationship with Tranio and Dido's relationship with her sister Anna in the *Aeneid*. Of a master's overly intimate relationship with a servant, Gouge writes, 'When masters suffer their servants to be their companions, playing, drinking, reveling with them, and saying, as it is in the proverb, "hail fellows met". Thus servants oft take liberty to presume above their master. For men are naturally prone to ambition, and "if an inch be given, they will take an ell"' (1634, 661). Lucentio's dependence on Tranio – as confidante and conspirator in his scheme of social metamorphosis – thus casts doubts not only on his own fitness as master, but on the purity of Tranio's motives, as well; for, as Judith Weil contends, the play's treatment of service opens up questions about 'whether the loving, grateful professions of subordinates can ever be trusted' (2005, 52).

Lucentio may view Tranio as a brother, but Tranio must remain acutely aware of the role he plays within Lucentio's household; although he has the manners and education of a gentleman, as Vincentio's comments remind us,

¹⁶ As Tillyard remarks, Tranio 'has observed acutely the manners of his betters and has picked up enough ... to carry conviction in polite society' (1965, 92).

he is not one. He is simply a servant, and beyond that, a ‘monstrous villain’ for having stepped beyond acceptable social boundaries (5.1.83). As Bailey argues, ‘The various points at which onlookers accuse Tranio of abusing his master’s generosity, of stealing from him, and even of murdering his master function as commentaries on the hermeneutics of suspicion employed by those who encounter a flamboyantly attired servant who conveys confidence in his appearance’ (2007, 63-64). Even though he acts out of loyalty to Lucentio’s cause, Tranio has taken ‘liberty to presume above [his] master’ (Gouge 1634, 661). Specifically, by calling for Vincentio’s imprisonment after tapping another commoner to perform as ‘supposed’ Vincentio, Tranio has upended the social hierarchy to such an extreme that he can no longer perform his way out of the mess. Moreover, as Evett has claimed, it is as if ‘by continually talking in the master’s vein to other masters (including Lucentio), he had become so fully committed to the exchange that he could not abandon it’ (2005, 66). Tranio grows so comfortable in his role as master that he refuses to abject himself to Lucentio’s father, even if it may save his life.

In *The Politics of Shakespeare*, Derek Cohen contends that the Shakespearean servant’s purpose ‘is to do the dirty work, clean up the mess, of the master’ (1993, 45); however, in the context of Tranio’s social metamorphosis, these roles are reversed. The real Lucentio must come in and clean up the mess of supposed Lucentio, ‘that damnèd villain Tranio, / That faced and braved’ Vincentio (5.1.94-95). Vincentio’s language here recalls the earlier stage direction – ‘Enter Tranio, brave’ – that signals Tranio’s transformation to master. By the play’s final act, Tranio has so internalized his performance that he becomes willing to ‘brave’ his master’s father.¹⁷ It is only Lucentio’s abjection and plea for mercy that earns Tranio his pardon: ‘What Tranio did, myself enforced him to; / Then pardon him, sweet Father, for my sake’ (5.1.103-104). Tranio remains safely offstage while Vincentio rages against his villainy, swearing ‘I’ll slit the villain’s nose ... I will in, to be revenged for this villainy’ (5.1.105, 108-109). Evett finds it odd that ‘this voluble rogue remains silent’ at a moment ‘where common sense seems to demand appeals for mercy’ (2005, 66). I argue, however, that Tranio’s absence from this exchange marks another moment of transformation: this time, a return to his rightful place in the social hierarchy as a liveried part of Lucentio’s household, as one ‘not merely clothed in his master’s identity but absorbed into his social body’ (Neill 2000, 23). Although he is willing to gamble with Lucentio’s economic future, when it comes to his own safety, Tranio leaves it to his master to ‘out-talk’ the angry Vincentio.

Tranio’s appearance in the final scene is thus an exercise in servile humility. He enters with other servants, ‘bringing in a banquet’ (5.2.s.d.);

¹⁷ *OED*, s.v. ‘brave, v.¹’ (<<http://www.oed.com/>>, accessed 27 January 2015).

although he is named with Biondello and Grumio, the stage directions specify that, of these named servants, only Tranio is tasked with serving food. Moreover, his response to Petruchio is that of, to borrow Tranio's own simile, a metaphoric dog with his tail between his legs: 'O, sir, Lucentio slipped me like his greyhound, / Which runs himself and catches for his master' (5.2.53-54). Tranio shows his master (and, by extension, his master's father) deference appropriate for someone of his station. Evett claims that Tranio's behavior in this scene 'not the behavior of someone who has been effectively punished – certainly not of someone who has undergone the terrible humiliation of the slit nose' (2005, 67). While I agree that Tranio's demeanor here shows no evidence that Vincentio has made good with his threat, he speaks and acts as one who has been put in his place.

Even his impudent response to Petruchio's next jibe attends to matters of social hierarchy, revealing not just his own status as servant, but a sense of Petruchio's status:

PETRUCHIO. A good swift simile, but something currish.

TRANIO. 'Tis well, sir, that you hunted for yourself.

'Tis thought your deer does hold you at a bay. (5.2.55-57)

Tranio's taunting reply insults Petruchio on two levels: not only has Petruchio had to hunt for himself, he has done a poor job of it. In other words, it is Petruchio, not Tranio, who has 'shot and missed' (5.2.52). Tranio responds in kind to Petruchio's teasing because Petruchio falls lower in the social hierarchy than Lucentio. Just as Katherina reserves her shrewishness for other women in this final scene, so too does Tranio reserve his gentlemanly wit for that master he deems unworthy of deference.¹⁸ Thus, even though Tranio has been put in his place, so to speak, his final comment in the play still acknowledges a sense of fluidity in matters of social class.

6. *Christopher Sly's Inescapable 'Plebeian-ness'*

Like Tranio's social transformation in the play proper, the comic social climbing (or, more accurately, dragging) of Christopher Sly in the Induction accentuates the performativity of class distinctions in Elizabethan society. In each instance, the characters involved create classed identities through performance. Although both characters are cast in higher social roles than they occupy, neither character assumes this dominant role of his own initiative. As is usually the case with disguises in Shakespearean drama, they do not 'of

¹⁸ Tranio's free speech toward Petruchio is a linguistic parallel to the velvet and silk clothing that servants of the elite were allowed to wear. He is licensed to speak insolently to Petruchio as a show of Lucentio's social superiority to Petruchio.

their own (represented) volition disguise *up* the scale' (Baker 1992, 313). They act above their given social ranks only because their social superiors authorize such performances. Tranio's disguise is for Lucentio's romantic benefit, and he is complicit in his boundary-crossing class performance. In contrast, Sly's social elevation is part of an elaborate practical joke the Lord devises to make the drunken beggar 'forget himself' (Ind.1.37). In this respect, Shakespeare aligns the Lord with the Paduan gentlemen who see Katherina as a creature who must be tamed. The Lord views Sly as a 'monstrous beast' in need of behavioral adjustment (Ind.1.30). Sly's performance as a lord, then, serves as the Lord's mocking attempt to transform, albeit temporarily, the drunken tinker into something less repugnant.

Sly's social elevation in the Induction looks forward both to Tranio's performance of class in the play proper and to the inevitable end of the Lord's joke, when Sly must return to his life as a poor tinker. Sly differs from Tranio, however, in that he never ventures beyond the parameters established by the Lord in his performance. The social order of the English household is never destabilized because of what Holbrook describes as Sly's 'immovable plebeianness' (1994, 116). The tinker's language betrays his true status; much as he tries to assume the role of Lord, he lacks the vocabulary to do so. He asks his 'wife', 'Are you my wife, and will not call me husband? / My men should call me "lord"; I am your *goodman*' (Ind. 2.97-98; emphasis added). Evett critiques the Arden editor's gloss of 'goodman' as 'husband', suggesting instead that the *OED*'s broad sense of the term as 'master or head of household' is more fitting (2005, 224). I would put even more pressure on this term, however, by looking at Sir Thomas Smith's distinction between the labels 'goodman' and 'master'. Specifically, he reserves the title 'master' only for those considered gentlemen: even well-to-do yeomen may 'be not called masters, for that (as I saide) pertaineth to gentlemen onely: But to their surnames, men adde *goodman*' (Smith 1583, 30). To follow Smith's figuration, even when he attempts to assume the mantle of lordship, Sly's language, unlike that of the smooth-talking Tranio, never rises to that of a gentleman. Ultimately, Sly poses no threat to the social hierarchy because he never truly straddles two social classes. Unlike Tranio, he cannot comprehend the possibility that social status can be performed, and, as such, he has no power to manipulate class conventions to suit his own purposes.

7. Framing Social Matters: A Conclusion

The Shrew's lack of a closing frame deflects attention from Sly's inevitable return to his role as beggar onto the closing of the play proper, in which Vincentio's arrival in Padua has contained the threat posed by the socially mobile Tranio. As such, Moisan argues, the play is 'orchestrated to suppress, rather than resolve, the dissonances it evokes in the march to its festive close' (1991, 282). Holbrook suggests that the play, 'with its emphasis on clever

deceit, or the strategic trickery of art, preserves the notion of an unchanging social reality only temporarily distorted by these fictions and subterfuges' (1994, 120). Evett contends that Tranio's final appearance in the play signifies another transformation for the clever servant, to that of 'the household's allowed fool' (2005, 67). Ending the play without a return to Sly's drunken performance or an end to the Lord's practical joke does make Tranio's containment within Paduan society more immediate, but it problematizes this containment by drawing *The Shrew's* audience closer to the anxieties stirred by Tranio's social transgression. His final line in the play, that barbed retort to Petruchio – 'Tis well, sir, that you hunted for yourself. / 'Tis thought your deer does hold you at a bay' (5.2.55-56) – suggests that this ostensible return to social order remains somewhat incomplete. Just as he used Gremio's familiar language as an excuse to respond in kind, so Tranio ends the play reminding his audience that he has not lost his sharp tongue.

Whereas Tranio shows the potentially dangerous mobility of savvy Elizabethan servants, notably in his derision toward Gremio and Petruchio and his authorization of the Pedant's impersonation, the 1594 quarto of the anonymous *The Taming of a Shrew* limits the actions of the lower classes, as shown in the portrayal of the servant Valeria.¹⁹ In contrast to *The Shrew's* transgressive class performances, it is Valeria's master, Aurelius, who holds agency for the social elevations of the play. Valeria simply follows his master's orders. As the ninth scene opens, for example, Aurelius tells the man impersonating him 'be sure you say / As I did tell you' (9.2-3). The play-proper of *A Shrew* lacks the transgressive element of social performativity found in *The Shrew*; therefore the inclusion of its epilogue does little more than tidy up the play's structure. Sly simply awakens where he first fell asleep, convinced his social elevation was only a dream illustrating a practical method of wife-taming: 'I know now how to tame a shrew. / I dreamt upon it all this night till now' (15.16-17). The class performances are wholly contained; both Sly and Valeria remain firmly ensconced in the lower tiers of social hierarchy. Considered alongside the complete frame of *A Shrew*, the missing closing frame of *The Shrew* acts as a metatheatrical element that blurs the boundaries between class performativity within the play and its possible existence within contemporary society.

In *The Shrew*, Tranio exists in the subordinate space commoners uneasily occupy within the social hierarchy. As Burnett relates, Elizabethan 'theater made manifest both the servant's dangerous mobility and the concerns

¹⁹ The characters in *A Shrew* do not correspond fully to those in *The Shrew*; however, Valeria is Tranio's closest equivalent in this play. Likewise, Aurelius plays a role most closely aligned with that of Lucentio, while Phylotus corresponds to *The Shrew's* Pedant. For a more thorough consideration of the plays' correspondences, see Barry Gaines and Margaret Maurer, *Three Shrew Plays* (2010).

of the employing class' (1997, 9). His liminal position, as what Bailey describes as a 'braving' Renaissance servant, fuels Elizabethan anxieties about the social mobility of lower classes (2007, 61). Moisan suggests that Shakespeare addresses these anxieties in the play 'only to marginalize them' within the context of extant social hierarchies (1991, 278). Whereas Tranio's comeuppance in the final act takes the wind out of the ambitious servant's sails and suggests that those who willingly seek out social mobility must be quashed, the play itself showcases the relative ease with which such an ambitious, educated servant can operate in higher social strata. Although he has been temporarily put in his place, Tranio's ability to play the master remains unchanged, and that is what makes him such a transgressive character for Shakespeare's Elizabethan audiences.

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‘Servant obedience changed to master sin’: Performance and the Public Transcript of Service in the Overbury Affair and *The Changeling*

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Abstract

The article discusses allusions that Middleton and Rowley’s *The Changeling* makes to the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury by Frances Howard, Countess of Somerset, focusing particularly on the Countess’s servants. It draws on James Scott’s theory of the ‘public transcript’ of authority, which posits that subordinate members of society use rhetoric and performance to struggle for control over the significance of hierarchical political ideologies. The textual archive surrounding the Overbury Affair provides a view of this struggle. The *State Trials* accounts of the legal proceedings record the servants emphasizing their own vulnerability and ignorance of the crime in the hopes of securing either merciful treatment or punishment for their more powerful patrons. The ballad and pamphlet accounts of their statements minimize and erase these sentiments and instead emphasize the servants’ remorse for personal sins. *The Changeling* continues, and in many ways exaggerates the efforts to contain the performance of Weston and Turner, the Somersets’ servants, but in such a way that clarifies the stakes of the struggle. Rather than marking their entire narrative of service as threatening, the play identifies a savvy and deliberate performance of service alone as having a corrupting, nihilistic effect on the aristocracy and the broader social order.

Keywords: Print Culture, Service, Seventeenth Century, Social History, *The Changeling*

1. *Introduction*

Both literary critics and historians have long noted the allusions that Thomas Middleton and William Rowley’s *The Changeling* makes to the events surrounding Frances Howard’s divorce from Robert Devereux, third Earl of Essex, subsequent remarriage to Robert Carr, first Earl of Somerset, and the scandal involving the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury. J.L. Simmons catalogued a long list of connections that Middleton himself had to Overbury and the Somersets – including the facts that Middleton and Overbury



attended Queen's College, Oxford, together in 1598, that Middleton had written the *Masque of Cupid* for the Somersets' marriage in 1614, and that the Earl and Countess were released from the Tower in 1622, the year that *The Changeling* was first performed – when making the case for the topicality of Middleton and Rowley's tragedy (1980, 154-155).¹ The allusion has also interested feminist critics exploring the ideological implications of the virginity tests undertaken by both Frances Howard in her divorce from her first husband and Middleton and Rowley's Beatrice-Joanna after her own marriage.² Discussions of the Overbury Affair and the Essex divorce themselves also frequently mention *The Changeling*, though in these cases the attention often proves more muted. David Lindley's *The Trials of Frances Howard*, for example, discusses Middleton and Rowley's play amongst a wide range of literary texts that Frances Howard's life and story engaged, while Alastair Bellany includes *The Changeling* in a discussion of the cultural memory of the Overbury Affair (Lindley 1993, 114-115; Bellany 2002, 251). These two topics, then, have become closely linked to one another in scholarship focusing both on Middleton and Rowley's play and the topical events to which it alludes.³

In most cases, both literary critics and historians exploring the significance of the Essex divorce and the Overbury Affair focus either on the Somersets themselves (and Frances Howard particularly) or on the court and factional politics surrounding them. Lindley's book, for example, discusses these events as part of a larger feminist reading arguing that historians (perhaps unknowingly) often reproduce seventeenth-century gender biases when discussing the life of Frances Howard. Bellany's book similarly uses the Overbury Affair as a case study in the circulation of court and factional politics within the early modern news culture. Many studies of *The Changeling* also understand the play as alluding to the Essex divorce but do not emphasize the subsequent murder of Overbury, and in neither case is this choice in scholarly focus unwarranted. The murder of Sir Thomas Overbury became the subject of gossip, newsletters, broadside ballads, and pamphlet literature precisely because the scandal involved one of King James's favorites and the

¹ See also Heinemann 1980, 178; Randall 1984, 362; and Bromham and Bruzzi 1990, 18-36, for other variations on topical readings of the play, and note 2 below for readings related specifically to the virginity test.

² See Luttfriing 2011 and Amster 2003, both of whom directly compare Frances Howard to Beatrice-Joanna. Luttfriing discusses the politics of the Essex divorce both in Middleton's time and in histories of the Stuart court written in the 1650s. Amster discusses both the Essex divorce and *The Changeling* in relation to the broader anxieties surrounding women's virginity. See also Lindley 1993, 77-124, on the Essex divorce.

³ Luttfriing refers to the connection as a 'critical commonplace' (2011, 123), and this perhaps captures the dynamic best.

daughter of a powerful political family. Moreover, the most topical reference in Middleton and Rowley's play – Diaphanta's concern that Beatrice-Joanna, 'Will not search me, will she, / Like the forewoman of a female jury?' (4.2.101-102) – alludes to Frances Howard's divorce rather than her involvement in Overbury's murder.⁴ From the beginning, then, the events and news surrounding the Overbury Affair have proved notable because they involved figures closely associated with royal favor and court scandal.

Notwithstanding, this essay will argue that the role that Frances Howard's *servants* and less powerful accomplices played in shaping the representations of the Overbury Affair are worth serious scholarly attention. The most obvious reason for this is the simple fact that these men and women were the protagonists of many of the Overbury Affair's earliest events and representations. Richard Weston – a servant paid by Howard to poison Overbury on a number of occasions – was the first accomplice to be tried and executed because without his conviction none of the other conspirators could be brought to justice. Anne Turner, a friend and lady-in-waiting to the Countess, was tried second, and she was followed by the Lieutenant of the Tower, Sir Gervase Elwes, and James Franklin, the apothecary who sold Turner the poison. Moreover, the vast majority of the printed representations that followed these events focus on these men's and women's statements of remorse – both those made publicly, and others wholly imagined – during their imprisonments and at their executions. Very few of these texts make direct reference to Frances Howard or Robert Carr. Likewise, while the most immediate allusion to this Affair in *The Changeling* centers on Howard herself, the play's broader narrative – in which a young, aristocratic woman enlists the aid of a servant and a lady-in-waiting to help her commit a murder that will allow her to choose her own husband – clearly draws upon the broader narrative surrounding the murder and includes, in the figure of De Flores, a servant, as a central character. While court politics played a key role in shaping this scandal and quite obviously deserves the scholarly attention it has received, the servants and clients of Frances Howard and Robert Carr were also at the forefront of the period's political and imaginary engagement with these events, and thus also deserve serious scholarly attention.

Another reason to reexamine the record of the Overbury Affair from the perspective of the accomplices, however, has to do with the permutations of this archive as one shifts from examining the manuscript descriptions of the trials and executions themselves to the popular printed representations of these events, and finally to their recreation as Jacobean tragedy. Manuscript accounts of the legal proceedings record the servants emphasizing their own vulnerability and ignorance of the crime in the hopes of securing either merciful treatment or punishment for their more powerful patrons. The

⁴ All references to *The Changeling* are to Middleton and Rowley 1998.

ballad and pamphlet accounts of their statements, however, either minimize or erase these sentiments and instead emphasize the servants' remorse for personal sins. These subtle shifts, I will argue, point to an on-going struggle both over the appropriate response to Overbury's murder, and control over the ideological significance of service itself. The servants tried for conspiring in Overbury's murder performed ignorant, helpless social roles in the hopes of gaining the sympathy and mercy of their judges and the public, and in such a way that implicitly laid the blame for the crime upon the Somersets. The courtiers and judges who condemned them to die, and the writers who later altered their statements, on the other hand, worked to deflect the primary blame and punishment for the crime away from the Somersets and onto the servants themselves. *The Changeling* continues, and in many ways exaggerates the efforts to contain the performance of Weston and Turner – but in such a way that clarifies the stakes of the struggle. Rather than marking their entire narrative of service as threatening, the play identifies a savvy and deliberate performance of service alone as having a corrupting, nihilistic effect on the aristocracy and the broader social order. Read as a dynamic archive, *The Changeling* and the various Overbury texts suggest that early modern conceptions of service took shape, not as a stable and fixed ideology, but instead as an ongoing and collective struggle shaped by numerous voices, including those of servants themselves.

2. *Trial, Deposition and Execution Accounts Contained in the State Trials*

One of the complicated aspects of discussing the Overbury trial is that the archive not only records multiple, differing accounts of the same events, but also that there are many reasons to look upon the records that survive as biased and misleading. Bellany has found references to the Overbury Affair in manuscript newsletters, separates, and libels, and in printed pamphlets and ballads, arguing that perception of the case was shaped by a complex oral and written news culture (2002, 85-111). David Lindley has meticulously reexamined the case noting that many commonplace assumptions – especially that Frances Howard began an affair with Robert Carr prior to their marriage (1993, 70-72) – are based less on direct evidence than on patriarchal biases against divorce particularly, and strong women generally. Richard Weston's trial and execution, in particular, proved an irregular and clipped event, first because Weston attempted to stand mute at trial, and second because three men accosted him while he was standing on the scaffold, reportedly interrupting him from making a final speech and distracting him while he said his final prayers. Given the notoriety of the event, the social standing of many of its participants, and the irregularity of many of the political and legal rituals that surrounded it, the simple facts of this case have, not surprisingly, proven a matter of debate amongst scholars.

Given this, the approach that I take in this article is not aimed at separating out the verifiable facts from their scribal, popular, and literary

reproductions so much as at better understanding the struggle shaping and changing the archive itself. My goal is to open up the performances, texts, and literary reproductions surrounding the Overbury Affair in order to expose the struggles engaged in by its more marginalized participants, charting the nature of that struggle even after the executions of many of the conspirators. I will begin by discussing the manuscript accounts – as collected in the 1730 edition of the *State Trials* – of the testimony, trials and executions of Richard Weston and Anne Turner –, both because these records purport to include the speech of the participants in ways that many subsequent texts do not, and because these legal rituals themselves constitute complex political struggles in their own right. Next, I will discuss several pamphlets, ballads, and poems based on the case that clearly alter the claims put forward by Weston and Turner in favor of more straightforward and traditional set of moral statements. The final section will argue that *The Changeling* can be understood as an illuminating participant in this same social struggle.

The most obvious struggle taking place in the trial and execution of Richard Weston actually involved different aristocratic factions, and seems to push Weston's own interests and voice entirely to the margins. When he first appeared in court and was asked to offer a plea, Weston only said, 'Lord have Mercy upon me! Lord have Mercy upon me! ... being then demanded how he would be tried, he answered, He referred himself to God, and would be tried by God; refusing to put himself and his Cause upon the Jury or Country, according to the Law and Custom' (Emlyn 1730, 314; henceforth *ST*). Weston's decision to 'stand mute' rather than face trial was reportedly made under the advice of 'Serjeant Yelberton an obliged servant to the House of the Howards ... in order to prevent the Prosecution from reaching any farther' (*ST*, 314). The tradition of 'standing mute' was a legal loophole available to accused felons who hoped to avoid trial. Rather than risk being found guilty, the accused could refuse to enter a plea and instead undergo the painful process of *peine forte et dure* which, according to J.M. Beattie, 'Meant he was taken to a dungeon, chained spread-eagled to the floor, and loaded with a gradually increasing weight of iron until either he agreed to plead or he died' (1986, 337). While it is often unclear what motivated people to stand mute, in this case the Howard family seems to have hoped that keeping Weston from being found guilty might 'prevent the Prosecution from reaching any further' in pursuing the murder.⁵ If Weston – the only man accused of physically poisoning Overbury – had never been found guilty, then it might prove difficult to prosecute Frances Howard or Robert Carr as part of a criminal conspiracy.

⁵ On the ambiguities of standing mute, see Beattie 1986, 337-338. For an example of a prisoner standing mute and being pressed in a seemingly confounding way, see Dugdale 1604, B3r.

Chief Justice Coke, eager to prove Weston's guilt and convinced that 'Some Great Ones, guilty of the same Fact as accessory' had convinced him to stand mute, worked to convince Weston to stand trial, first by describing the physically painful pressing by stones that the state imposed on those who stood mute, and then by reading Weston's pre-trial examination even though the trial had not technically begun (*ST*, 314-318). When even this did not convince Weston to offer a plea, the trial was delayed so that authorities could continue to pressure him to stand trial. The Sheriffs of London eventually convinced Weston to enter a plea and he was found guilty at a second trial. The struggle between the Howard family, the Somersets, and Chief Justice Coke continued, however, all the way to the scaffold, where several clients of the Earl of Somerset questioned Weston in the hopes of throwing doubt upon the justice of his trial (Bellany 2002, 226). Both in his irregular, constantly interrupted trial and testimony, and in his physical body, Weston in many respects became a vehicle through which opposed court factions struggled to manipulate public perceptions and the legal system itself.

If, in his trial, Weston played something of a subordinate role in a proxy struggle between Chief Justice Coke and court factions aligned with the Somersets, though, this does not mean that his role was wholly or even primarily a passive one. While there are certainly moments – particularly when Coke reads Weston's deposition despite his standing mute, and the interruption of Weston's scaffold prayers – where Weston gets pushed into a passive role, other moments involve him more actively embracing a subordinate role. A sheriff of London named William Goare describes how, during attempts to convince Weston to enter a plea, 'Weston answered, He hoped he would not make a Net to catch little Birds, and let the great ones go' (*ST*, 320). The phrase proves somewhat ambiguous because the second 'he' could refer either to Goare or to Weston himself. If 'he' refers to Goare, Weston seems to be attempting to shame the sheriff into acting more mercifully by pointing out that he's pressuring Weston, 'a little Bird', while seemingly letting the more powerful Somersets – 'the great ones' – go. If 'he' refers to Weston, then the statement suggests that Weston chooses to stand trial because he does not want to endure the somewhat gruesome ordeal of being pressed while allowing his patrons to escape punishment entirely. In either case, Weston shows an awareness of his social status in comparison to the Somersets and a willingness to allude to this in order to place pressure on figures of authority. While it is not clear if he hopes to gain mercy or justice, Weston's statement quite clearly and powerfully draws attention to the injustice of punishing a servant rather than his more powerful patrons.

Weston's testimony in depositions and in trial similarly emphasized his low status in ways that more clearly imply he should not be found guilty of a crime. In the trial itself, Weston pled not guilty because he was 'Ignorant or Unawares' (*ST*, 321) of the contents of the liquid and food prepared for Overbury, claims that reinforce statements recorded in his depositions:

The Countess did request him to give *Sir Thomas Overbury* a Water, but not to drink it himself; she promised to give him a good Reward, and he suspected it was Poison ... [he] told the Lieutenant of it, and [the Lieutenant] set the Glass into a little Study. He confesseth he told Mrs. *Turner* he had given it him, and demanded his Reward ... He confesseth to have received of the Countess in Rewards ... in all 180 *l.* (*ST*, 320)

The testimony consistently places Weston in a submissive position; the Countess gives him the poison without informing him of its contents, and he does this for pay rather than another motive. Even the seemingly moral choice not to give Overbury the water gets made by Weston's superior rather than himself. The only agency that Weston grants himself – lying to Anne Turner about administering the poison – reinforces his status as a hired agent, primarily seeking money while hoping to avoid moral responsibility. These statements differ from those moments where Weston stands mute or gets silenced through aristocratic influence. While he clearly portrays himself as lacking knowledge, agency, and being of a 'little' status, these claims represent an active rhetorical strategy on Weston's part to convince his judges that the Countess should be held accountable for the murder rather than Weston himself.

In adopting this pronounced, seemingly deliberate posture as socially subordinate, Weston participates in forming what I will refer to throughout the remainder of this essay as the 'public transcript' of early modern service. The concept of a 'public transcript' was developed by J.C. Scott to describe social relations in hierarchical societies in such a way that subordinate groups can be understood to actively participate in shaping the conditions and even the terminology that governs their lives, rather than passively accepting a fixed ideology put forward by dominant authorities.⁶ Rather than acting out of an internalized belief in a hegemonic culture, Scott sees people in socially subordinate positions as

understanding at some level the usefulness of naiveté, simplicity, and backwardness in appeals to the [king]. If the official view of the peasants as childlike, unenlightened, God-fearing, and basically loyal led to a philosophy of rule that emphasized both strictness and paternal indulgence, this official view was not without its advantages

⁶ Scott's understanding of a 'public transcript' shares some elements with the theory of the 'public sphere', put forward by Jürgen Habermas, and also differs in important respects. Both conceptions share a sense of 'public' that is, 'Open to all, in contrast to closed or exclusive affairs' (Habermas 1991, 2). For Habermas, 'public' usually implies a contrasting sense of the 'private' (see esp. 11-14 and 43-50), where for Scott the 'public transcript' often conceals a 'hidden transcript' characterized by dissatisfaction and resistance. On the other hand, Habermas more thoroughly traces the institutional nature of the 'public sphere', particularly in its bourgeois phase, where Scott seeks to put forward a more cross-cultural and trans-historical theory about the dynamic relations of dominant and subordinate groups. For my thoughts on the 'hidden transcript', see note 8 below.

to peasants in a tight spot. By invoking their simplicity and loyalty they might hope to invoke his generosity and forgiveness as well as that of the judges and police officials they might encounter ... In this respect, we must not see the myths of the [king] and peasant as an ideological creation of the monarchy, then appropriated and reinterpreted by the peasantry. These myths were rather the joint product of historic struggle rather like a ferocious argument in which the basic terms ... are shared but in which the interpretations follow wildly divergent paths in accordance with vital interests. (1990, 99-100)⁷

Peasants, in Scott's view, actively participate in shaping political culture by selecting and emphasizing those elements of the dominant language that suit their immediate interests and then struggling in various ways to pressure figures of authority into accepting their point of view. Despite its uneven terms, the public transcript of hierarchical authority in this view can be understood as fluid, collectively shaped, and performative in nature.⁸

⁷ Scott writes this statement while discussing the specific case of the 'Czar-Deliverer' in Russia (96-103). I have chosen to replace his use of the word 'czar' with 'king', in order to make the statement more applicable to an English context, and less distracting to the reader. While this, quite obviously, removes the statement from its local context within Scott's book, I do not feel that it changes the fundamental meaning of the 'public transcript' as Scott conceives of the term. Scott uses *numerous* examples from across cultures – including references to American slavery, colonial Burma, various European peasantries, and many others – to offer a general theory of domination and resistance. Given Scott's own cross-cultural terms, and the fact that numerous social historians have adopted these same terms when describing early modern England, I feel that this linguistic change is warranted.

⁸ I am using the term 'performative' here in a sense similar to that developed by Judith Butler's notion of a 'performative citation', in *Bodies That Matter*. Butler argues that 'Performativity is thus not a singular "act", for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition' (1993, 12), implying that power takes shape in a dialogue between present actions and broader, socially constructed norms. Scott himself uses theatrical language throughout his book, and states a clear belief that in many cases peasant performances of *naïveté* and simplicity are misleading and deliberately deceptive. When he first introduces the term, for example, Scott says, 'The public transcript, where it is not positively misleading, is unlikely to tell the whole story about power relations. It is frequently in the interest of both parties to tacitly conspire in misrepresentation ... The theatrical imperatives that normally prevail in situations of domination produce a public transcript in close conformity with how dominant groups would have things appear. The dominant never control the stage absolutely, but their wishes normally prevail. In the short run, it is in the interest of the subordinate to produce a more or less credible performance, speaking the lines and making the gestures he knows are expected of him' (1990, 2-4). In the same book, Scott puts forward his more widely known concept of a 'hidden transcript', to refer to those moments when dominant and subordinate alike find themselves 'off-stage', and can make statements inappropriate for public venues (4-10). While I obviously find Scott's understanding of a 'theatrical' political culture that masks a 'hidden transcript' intriguing, I have chosen the more commonly accepted term 'performative', because I find Scott's stronger notion of a 'theatrical' political culture problematic in many respects.

Social historians of early modern England – including Andy Wood and John Walter – have been deeply influenced by Scott's theories, arguing that many interactions between authority figures and subordinate groups can be understood as types of negotiation and struggle over the significance of a shared ideological language. Walter, for example, says that patriarchal ideology provided subordinate and marginalized groups weapons which could be used to spur more powerful members of society to act:

The subsistence of subordinate groups underwrote a political culture which, paradoxically, could be read as emphasizing the duties of the powerful and the rights of the weak ... The weapons took a variety of forms, but all represented attempts to recall individuals who were the focus of popular grievance to observance of what were represented as common (and moralised) standards by which economic relations ought to be ordered and to remind authority of its obligations in their defence. (2006, 200)⁹

When Weston told William Goare that, 'He hoped he would not make a Net to catch little Birds, and let the great ones go', and insisted that he was ignorant of the Countess's plans and only – imperfectly – worked for a wage, he actively remade the public transcript of service in such a way that held his patrons to a higher moral standard than their servants. Weston fashions the Somersets as 'great', and knowingly, actively arranging the poisoning of Overbury in the hopes that either he himself will be spared a harsh treatment or, that failing, that his patrons will also be punished.

Further evidence that Weston's testimony participates in a dialogic struggle over a public transcript of service appears in the fact that his claims often match those made in the numerous texts that describe proper master-servant relations. The claim that Weston only participated in the poisoning for a wage, for example, draws upon a highly moralized charge made to masters that they had an obligation to sufficiently reward those that worked for them. In the domestic manual *A Health to the Gentlemanly Profession of Servingmen* (Anonymous 1598), for example, the author insists, 'I am none of these miserable Maisters that so inhumanely burieth in oblivion unrewarded the long, good, and duetifull service of my olde servant: But if you be such as either thus, or otherwyse abuseth those good creatures that God hath lent you ... Let these my caviats worke some remorse or conscience' (A2r-v). William Basse's *Sword and Buckler, or Serving-Mans Defence* similarly places

For an excellent discussion of some problems with this strong version of a 'theatrical' subordinate culture and a 'hidden transcript' of resistance, see Wood 2006. For an excellent discussion of the 'essentially contested nature', of the term 'performance', see Strine, Long, and Hopkins 1990, 183. On the different uses of the term 'performance', including Butler, speech-act theory, and anthropological approaches, see Madison and Hamera 2006.

⁹ See also Wood 2001, 78-80.

the taking of wages at the center of the master-servant relationship, 'You give him wages and food: That's most true, / And other matters to sustain his living: / Why, els he is not bound to follow you' (1602, C1r). Wages here are not an indifferent legal contract, but a moral obligation that ties masters to their servants. Masters must adequately care for their servants in order to avoid charges of inhumanity and abuse, and the wage has a reciprocal hold on the servants themselves, 'binding' them to the person sustaining them materially and financially.

The corollary to the master's duty to offer rewards for service, of course, was that servants themselves were called by these same social commentators to behave with obedience and humility towards those they served. Bas charged servants:

This man of all things must abandon pride
 Chieflie in gestures, and in acts exterior:
 For greater states can by no meanes abide
 Ambition in a person so inferiour. (1602, B1r)

Thomas Fosset went so far as to argue that good servants must even endure suffering at the hands of their masters, 'If when ye do wel ye suffer wrong and take it patiently, this is acceptable to God ... for here unto yee are called, God hath called you to this, that is, to obey and to suffer' (1613, 10). William Gouge argued that servants, 'Labour to bring their judgement to the bent of their masters judgement, and to thinke that meet and good which he doth' (1622, 636), essentially suggesting that servants ought to adopt their master's thoughts and opinions as part of their humble status. When Weston claimed to be innocent or deserving of sympathy because he worked for pay, was 'Ignorant or Unawares' of the full import of his actions, and was 'Little', he effectively laid claim to moral conventions put forward throughout the culture that charged servants to be humble, obedient, and consider themselves as bound to those who sustained them. Weston importantly made *selective* claims upon these moral precepts. Gouge explicitly says, 'If masters command their servants never so peremptorily to doe any unlawfull thing, that is, any thing forbidden by Gods word, they may not yeeld to it' (637), mentioning murder, theft, and even using false weights and measures as examples of commands that servants are bound to refuse, and numerous manuals and religious tracts emphasize that servants are not absolutely bound to obey.¹⁰ The selective nature of Weston's testimony, however, further demonstrates the active role he played in attempting to remake the public transcript of service. While he obviously draws on a shared language of service that positions

¹⁰ See especially Strier 1988.

him as humble and obedient, in mounting a defense he sought to interpret that language in a way that relieved him of moral responsibility and, at least implicitly, deflected guilt onto his patrons.

Anne Turner's trial shows a similar pattern, and if anything more clearly shows a woman trying to lay claim to a servant's role in order to gain mercy and sympathy from her judges and the public. The most memorable part of Anne Turner's trial involved Coke introducing letters and pictures that Turner and the Countess of Somerset had allegedly obtained from the astrologer Simon Forman to help secure the love of Robert Carr and another man for the Countess and Anne Turner. Among the documents that Coke introduced were 'Certain Pictures of a Man and Woman in Copulation', and other 'enchanted Papers', and when he showed this material, 'There was heard a crack from the Scaffolds, which caused great Fear, Tumult and Confusion among the Spectators, and thro'out the Hall, everyone fearing Hurt, as if the Devil had been present and grown angry to have his Workmanship shewed' (ST, 322-323). Despite this salacious evidence, Turner herself was recorded as very submissive in her own defense. After Coke ended his case calling her 'A Whore, a Bawd, a Sorcerer, a Witch, a Papist, a Felon, and a Murderer, the Daughter of the Devil *Forman*', Turner simply asked him, 'To be good unto her, saying, she was ever brought up with the Countess of *Somerset*, and had been of a long time her Servant, and knew not that there was Poison in any of those things sent to Sir *Thomas Overbury*' (ST, 324). Like Weston, Turner claims to have been ignorant of the poisoning, but she also emphasizes her long history in the Countess's household and explicitly describes herself as a 'Servant'. Turner's social status thus stands alongside potentially mitigating circumstances as part of a plea that judges 'Be good to her', by extending gentle treatment and 'Favour' (ST, 324) in the form of a commuted sentence.

Turner made similar claims at her execution, suggesting that these types of public statement worked not only as part of an immediate defensive tactic aimed at escaping punishment, but also as part of a larger strategy to establish service and subordination as deserving sympathy and understanding. On the scaffold, she told spectators,

Not to rejoice at her Fall, but to take example by her; she exhorting them to serve God, and abandon Pride, and all other Sins; relating her breeding with the Countess of *Somerset*, having had no other Means to maintain her and her Children, but what came from the Countess: and said farther, That when her hand was once in the Business, she knew the revealing of it would be her Overthrow. The which, with like other Speeches, and great Penitency there shewed, moved the Spectators to great Pity, and Grief for her. (ST, 324)

In most respects, Turner clarified the rhetorical claims to service that Weston's trial and execution had sought to put forward, but could only suggest, due to its constant interruptions. She not only claimed to have participated in the event for

money, but also emphasizes that she relied upon the Countess's favors to live. She furthermore insists that this reliance put her in a situation from which she could not reasonably escape, since 'the revealing of it would be her Overthrow'. Although Anne Turner also admitted her own pride and offers herself as an example, the report here suggests that what moved her audience to pity most directly was her vulnerability and helplessness at the hands of her aristocratic patrons.

The *State Trials* accounts of the trial, detention, and executions of Richard Weston and Ann Turner thus suggest that the Somersets' servants sought to escape their fate – and failing that to gain public sympathy – by emphasizing their adherence to accepted conventions of service and the vulnerability of people of their social status in order to place responsibility for their actions onto their masters. The point here is not to suggest that Weston and Turner made these claims cynically or with a performative energy meant to deceive the court and public. Instead, it is to observe that for both, the performance of public roles as servants and the fashioning of dependent, vulnerable identities paradoxically took part in an active struggle whereby subordinate members of society made claims upon those in power and sought to reshape the moral significance of the public transcript of service.

3. *Pamphlets and Poetry*

These types of manipulation did not, of course, occur in a free exchange of political authority, nor should they be understood as a transparent window into the political actions of servants in early modern England.¹¹ In Weston's case specifically, our access to his statements remains filtered through the efforts of the Howards to silence him, and in neither case were these claims effective in gaining mercy from the Chief Justice or the King. The struggle cut both ways and, in the Overbury Affair, it continued even after Turner and Weston had been found guilty and executed. Numerous popular texts reimagined and recreated the public performances of the conspirators in the Overbury trials, and although these texts differ from one another significantly, most alter the statements of Turner and Weston in a way that works to contain the power of their original performances.

Perhaps the most interesting of these texts is a poem entitled *Sir Thomas Overburies Vision* by Richard Niccols (1616), because here alterations that work to contain the original performances stand alongside others that clarify and sharpen the original claims Weston and Turner had made upon their masters. The long narrative poem tells of a dream where Thomas Overbury's spirit approaches the poet, and then takes him to the Tower where the spirits of the four tried conspirators each address him by offering repentant speeches about their fall. The first spirit is Richard Weston, who repents his greed and his willingness to be used in the murder. Having Weston's spirit charge himself

¹¹ For more on the limitations of understanding manipulations of the public transcript of authority, see Wood 2006.

with greed alters his original claim to have been working as a paid servant, implicitly bound to obedience. When Weston's spirit, for example, says

O strong inchantment of bewitching gold!
 For this, the Syre by his owne sonne is sold,
 For this, the unkind brother sells the brother,
 For this, one friend is often by another
 Betray'd to death, (Niccols 1616, 22-23)

the moral lesson applies to a wide range of people, rather than to servants alone. As such, where the original statement had alluded to pay as a reciprocal obligation that bound servants especially to obedience and humility, *Overburies Vision* suggests that taking wages participates in a universally applicable sin. While both statements fashioned Weston as weak, this account presents his weakness as a flaw deserving of punishment, where the original had sought to use it to avoid punishment.

If this alteration of the unique relationship between servants and pay works to contain the moral claim that Weston had made on his masters, however, a second lesson that the poem draws amplifies the same claim. When he addresses Overbury, Weston's spirit refers to himself as an 'Instrument' (20) of Overbury's enemies, and he later speaks to all servants,

Ye hapless instruments of mighty men;
 Ye sponges, whom the hands of greatnes, when
 That they by you have wiped out the spot
 Of that disgrace, which did their honour blot,
 Do squeeze so long, untill that ye be drie,
 And then as needless things doe cast ye by. (23)

The image of Weston as a sponge that blots the blood and dishonor of his powerful masters, until eventually he has been bled dry, rather intriguingly combines the sentiments put forward in his own trial with those uttered by Anne Turner. Much like Turner, Weston's spirit uses a metaphor that suggests he's been pressured into participating in the crime, made subject to his master's will rather than exercising his own. The fact that this sponge has been used to clear the master of dishonor, leaving him clean while the servant gets cast aside, picks up the historical Weston's claim that the 'little Birds', would be caught by the law while the 'great ones' would not. If the poem's concerns about greed transform an image of service into a universal moral lesson, then, its reference to the instrumentality of servants casts a more critical eye on those who used Weston and yet have escaped without punishment.¹²

¹² The references to the instrumentality of servants continue to cast some criticism on the servants themselves. Hamlet, for example, calls Rosencrantz, 'A sponge ... that

The speaker next encounters the spirit of Anne Turner, and again issues related to status and service are placed alongside more personal moral lessons. Niccols imagines Turner first complaining about the role that powerful patrons play in bringing down a client:

Neither thirst of gold, nor hate to thee
 For injuries receiv'd, incensed me
 To seeke thy life; but love, deare love to those
 That were my friends, and thy too deadly foes:
 With them in Court my state I did support,
 Ah, that my state had never known the Court! (27)

Turner's spirit later complains that 'Too much idle ease' (29) helped produce her sinfulness, blaming both the direct influence of her powerful patrons and the leisurely lifestyle that their patronage afforded her. Issues of status thus play a central role in this version of Turner's repentance, and at least initially blame falls most directly on wealth itself and the influence of her friends. At the ending of the speech, she returns to this theme, warning readers, 'Thinke how the friendship, and the auncient love / Of some great Lady long enjoy'd may moove' (36) in order to suggest that powerful patrons might corrupt any person. Likewise, Turner's spirit insists upon a certain passivity in the murder itself:

I went on, and did agree
 To be an actor in thy Tragedie,
 Thou injur'd ghoast; yet was I but a mute,
 And what I did was at an others suite:
 Their plots I saw, and silent kept the same,
 For which my life did suffer death and shame. (37)

In these passages, at least, the narrative of Turner's crimes closely resembles the one she put forward of herself as a woman only marginally involved in a murder predominantly carried out by wealthy courtiers, and primarily motivated by economic pressures that she did not entirely seek. If Niccols imagines that Turner no longer hopes for mercy, he nevertheless incorporates evidence originally in Turner's trial to invite his readers' pity and sympathy.

Other elements of Turner's speech, though, work to offer a more straightforward moral lesson based on lust. After she comments on the role

soaks up the King's countenance, his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the King best service in the end. He keeps them like an ape, an apple in the corner of his jaw, first mouthed to be last swallowed. When he needs what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall be dry again' (*Hamlet*, 4.2.10-18). Here, the criticism falls on both Rosencrantz and the King.

that 'idle ease', played in her downfall, for example, Turner's spirit laments that one of the results of her life at court was the development of a taste for expensive clothing:

First pride aray'd me in her loose attires,
 Fed my fond fancie fat with vaine desires,
 Taught me each fashion, brought me over seas
 Each new devise, the humorous time to please. (31)

Turner claims that extravagant dress eventually promoted lust and sorcery, 'So did my loose desire / ... burst forth and burne me in the flame. / I left my God t'aske counsell of the devill' (34). The lurid accusations made by Coke at Turner's trials are all now placed into Turner's own mouth. The effect conjoins Turner's own narrative of being misled by her wealthier and more powerful mistress with a more personal condemnation of sartorial excess, lust, and devil-worship.

The overall effect of *Overburies Vision* then reshapes the testimony of Weston and Turner with ambiguous results. On the one hand, the poem clarifies and sharpens issues that were raised only implicitly at the trial: the Weston of the poem actively warns servants against masters who use their servants as instruments and 'sponges' where his historical counterpart only implied his patrons should be held responsible for his actions; Niccols's Turner expresses a wish that she had 'never known the Court!' where Turner herself had only said this left her vulnerable. On the other hand, both Weston and Turner admit to wholly personal faults in *Overburies Vision*. Direct condemnation of particularly aristocratic vices gets mixed with more personal warnings and statements of remorse from servants themselves.

Other texts more completely transform the images of Weston and Turner in ways that more or less erase their claims to have been servants dependent on the Countess of Somerset. An anonymous text entitled *The Bloody Downfall* (Anonymous 1615a) appends prayers that Turner and Weston allegedly spoke in prison to a longer treatise denouncing murder and ambition. The primary treatise speaks only in general terms and seems an unfit moral to attach to either Turner or Weston directly, since the author describes ambition as a sin associated with young male courtiers, 'Then begins hee with gifts to winne hearts, by fayned humility to avoyd hatred, by offices of friendship, to bind his equalls, by cunning insinuations to worke his superiors ... being growne to this steppe higher, the authority likes him not, without the still, wherein if in any crosse him, looke for poyson in his cuppe' (Anonymous 1615a, A4r-v). Given the loose connections between the main text and the Overbury case, and the fact that Overbury's, Turner's, and Weston's names all appear on the cover page, the pamphlet was quite likely trying to capitalize on the notoriety of the case by attaching well-known names to a vaguely moralizing text.

Nevertheless, the pamphlet's content reveals two rather interesting patterns. First, Anne Turner's own laments are rewritten as acts of ambition in and of themselves: 'Climbers hye, / Beyond their reach must downe, and so doe I', based on enjoyment of the pleasures of the court, 'I ... dranke in richest plate: / Wore ritche attires, tasted all worldly pleasures, / But ne're had care to hoord up heav'nly pleasure' (D1r). Fashioning Anne Turner as ambitious in her enjoyment of the luxuries of court life effectively completes the ideological reversal that had begun in *Overburies Vision*. Where Niccols had refashioned Turner's own claims to economic vulnerability and coercion into a kind of seduction by and complicity with her powerful patrons, this version of Turner laments her active attempts to rise in social status and blames them for her fall. A broadside ballad entitled *Mistris Turners Farewell to all Women* (Anonymous 1615b) does something similar by having Anne Turner denounce her former pride in her beauty and clothing for her downfall. In both cases, blame falls on the client, here fashioned as an upstart, where earlier iterations of this same lament had placed blame squarely on the patron.

Weston's presence in this pamphlet proves more muted, possibly because he does not fit in with its general sermon denouncing ambition. Where the anonymous author gives Turner both a lengthy poem and a prayer, Weston's presence only comes in the form of a prayer that aligns his crimes with archetypal sinners and asks for grace and mercy, 'With *Caine* I have beene a Murderer, and with *Judas* a Betrayer of the Innocent ... I have been the Divells instrument, and am now become the Scorne of Men ... God of my Soule and Body, have mercy therefore upon mee, Save me, O save me' (Anonymous 1615b, D4v). The only connection between this prayer and other representations of Weston comes in the reference to his being, 'the Divell's instrument', a phrase that had been used by Niccols and captures the general sense of 'littleness', often associated with Weston. In *The Bloody Downfall*, however, the instrumentality of servants holds a more personal moral lesson than it does in the other works. Towards the end of its discussion of ambition, the author says, 'Is it not also great pittie that for want of grace some of a servile (yet an observing condition) should from the golden meane of low estate wait at the elbow of Greatness, and bring fuell to their fire of iniquity' (C1v). Servants are here described as adding to the wickedness of the ambitious, rather than being drawn towards sin by the powerful. The sentiment gets reinforced later, 'O wherefore should simplicity thus blind up their eyes of understanding, to be thus the instruments of such dangerous drifts' (C2r). The ignorance and instrumentality that Weston and Turner had both used to generate sympathy and plead for mercy are here portrayed as actions of servants who 'bring fuel' to ambition and 'blind up their eyes' themselves. In this pamphlet, the very different moral expectations for masters and servants are transformed into variations of a single sin – ambition – in such a way that Turner is fashioned as having shown it, while Weston is implicitly held responsible for aiding its wickedness.

This selective editing of Anne Turner and Richard Weston's testimony in popular print provides another example of the struggle for control of the public transcript of service. Here, the struggle focuses on the role that social hierarchy plays in assigning moral accountability to masters and servants, and paradoxically the servants themselves emphasize their status as obedient, weak, and economically dependent, while later poems and pamphlets respond by emphasizing their individual moral agency and universal subjectivity. This dynamic obviously counteracts a notion that discourses of social hierarchy always and necessarily worked to benefit a hegemonic social elite. In their trial and scaffold testimony, Weston and Turner had actively participated in shaping the culture of service in the hopes of displacing blame primarily onto the Countess of Somerset. While these efforts did not manage to gain them pardons and save their lives, a text like *Overburies Vision* (Niccols 1616) demonstrates that they did have a subtle shaping force on the culture, capable of denouncing masters that treat servants as instruments and denouncing wealth itself as having a corrupting moral influence. Popular depictions of Weston and Turner could, however, also work to contain their efforts to shape the public transcript of service. *Overburies Vision* muddies the moral force of their original testimony by placing it alongside more individual, universal moral lessons. *The Bloody Downfall* (Anonymous 1615a) also offers universal moral lessons, and on top of this implies that servants contribute to their masters' wickedness by 'blinding themselves' and 'bringing fuel to their fire of iniquity' through the act of service itself. Rather than operating as a static, hegemonic discourse, then, the ideological understanding of service took shape in the Overbury Affair as a dialogue, written and rewritten by different people – including servants themselves – who sought to privilege different elements within the public transcript of service depending on their situational and social interests.

4. The Changeling

Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's *The Changeling*, in its topical allusions to an imaginary recreation of the Overbury murder, participates in this same struggle, but in a way that helps to clarify its broader political and social significance and the role servants played in shaping it. Specifically, the play does this by separating the image that Richard Weston and Anne Turner put forward – of servants as unknowing and powerless participants in the murder – from an image of servants capable of posturing and playing this same role in order to exert a form of moral authority and control over their masters. Within the world imagined by the play, servants who are treated as instruments of their masters pose little threat to the social order, and are generally depicted with sympathy. The real threat to the social order comes from the manipulation of the servant's role in a way that suits the interest of the servant himself, rather than any particular master. Taken as a whole, the play's

depiction of service suggests that the Overbury trials and their subsequent rewritings enacted a struggle, not over the ideological understanding of service itself, but instead over the possibility that servants might use performance to control the public's feelings about and understanding of the public transcript of service.

The play makes this distinction by embodying a naive, instrumental form of service and a more deliberately performative form of service in two distinct characters. The most pliable servant in the play is Beatrice-Joanna's lady-in-waiting Diaphanta, also the character who makes the allusion to Frances Howard's virginity test, 'She will not search me, will she, / Like the forewoman of a female jury?' (4.2.101-102). In addition to inviting this direct comparison between Beatrice-Joanna and the Countess of Somerset, Diaphanta's role in the play also draws on several other images that appeared both in the Overbury trials and the printed manuals on service. When undergoing the chastity test, for example, Beatrice-Joanna tells Diaphanta to ingest the contents of 'Glass M', without telling her the contents of the glass, recalling the moments when Turner and Weston claimed to have been given vials for Overbury without knowing they contained poison. Although Beatrice-Joanna assures Diaphanta the contents of 'Glass M' are safe by drinking them, Diaphanta pointedly says, 'I will not question what 'tis, but take it' (4.2.105), obeying her mistress without hesitation. While the moment stops short of making a direct allusion to the trial, it nevertheless repeats an association of service with uncomplicated loyalty and credulity. Diaphanta's reaction to the virginity test serves a similar function. Her gaping, sneezing, and giddy laughing all provide the model that Beatrice-Joanna will later imitate to convince Alsemero of her virginity, but this fact is never shared with the lady-in-waiting. Diaphanta even obeys her mistress's order following the bed trick, 'Hie you to your chamber; / Your reward follows you' (5.1.79-80) only to meet with De Flores, who shoots her and sets her room on fire to cover up the murder. In more or less every sense, Diaphanta proves the unwitting instrument that the Overbury conspirators had styled themselves – unquestioningly handling mysterious liquids, carrying out commands without realizing their purpose, and meekly obeying all orders.

Another, broader association between Diaphanta and traditional depictions of service is her association with monetary reward. Before using Diaphanta in the chastity test, Beatrice-Joanna gets her to agree to take her place in bed by pretending to be afraid of losing her virginity, and offering a thousand ducats to any woman willing to take her place on her wedding night. Although Diaphanta finds the offer strange, she ultimately volunteers, saying:

I do not know how the world goes abroad
 For faith or honesty; there's both required in this.
 Madam, what say you to me, and stray no further?
 I've a good mind, in troth, to earn your money. (4.1.90-93)

Diaphanta's honesty and faith – both supported by her place in Beatrice-Joanna's household, in opposition to those who 'go abroad' – provide the preconditions for the 'good mind' that she has for earning a wage. Far from being at odds with one another, loyalty, service, and a desire for money mutually reinforce one another. The play makes this same connection when Pedro provides the expenses with which to care for Antonio in the madhouse. The servant Lolio tells him: 'An officer in this place may deserve something; the trouble will pass through my hands', and Pedro responds: 'Tis fit something should come to your hands then, sir', and gives him money (1.2.93-95). Service and reward prove indelibly linked in the political imaginary and language of the play; it even shows up in the promises of the nobleman Jasperino, who takes an elicited love letter to Alsemero saying, 'The joy I shall return rewards my service' (2.1.5). Although he does not expect monetary payment, the variation maintains an assumed connection between service and some sort of reward. Much as we saw in the testimony of Weston and Turner, reward provides a key signifier for the loyalty and actions of service.

My point is not that Diaphanta should be understood as an ideal servant, but rather that her model of service proves unthreatening to the social order established within the play. There's a certain naiveté to Diaphanta's role in both the virginity test and the bed trick born out of her willingness to obey her mistress without question and her desire for reward. Those judgments that the play makes of Diaphanta focus on her sexual appetites, rather than her status as a servant. When she promises to help Beatrice-Joanna, Diaphanta uses a *double entendre* that implies she desires Alsemero, 'I shall carry't well, / Because I love the burden' (4.1.122-123) and the ending of the play suggests that she has been punished appropriately for her actions.¹³ While Diaphanta would not have acted on these desires had she not been unquestioning in her obedience, the play offers no moral statement that chides servants for excessive credulity in the manner of *The Bloody Downfall*. The values of service emphasized by Weston and Turner at their trials thus appear in *The Changeling* without the obvious, didactic embellishments seen elsewhere; at best, men like Don Pedro and Jasperino actively support them, while at worst they lead Diaphanta to become an unwitting accomplice of her mistress, shamed for lust but not her willingness to serve.

¹³ Beatrice-Joanna refers to her as a 'False bride' (5.3.161), and Alsemero says: 'I, a supposed husband, changed embraces / With wantonness, but that was paid before' (5.3.200-201) in his summation of the play. Michelle Dowd argues that Diaphanta is characterized as 'Unreliable and sexually voracious' (2011, 140) and participates in a pattern that the theater constructed of lusty servants: 'These narratives serve a cautionary function, warning audiences about the uncertainties and instabilities that these female workers potentially bring to English homes' (2011, 142).

The harmlessness of Diaphanta proves particularly striking when compared to the actions of De Flores, her more threatening counterpart. De Flores actively rejects virtually every characteristic of traditional service that Diaphanta embodies. Where Diaphanta seems either misled or willfully ignorant of Beatrice-Joanna's uses of her, De Flores proves fully aware of the fact that Beatrice-Joanna lies to him when asking him to kill Piracquo, and yet he plays along in the hopes of manipulating her later. When she insists that his appearance has improved, for example, he turns to the audience and says, 'Not I; / 'Tis the same physonomy, to a hair and pimple, / Which she called scurvy an hour ago' (2.2.75-77), and when she repeats the same compliments again, he says, 'I was blest / To light upon this minute; I'll make use on't' (2.2.90-91). From the first, De Flores humors her flattery in the hopes of gaining advantage over her, and his promises of service are littered with a sexual innuendo that denotes this. When she comments on how, 'Hardness becomes the visage of a man well; / It argues service', he responds, 'I would but wish the honour of a service / So happy as that mounts to' (2.2.92-93, 96-97). When she promises a reward following the completion of the murder, 'Thy reward shall be precious', he responds, 'That I have thought on; / I have assured myself of that beforehand, / And know it will be precious; the thought ravishes' (2.2.130-132). De Flores not only proves aware of and anticipates the transgressions Beatrice-Joanna hopes to enlist him in, he welcomes them in order to eventually 'use', 'mount', and 'ravish' her.

After committing the murder, De Flores also makes a point of rejecting monetary reward. When Beatrice-Joanna offers him three thousand florins, he scorns her,

Do you place me in the rank of verminous fellows,
To destroy things for wages? Offer gold?
The life blood of a man! Is anything
Valued too precious for my recompense? (3.4.64-67)

De Flores claims that no sum of money can properly pay him for taking a man's life, and refuses to join the rank of 'verminous fellows', who would commit sin for salary. When he's offered double the wage, he responds: 'You take a course / To double my vexation' (3.4.73-74). Where all of the other servants in the play – not to mention both of the servants in the Overbury trials – had understood wages as a central aspect of their social role, De Flores explicitly refuses payment in the wake of carrying out his mistress's commands.

Many critics have seized upon these rejections in order to argue that De Flores operates as a fearful image of either upward mobility or social inversion. Michael Neill, for example, has argued that in refusing pay De Flores rewrites himself in a role of courtly lover, 'His response is charged with the kind of outrage that results when someone deliberately violates the rules of a well-established social ritual ... "Salary", "wages", "hire": to soil oneself with such

considerations is to be reduced from the stately rank of gentleman to the rank of a menial, some louse-ridden peasant or mercenary tradesman' (2005, 130). In this reading, De Flores lays claim to a role as a chivalric lover, ennobled by the elimination of his rival and owed possession of Beatrice-Joanna's love as a result. Mark Thornton Burnett offers a similar reading of De Flores as a servant, 'Possessed of an agency that infects the collective ... he is constructed as posing a threat to the coherence and integrity of the community' (2006, 299). Pointing to a warning that Thomas Fosset issues to servants – 'When a servant raigneth, that is despiseth his maisters government, and followeth his own will, and his owne wayes, it is a thing so evill, and so disorderly, that it maketh the earth to be mooved, the whole house, yea sometimes the whole towne, or city to be disquieted' (Fosset 1613, A4r) – Burnett reads De Flores as an image of a 'world turned upside down', where the lowly dictate terms to their social superiors. In both readings, De Flores proves threatening because he hopes to place himself at the top of the social hierarchy; for Neill, he fashions himself as a traditional member of the nobility, while for Burnett he embodies a threatening image of social inversion where servants rule.

While anxiety about servants obviously surrounds De Flores and proves essential to the work performed by the play, I would argue that understanding him primarily as an upstart, looking to rule or topple the social order, overlooks a key aspect of the threat he poses. While De Flores does, indeed, reject his role as a paid, deferential servant in an effort to establish mastery over Beatrice-Joanna, he does this only after performing service in a manner fully compatible with the ideals put forward in the handbooks and in the testimony of Richard Weston and Anne Turner. When Beatrice-Joanna informs him of her desire to end her engagement, De Flores drops to his knees and begs to be employed: 'Put it not from me; / It's a service that I kneel for to you' (2.2.116-117). When she then warns him of the bloody nature of the service, he insists that this only increases his desire:

If you knew
 How sweet it were to me to be employed
 In any act of yours, you would say then
 I failed and used not reverence enough
 When I receive the charge on't. (4.2.120-124)

For the audience, this speech carries a complex double meaning. De Flores has already stated a belief that Beatrice-Joanna's desire to break her engagement will eventually lead her into an insatiable desire for all men:

For if a woman
 Fly from one point, from him she makes a husband,
 She spreads and mounts them like arithmetic –
 One, ten, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand. (2.2.60-63)

De Flores begs to serve Beatrice-Joanna, then, explicitly in the hopes of bringing this insatiable desire about, meaning that he does indeed 'fail' as a servant because he uses 'not reverence enough'. She, however, does not hear the earlier speech and assumes that he desires money: 'Belike his wants are greedy / ... Possible his need / Is strong upon him' (2.2.125-127). De Flores's language, importantly, allows for this interpretation, since it can easily be understood as a strong and loyal desire for employment from his mistress. He also conspicuously takes Beatrice-Joanna's payment prior to the murder (2.2.127). If De Flores reveals to the audience here a desire to ravish Beatrice-Joanna that subverts social hierarchy and decorum, the realization of this depends upon his successfully performing the very desire for employment and reward expected of someone from his social station. The very servility that De Flores will later reject, he first performs masterfully.¹⁴

De Flores continues to perform the role of an obedient, deferential servant throughout the remainder of the play. Where a man usurping the role of aristocratic lover might challenge Piracquo to a duel and overpower

¹⁴ 'Eye-service' provides a term that often approximates this type of performance in both early modern service manuals and literary criticism. Michael Neill refers to this term in order to describe Iago's celebration of servants that 'Keep their hearts attending on themselves, / And throwing but shows of service on their lords, / Do well thrive by them' (2004, 222). Elizabeth Rivlin similarly uses this term in reference to anxieties about service and performance: 'The epistemological issue the didactic literature raises is how masters can distinguish between a servant who fully inhabits his socially subordinate role and a servant who disguises an insubordinate will behind a duplicitous, convincing performance of service', and then pointing to an oft-quoted passage from St. Paul: 'Servants, be obedient unto them that are *your* masters, according to the flesh, with feare and trembling in singleness of your hearts as unto Christ, / Not with service to the eye, as men pleasers, but as the servant of Christ, doing the wil of God from the heart' (2012, 14). Some manuals use 'eye-service' in this way, referring to those who seek to rule the household in the absence of the master. Richard Brathwaite, for example, charges masters: 'If you meet with such a *Servant*, that saith in his heart, *My master doth deferre his comming; and shall begin to smite the servants and maidens, and to eat, and drinke, and be drunken;* you are not to use remisnesse to such a *Servant*, but to cut him off, lest you give example unto others' and later describes, 'an *evill servant*' as one 'Whose service is only to the eye, and not for conscience sake, is a scatterer of his substance whom he serveth, aiming only at his owne private profit' (1630, 160). In other cases, however, writers use 'eye-service' more generally. Gouge, for example, says: 'The world is full of such eye-serving servants, who while their masters are present, will be as Bees: but if he be away, then either idling at home, or gadding abroad, or nothing but wrangling, and eating, and drinking with the drunken' (1622, 617) referring to 'eye-service' as a way to conceal laziness and other forms of failing to serve honestly from the master. Thomas Fosset similarly says: 'Servants, for the most part, are so bad and carelesse, and such as doe not their worke for love and for conscience sake as they ought to doe, but onely for feare and fashion-sake, with service to the eye as men-pleasers' (1613, 44), making a distinction between honest servants good at their job and shirkers. Given the ambiguity of the term during the early modern period, I've chosen to relegate a discussion of it to the notes. For further discussion of 'eye-service' see Schalkwyk 2008, 14.

him, De Flores agrees to take him on a tour of the castle – saying, ‘I am your servant sir’ (2.2.162) – and then stabs him in the back. When Tomazo de Piracquo, Alonzo’s brother, suspects foul play and looks for his brother’s murderer, he turns to De Flores for help, calling him, ‘Honest De Flores! ... / Come hither, kind and true one; I remember / My brother loved thee too well’ (4.2.37-43). Although De Flores admits in an aside that talking to Tomazo leaves him feeling guilty, ‘I smell his brother’s blood when I come near him’ (4.2.41), he conceals this entirely; Tomazo continues to insist on De Flores’s honesty even after he’s walked off stage, ‘That De Flores has a wondrous honest heart; / He’ll bring [the murder] out in time, I’m assured on’t’ (4.2.57-58). De Flores even manages to maintain an appropriate public facade later in the play when Tomazo strikes him in a fit of unfocused anger, responding to the blow, ‘I will not question this. I know you’re noble; / I take my injury with thanks given, sir, / Like a wise lawyer, and as a favour’ (5.2.34-36).¹⁵ While De Flores’s sexual usurpation of Beatrice-Joanna clearly claims a form of authority over her father, her suitors and her body, he consistently hides this from them beneath an act of respect for their superior status. Rather than establishing a fear of an upstart or the potential for hierarchy to be inverted, these scenes raise the fear that privileges as they exist, and as the powerful experience them, are capable of being rewritten by the lower sorts without their even having to alter their assigned behaviors or directly challenge figures of authority.

Viewed in this way, *The Changeling* helps to explain the constant rewritings and erasures in the various texts about Richard Weston and Anne Turner in the wake of the Overbury Affair. Rather than struggling to erase or counteract the narrative put forward by Weston and Turner, these texts work to contain the potentially disruptive power that servants could wield by selectively performing their assigned roles within the public transcript of service. By claiming that their actions were undertaken in a submissive ignorance and out of a need for monetary reward, Weston and Turner fashioned themselves as loyal servants to their social superiors, and indeed their statements survived in manuscript accounts and in *Sir Thomas Overburies Vision*. Nevertheless, these performances explicitly sought to make Weston and Turner appear sympathetic and deserving of mercy, while implicitly deflecting blame for the murder onto the Countess of Somerset and her husband. Left unchecked the performances of Weston and Turner might have easily created a feeling that the Overbury trials were indeed ‘A

¹⁵ Tomazo, at this point, has no idea that De Flores has murdered his brother; after striking him, Tomazo ironically states, ‘All league with mankind I renounce for ever, / Till I find this murderer; not so much / As common courtesy but I’ll lock up. / For in the state of ignorance I live in, / A brother may salute his brother’s murderer, / And wish good speed to th’ villain in a greeting’ (5.2.43-48). Tomazo, of course, has done this earlier in the play. He has also struck his brother’s murderer, and then shown regret for doing so afterwards.

Net to catch the little Birds, and let the great ones go'. By adding statements of remorse and personal repentance – and in some cases deleting the original sentiments – popular texts like *Overburies Vision*, *The Bloody Downfall* and others worked to contain the performative power of the original testimony and the feelings of sympathy, mercy, and injustice that it sought to produce.

In *The Changeling*, the ideological and performative aspects of the testimony of Weston and Turner are projected onto Diaphanta and De Flores respectively. The former character comes closer to the model of a true servant, proving malleable and motivated by the promises of monetary gain. Ultimately, Diaphanta operates as an instrument of her mistress's crimes, rather than a full participant in them. De Flores, on the other hand, rejects signifiers of service in private even as he masters them in performance. This ability to change, in Alsemero's words, 'Servant obedience / To a master sin' (5.3.198-199), not only allows him to anticipate the full implications of his mistress's flattery and offers of reward, but it also helps him leverage his service into a form of blackmail and hidden control over her body. The play thus remakes the ideological content of the Weston and Turner testimony harmless, while marking the performative mastery of service as threatening.

In an ambiguous and exaggerated way, then, *The Changeling* participates in the containment of servants' efforts to control and shape the public transcript of service. Middleton and Rowley's play draws upon the performative efforts of Weston, Turner, and many other members of the lower strata of early modern society, and reimagines them as scheming, murderous, and noxious. De Flores importantly knows that killing Alonzo de Piracquo is degrading and the murder haunts him throughout the play. When Beatrice-Joanna offers him reward for the murder, he seems offended partly by the idea that money can repay the stain on his conscience. Offered Piracquo's diamond, he responds: 'Twill hardly buy a capcase for one's conscience' (3.4.44). Far from unintentionally degrading himself, though, De Flores has out sought guilt as the means through which to manipulate Beatrice-Joanna. When she responds to his demand that she reward his service with her virginity by pointing to his low birth, De Flores responds: 'Tush, fly not to your birth, but settle you / In what the act has made you; you're no more now. / You must forget your parentage to me' (3.4.134-136). De Flores insists that she has lost nobility 'to me' as a result of their shared crime, a meaning that he reinforces by responding to her horrified: 'With thee foul villain?', by seemingly accepting the title, provided that she does too: 'Yes, my fair murd'ress' (3.4.140-141). The point here is not to overthrow the social order, but to so thoroughly debase both himself and Beatrice-Joanna to the point that she will have trouble refusing him, a fact made clear when he threatens her: 'If I enjoy thee not, thou ne'er enjoy'st. / I'll blast the hopes and joys of marriage. / I'll confess all; my life I rate at nothing' (3.4.147-149). Only by reducing them both to 'nothing' in the eyes of traditional authority can he overcome her revulsion and achieve his desire.

This nihilistic quality of De Flores's service and demand for reward reduces servants' efforts to shape the public transcript to an insatiable, wholly physical, self-destructive lust. Numerous feminist critics have discussed the fact that De Flores enacts early modern society's most misogynistic beliefs about women's sexual desires and rape, and this strikes me as correct.¹⁶ For my purposes here, though, what seems most significant is that De Flores's manipulations of 'honesty' and service seem aimed at tainting and poisoning the social order rather than seeking to overturn or rule it. De Flores continues to perform servitude fully after ravishing Beatrice-Joanna, and even submits reluctantly to payment when she insists to Alsemero and Vermandero that his 'heroism' in putting out the fire in Diaphanta's room deserves it: 'Rewarded? Precious, here's a trick beyond me! / I see in all bouts, both of sport and wit, / Always a woman strives for the last hit' (5.1.125-127). In De Flores, performative efforts to shape the public transcript appear as a force with no desire to rule, no desire for wealth, and only a temporary desire to assert one's will: as a result, he cannot be bargained with, nor can he be recognized until he has already poisoned the social fabric. In imagining De Flores in this way, and then killing him, the play fashions a scapegoat that works to expunge the threat posed by subordinate members of society who sought to performatively shape the public transcript of early modern service.¹⁷

The fact that *The Changeling* works to demonize and contain servants' efforts at shaping the public transcript of service should not, however, be understood as an argument that the types of performance undertaken by Weston and Turner were fully contained within the broader political landscape of early modern England. In fact, I would suggest quite the opposite. A character like De Flores provides evidence that these performances captured public attention and were imagined as threatening to established authority. While Weston and Turner did not gain pardons as a result of their testimony, they did muster significant public sympathy, and eventually this may have promoted the palpable anger at the Countess and Earl of Somerset – who were eventually pardoned – and through them at the crown itself. As Alastair Bellany has noted, manuscript accounts suggest that the London crowd did not wholly submit to the obvious injustices in the verdicts handed down in this case. A newsletter discussing the pardon of the Somersets records that, 'Everybody is of the opinion they shall both live, howsoever they wish in their hearts' (Bellany 2002, 244). Another newsletter reports that at the same time, when 'A coach carrying the queen, two ladies, and a lord – but rumoured to contain the countess of Somerset and her mother – drove

¹⁶ See especially Malcolmson (1990), Burks (1995) and Dolan (2011).

¹⁷ On De Flores as a kind of poison that needs to be thrown away, see Neill (1991, especially 115-117).

into London, the people “flocked together and followed the coach in great numbers, railing and reviling ... putting all in fear” (Bellany 2002, 244). The penitent speeches of Anne Turner, and the feeling that Richard Weston had put forward that the Overbury case would catch the ‘little Birds, but let the great ones go’, provide variations on these feelings of dissatisfaction and anger at the crown’s treatment of the lower sorts. All of these feelings are the result of expressions of servants’ political agency and action. If, in De Flores, we see a caricatured and exaggerated representation of servants as a force of contagion and anxiety, the existence of this representation provides evidence of an on-going struggle taking place within early modern political society which, at certain moments, gave members of the nobility reasons to be afraid even as – or perhaps because – people sought to further their own interests by performing the role of servant.

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Regulating Service

‘Humblewise’: Deference and Complaint in the Court of Requests

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Abstract

When servants, laborers, and apprentices sued their masters for back wages or mistreatment in the Court of Requests they took advantage of the court’s doctrine of equity. Since these plaintiffs often lacked the strict written proofs required by common law, or were bound by unfair written contracts, they badly needed an equitable jurisdiction where fairness, extenuating circumstances, and broad social mores could overrule the letter of the law. The formal tropes of their Complaints negotiate the tension between these two conceptions of justice and reveal how that tension relates to early seventeenth century economic culture, where customary ideas about patronage and hierarchical obligations coexisted with emerging notions of self-interest and contractual equality. In appealing to the court with older but still vibrant discourses of social justice and mutual obligation, plaintiffs modulated their Complaints with expressions of deference and helplessness. Their pleadings therefore take the sophisticated rhetorical form of self-assertion articulated as abject submission. The documents are highly mediated by lawyers and institutional constraints, but nevertheless reveal subordinates tactically using expressions of weakness to elicit pathos and use the ideology of paternalism against their masters.

Keywords: Court of Requests, Employment, Equity, Paternalism, Service

When Thomas Dekker attempted to describe bear and bullbaiting in a 1609 plague pamphlet, he thought first of Hell itself, then the grim spectacle of unfair legal wrangling: ‘for the *Beares*, or the *Buls* fighting with the dogs was a lively representation (me thought) of poore men going to lawe with the rich and mightie’. The gruesome defeats of the crushed and mauled dogs (which he equates with the overmatched poor men) motivate this simile, but the comparison cannot avoid linking the discourse of poor litigants with the din of curs ‘whining and barking at their strong Adversaries, when they durst not, or could not bite them’ (1963, 98). Thus, even Dekker’s sympathetic portrait associates underdog plaintiffs with rhetorical, as well as financial, poverty. While historians have found that poor men and women did in fact have some bite in the early modern legal system, the records of the Court of



Requests provide an opportunity to ascertain how (with the help of lawyers and clerks) lower-status individuals could submit complex and tactically formidable legal pleadings.

The Court of Requests, designed for anyone unable to afford common law suits, became a popular venue for servants, laborers, and apprentices to sue unjust masters. The court was relatively inexpensive, ‘a poor man’s Chancery’ (Seaver 1989, 51), but its most salient feature may have been its status as a court of *equity*, which meant that ‘principles of natural justice, common sense, and common fairness’ could ameliorate or override the rigidities of common law (Elton 1982, 152).¹ This article attends to the formal qualities of Bills of Complaint (the long documents in which plaintiffs outlined their grievances and initiated a case) submitted by social inferiors, since these narratives often harness broader attitudes surrounding service, status, and justice while telling the litigant’s specific story in some detail. I end with an extended look at one instructive lawsuit to showcase these attitudes at work beyond the initial Complaint, in the defendant’s Answer and several witness depositions. The cases under study here all occurred between 1603 and 1625, and generally involve people in the greater London area. They primarily (but not exclusively) express relationships of service and mastery, though distinctions between service, apprenticeship, and employment – as well as degrees of status – are often blurry or contested. In fact, the institutional pressures imposed by the court make these records unreliable guides to the exact truth of the litigants or their conflicts, but they do reveal cultural expectations surrounding master/subordinate conduct, and they let us hear some specialized discourses employed when those expectations were violated. Overall, the documents indicate that in this court a plaintiff made a stronger case by emphasizing her or his condition as a dependent, not a contracting equal.²

¹ Requests ‘could determine suits not on the basis of a strict reading of the law, but rather on the basis of the principle of equity or fairness’ (Seaver 1989, 51). Seaver’s article describes a single conflict between a Bristol notary and an apprentice who defied him. For a history of the court, see G.R. Elton’s *The Tudor Constitution* (1982, 187-199). Tim Stretton’s *Women Waging Law in Elizabethan England* describes the origins of the court and its business under Elizabeth (1998, 7-9, 70-100).

² Despite the intention that this court serve the poor, it was deluged with more conventional lawsuits. Complaints directed from plaintiffs against defendants of higher status represent only a minority of the court’s business (at the end of Elizabeth’s reign, only 17% of cases [Stretton 1998, 94]). For this reason, nothing in this article should be taken as an attempt to describe the overall archives of the court, which are quite diverse. Some cases may, in reality, certainly have involved conflicts between individuals actually quite proximate in social rank, or closer to business partners than masters and servants. In other cases, social status can be complicated by life-cycle mobility, as in cases when fathers sued on behalf of their apprentice sons. In such cases plaintiffs may be partially ventriloquizing the doctrines of paternalism to gain a better footing in the court.

I focus on four broad patterns in the Complaints: first, they tend to describe economic relationships reliant on mutual trust. Second, they carefully signal submission to both the court and established social hierarchies, including descriptions of the plaintiffs' deference to their masters. Third, they foreground the plaintiffs' own abjection and weakness, but such self-abasement prods the court to act on their behalf. Finally, the trials often set an informal sphere of verbal agreements and traditional social codes articulated by the plaintiffs against a formal sphere of written contracts and impersonal financial relationships preferred by their masters. This opposition almost always dovetails with the plaintiffs' assertions that, because they either lack written proof or are burdened by unfair contracts, they will not receive justice through common law.³ The Complaints carefully leverage a 'public transcript' of fair and proper master-servant conduct, what James C. Scott describes as a set of cultural rules for interactions between elites and subordinates that, while negotiable, remains largely a product of the powerful (as opposed to the 'hidden transcript' of covert plebian dissent). This court's archive may usefully test Scott's argument that 'any ideology which makes a claim to hegemony must, in effect, make promises to subordinate groups' (1990, 77). What appears to be false consciousness may instead represent tactical victories where subordinates 'call upon the elite to take its own rhetoric seriously' (106).⁴ Subordinates suing in the Court of Requests often managed to mount effective critiques of their superiors in part *by* signaling their adherence to dominant values.

³ Common law did privilege bonds, bills, and sealed obligations and technically refused to hear pleas without written evidence. In practice, however, the actions of many courts could be broader and more complex, especially given the rise of pleas of *assumpsit*, described by Craig Muldrew as a way of litigating informal agreements as trespass on the case (1998, 204-209). But Lamar M. Hill explains that, for many, against 'the harsh inflexibility of the law ... equity remained the only avenue of redress'. Hill further reminds us that 'Since the working poor had neither desks, offices, strongboxes, nor sturdy chests, indentures, bonds, and sureties were frequently lost, destroyed or stolen. Fraud was a further risk' (2007, 139), and these are precisely the problems addressed in the suits examined here. Some suits in Requests were also intended to override prior suits in different venues.

⁴ Scott may underestimate hegemony and exaggerate the agency of marginalized populations, but his work remains useful for many contexts. One of his most sophisticated arguments seeks to establish how elites themselves depend on performances of the public transcript and may be manipulated by it: 'the masks domination wears are, under certain conditions, also traps' (1990, 55, see 49-50). The best account of Scott's work for early modern studies remains Braddick and Walter's introduction to their anthology *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society* (2001, especially 5-11). For a thoughtful critique of Scott, see Andy Wood's work, (especially 2002, 18-23 and 2006b, 41-46). Scott, it should be noted, underestimates and sometimes even caricatures other schools of thought on ideology. The Marxist tradition, for example, has long sought to emphasize how ideology 'can never be purely *instrumental*' since 'a class that *uses* an ideology is its captive too' (Althusser 1990, 234-235).

The conflicts at issue often involved people left vulnerable by fluid and informal arrangements. For example, Thomas Walklate agreed to serve John Field ‘for soe longe tyme as they should agree or like well one of another’, and he gave over a security deposit for his ‘Just and honest Carriage’. Walklate ‘dulie and trulie’ worked as a tapster in Field’s Westminster ‘victuallinge howse’, but Field cashiered him ‘without anie Just cause’ and kept the money. Because their agreement was unwritten, Walklate correctly told the court that he had no recourse to common law, and bemoaned ‘gyveinge overmuch Creditte’ to an unworthy master (REQ2.310.11).⁵ Other plaintiffs likewise regretted entering into agreements for service, labor, or business ‘relyeing ... upon the faire speaches’ of people who promised to ‘deale liberally’ with them (REQ2.403.74).⁶ Conversely, some plaintiffs found that unfair written contracts gave their superiors undue power over them, but on the whole the documents indicate that participation in a fluid ‘economy of makeshifts and expedients’ often meant relying only on glib spoken promises that could not easily be enforced (Wrightson 2000, 57).⁷ Requests documents therefore give glimpses of the individuals ‘Toiling in the largely unregulated and overcrowded labor sector that existed beyond the protected confines of the guilds’, a sector usually less visible in the historical record (Hubbard 2012, 4).

However, it would be a mistake to consider the informal economy that appears in these records to be an *unregulated* economy. Plaintiffs describe

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all quotations come from the Bill of Complaint (frequently the only document in a case file). I have preserved original spellings, but silently modernized *i/j*, *u/v*, and expanded common scribal contractions.

⁶ This interesting Complaint represents the different expectations that could arise in bargaining and the dangers of oral agreements. This plaintiff told the court he had already achieved independent status, but (after the defendant ‘did very earnestly intreate’ him) he broke up his house, sold his wares and belongings ‘at under rates’, and moved into the defendant’s glasshouse near Blackfriars. He worked hard to fix up the glasshouse furnace so he could be a factor in charge of sending glasswares to the defendant’s warehouse, but he was promised opportunities to profit with any ‘surplusage’. He thus ‘wholly betooke and imployed himself and all his tyme in the busines of [the defendant]’, trusting in the ‘performeance of his promises and protestations’. And ‘to give color to those his promises’ the defendant allegedly even offered to show him his account books to prove he had a lucrative business and was a generous man. Their ‘bargaine and agreement’ was never set down, and so (it was alleged) the defendant ‘purposely and in Cuning’ waited until the glasshouse was fully functional, then ‘Comaunded him to depart from the same and to provide for himself ells where and so turned out’ the plaintiff. Lacking written evidence, he lost much ‘attendaunce paines & travell’ thereby. Fitting a trend I will later describe, this plaintiff claimed that the defendant’s superior status initially cowed him (he ‘did quietly depart and goe his waye’), but further financial difficulties moved him to sue. He knew his antagonists’ behavior went ‘contrary to all right reason and equetic’ (REQ2.403.74).

⁷ On the ‘economy of makeshifts’, Steve Hindle’s *On the Parish?* describes how a large and mobile pool of surplus labor survived through piecemeal work, short term employment, and highly diversified economic activities (2004, 17-26).

a world structured by emphatic verbal assurances, mutual obligations, long familiarity, custom, fairness, and trust. One man who lived in Ralph Keyes' house had scraped together five pounds for old age 'by his hard labour', but since he 'repos[ed] greate trust and confidence in the sayd Keyes and wyffe that they would have dealt well with him' he left his money in their hands. They 'faythfully promised ... in private betweene themselves' to keep the money safe and give it to him 'whensoever he should demand the same', but Keyes and his wife allegedly broke their promise (REQ2.390.62). And when George Somers' master began 'as he then said takeing Likeinge' to him, they discussed his transition from service to apprenticeship but the young man did not insist on strictly detailed terms: 'suspecting noe fraude nor guile to be in [his master] but hoping for good & just dealings' from the man who 'did then professe great love & affeccon', Somers operated 'uppon this trust' and came to regret it. His master blocked him from setting up for himself, Somers claimed, on the grounds that he had not completed an apprenticeship (REQ2.308.7). Plaintiffs characterize the breaking of verbal agreements as cutting betrayals, and often speak of masters or employers 'maliciously intended ... carying nether for breaking covenants nor anything else' but their own gain (REQ2.404.67).

Unscrupulous masters could also use their social position to pressure or mistreat dependents. The court would often hear about excessive workloads, like the extra tasks given to one plaintiff, 'which he did not refuse to doe for that he knew he was servant to the said Sir Thomas'. This powerful master (a Justice of Peace in Essex) allegedly then dismissed the servant (a clerk and tutor from London) but detained his wages and belongings, leaving him 'altogether remedlesse ... yf he be not ayded and releved' by the court (REQ2.390.49). Other plaintiffs complained of outright cruelty, but most said they tried hard to fulfill their callings: one 'performed unto his said Master faithfull and painefull service by day and night' despite 'harde, cruell, and ungodly usage', including 'unmercifull, and unmeasurable beating' (REQ2.416.110).⁸

These individuals' stories were told in a relatively bleak economic climate. Keith Wrightson's *Earthly Necessities* describes how a century of population growth, inflation, and expropriation caused real wages to decline and strengthened the bargaining hand of employers (2000, 145-148).⁹ Craig

⁸ Such hard usage is a frequent enough complaint, but this master allegedly included some unique spiritual torment 'by debarring [the plaintiff] for repairing to the Church ... halfe a yere together' though the young man 'much desired the same'. In another form of abuse, one Complaint from the 1590s alleges that a master forced his apprentice to falsely confess that he had 'carnall knowledge & copulacion' with a maidservant (REQ2.283.38).

⁹ Although Wrightson notes that this trend was less severe in London, the relative vibrancy of the London economy may have been counterbalanced by the disadvantages thousands of migrants encountered starting at the bottom of an unfamiliar and still highly structured economic environment.

Muldrew's account of macroeconomic change matches Wrightson's and confirms the consensus view that social polarization and economic instability grew over the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as the labor market became more competitive (1998, 15-17). These changes naturally affected the culture of service. Alexandra Shepard explains that 'the system of transitional, life-cycle service ... was beginning to splinter by the late sixteenth century. Increasing numbers of men were becoming primarily and permanently dependent on wage labour ... employment was scarce, irregular, and not particularly fruitful' (2003, 209). Long term positions within a single household were often harder to find in Jacobean England.¹⁰ But Shepard has elsewhere helped to show that distinctions between wage work and service were not absolute:

That wage earning of any kind could be represented as a form of servitude and an insubstantial means of living meant that a distinction between labour and service went readily unheeded ... In this conceptual framework, providing work was constructed as a form of patronage benefiting the labourer rather than the employer. (2008, 85)

This sense of overlapping roles – servant and laborer, patron and employer – helps explain the Requests documents, since the plaintiffs (whatever their status) sought to activate the ideology of patronage that Shepard mentions and turn it to their own ends by reminding the court that an ideal master was (as William Gouge decrees in *Domesticall Duties*) 'fatherlike' in responsibility as well as in authority (1622, 687). Gouge emphasizes the parental role of both employers and masters within his general discussion of 'equitie', and Dod and Clever agree that they should act 'as loving parents' (1622, sig. Z5r).¹¹ Overall, as Bernard Capp notes, 'early modern conceptions of social order were rooted in the principle of reciprocal obligations, and many authors pulled no punches in condemning employers guilty of cruelty, exploitation, or neglect' (2003, 131). So although their Complaints may have run against the grain of orthodox conceptions of hierarchy by challenging superiors, in another

¹⁰ On the decline of annual contracts, see Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos (1994, 70-71, 175, 181-182). Bernard Capp agrees that, in towns and cities, service 'periods were more variable' (2003, 130, and see also Hubbard 2012, 30-32), but Capp points out that market forces could also sometimes work to the advantage of employees. Speaking about maidservants, he claims that 'the massive demand for domestic labour' in London 'gave the well-qualified considerable leverage over pay and conditions' (153).

¹¹ Gouge rarely addresses the distinction between servants and laborers, but when he does he groups them quite closely. In one place Gouge foresaw that readers might object that his prescriptions apply not to servants but only to 'labourers hired by the day'. He countered that 'servants are in the same ranke: and the ground for both is the same: For both worke for wages' (1622, 684-685).

important sense the plaintiffs had powerful ideological currents on their side, and Eleanor Hubbard's recent book helps show how 'promoting and upholding conservative hierarchies and values' could garner support for mistreated servants or workers (2012, 5). One relevant issue she traces involves how pregnant maidservants could enlist social sanctions against their masters since 'fathering illegitimate children was an offense against early modern patriarchal values' and 'a danger to the order and prosperity of the community' (80).¹² The cases of sexual exploitation Hubbard finds capture some of the attitudes pertinent to the allegations of economic exploitation surfacing in the Requests documents; bad masters not only abused their servants but also abused their neighborhoods by creating social problems including poverty, strife, and even vagrancy. Ideally, Hubbard remarks, 'Service was a crucial stabilizing institution' (25), but only when service was itself stabilized by conventions of paternalism. Capp in fact argues that broad cultural expectations structured hierarchical relations more than the law: 'the courts thus offered some measure of protection. It is likely, though, that most employers were constrained more by social convention ... the very ubiquity of service must have encouraged some sense of communal norms' (2003, 138). The Court of Requests presented a unique venue for institutional observance of social conventions, and its records display some of the practical problems and uncertainties surrounding the system of reciprocal obligations. Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos points out that those conventions could be vague and contradictory:

There is some difficulty in capturing the nature of the norms governing the support and assistance of masters to their servants and apprentices, for there was some ambiguity in these norms. That ambiguity had to do with the fact that the interaction involved in any service or apprenticeship arrangement – whether made for a short or long period, in writing or not – was, in addition to being an interaction based on contract, something akin to the special obligations associated with kin and even parents ... This lack of clear boundaries between the contractual and the moral aspects of the arrangement of service could lead to many expectations, but at the same time to frustrations and disappointments. (1994, 170-171)¹³

¹² Hubbard's third chapter addresses 'bastard bearers', but she finds similar patterns through a range of issues where public economic concerns carried great weight, including divorce (2012, 171-172) and women's work (189-191). What her findings underscore for the purposes at hand is how early modern culture expected masters to be not only patriarchs, but *responsible* patriarchs for the economic health of their communities.

¹³ REQ2.381.1 provides an instructive example of some ambiguities: Richard Snelling, a London journeyman, juxtaposed the vocabularies of service, employment, and trade in his Complaint: 'should soe long serve and bee a Jorniman'; 'should bee in service or Imploied with or by'; 'by his said service & trade of Poulterrie'; 'entred into the said service of a Jorniman in the said Trade'. The conflict, moreover, hinged in part on how much he was truly his master's man or his own – could he conduct his own business while out delivering poultry or should

To be sure, many of the allegations made in Requests concern clear crimes and transgressions. Savage beatings, detained wages, and starvation diets obviously breached both the contractual and the moral orders, not fuzzy areas of unclear expectations. But the straightforward conflicts as well as the messier ones took place in a world where contract and covenant, as well as wage-work and long-term service, coincided. Plaintiffs thus invoked the public transcript of what Ben-Amos calls ‘aids and benefits which were not made explicit in the terms of employment agreed upon in the contract, whether orally or in writing’ (171). To be eligible for those benefits, however, they had to stress their own subordination, a trend I turn to now.

As the earlier examples began to illustrate, servants took care to signal that their pleas should not sound overweening, so they often larded down their Complaints with deferential, even obsequious language. Plaintiffs commonly began with formulaic markers about how their petition to the court will ‘humbly shew’ how they have been abused – one popular opening was ‘in most humblewise complaining’. These rhetorical tags likely indicate the influence of lawyers and scribes. But their descriptions of prior interactions with their masters may be the most interesting feature of the Complaints, and are (like the rest of the narratives) far more personalized. Since lawsuits are by nature adversarial, even the lowliest plaintiffs vigorously accuse the defendants of injustice or criminality. However, when litigating upwards, plaintiffs usually assured the court that they tried to preserve decorum by addressing their superiors ‘in gentle and frindly mannor’ (REQ2.390.62) or petitioning them only with ‘very humble termes’ (REQ2.308.7). One explained how he ‘oftentimes in submissee mannor Demanded’ fair treatment (REQ2.308.1). They went to court, they claimed, only after politeness had failed. Some recounted their desire for community mediation, and even maintained that they were ‘allwayes desirous of peace and quietnesse and willing rather to embrace it with losse and expence then by suites in lawe to be a gayner’ (REQ2.404.67).¹⁴ Often they stressed the superiority of their antagonists; one initially accepted a raw deal ‘to avoid contention and suites in law which he was neither willing nor able to sustaine [against] a great rich man’ (REQ2.403.74). Nearly oxymoronic constructions like ‘submissive demands’ and ‘humble complaints’ reveal the ideological contradictions

he only mind his master’s business? Could he use the return journey to transport things for his own profit or not?

¹⁴ This case concerned an apprentice purportedly of gentle status who had been serving as his master’s factor in London when they fell out. But despite that status, he and his father still protested the ‘unnecessary expences and wrongfull vexation’ by harassment and expensive legal bullying in other venues – they claimed Requests was their only defense against the master’s ‘underhand dealing without great trouble and expence of money’ (REQ2.404.67).

that arose when ideals of hierarchy and justice collided, but rhetorically deft plaintiffs could turn constraints into advantages.

One John Goldsmith's Complaint uses several of these rhetorical tactics to leverage his own relative weakness into an asset. First, it contrasts his deference with his master's imperiousness: Goldsmith wanted 'arrearages' due him 'in liewe & recompence of his said service & paines', so he approached Nicholas Bradshaw in 'gentle & quiet manner', 'no way urging him or offending him'. But Bradshaw spurned him, 'rayling at him & revyling him in the basest termes onely for demanding his due'. Goldsmith suggested mediation by neutral parties chosen by Bradshaw, which should have been amenable to Bradshaw (who was a parson), but he 'never would yelde to anie such peaceable meanes'. Second, the Complaint maps out the extreme power asymmetry between Goldsmith, a clerk 'aged poore and utterlie voyde of other means', and his opponent 'of so greate friends wealth & estate'. By pointing out his reluctance to take such a powerful man to court, Goldsmith began to turn Bradshaw's power and prestige into a legal weapon against him; Bradshaw felt free to withhold money with impunity, the Complaint states, 'knowing howe unable [Goldsmith] was to Contest with him in suites of Law'. Third, even as the Complaint points out that Bradshaw is 'of an evell Conscience' it expresses a paradoxical confidence that if Bradshaw is required to answer the charges against him, then even this 'Cruell & unjust' parson will do the right thing: Goldsmith 'is perswaded that the said Nicholas Bradshawe will uppon his Corporall oath Confess & acknowledge the said agreement' even though they had only 'Communicacion ... in private' (REQ2.416.47). Suggesting that an overbearing enemy will freely confess occurs with some regularity and represents a curious but important trope of the pleadings. When a widow sued the powerful people that owed her money, she also added that she 'hath noe bonds or specialtyes to shew ... for the prooffe thereof as the exact rule of lawe doth require but hopeth that they beinge called into this honorable Courte will uppon their severall oathes acknowledge and Confesse'. Though perhaps wishful thinking, such claims also made a key rhetorical move. Plaintiffs thereby acknowledged their inability to prosecute the case at common law, but simultaneously moved the conflict onto the moral terrain of equity, framing the case not as a test of law but as a test of their opponent's character. These formulations also sent a tactful signal that the plaintiffs depended wholly on the court and endorsed its infallibility. This widow was a seamstress, not a live-in servant or full-time employee, and the sums she mentioned add up to far more than bare subsistence wages (she may have been something more like a pawnbroker or an informal retailer), but she still worked from the same cultural script; she told the court that the money owed her for various wares and 'parcells of semestrye' amount to 'the greatest parte of [her] estate and mainteyneance'. She feared 'great

impoverishinge and decaye ... being but a poore widdowe'. In contrast, the people she sued used their social station to make grand promises but then continually delayed payment, despite the widow's 'quiett and friendly' entreaties (REQ2.391.48).¹⁵

Overall, when plaintiffs represented themselves as downtrodden victims, they engaged in polyvalent gestures of submission and self-assertion. They attempted to shame their adversaries, and rhetorically constructed the trial as a means to merciful redress of injustices perpetrated by the strong upon the weak. As Scott explains, 'the dominant elite's flattering self-portrait ... can become a political resource for subordinates' (1990, 54). Moreover, plaintiffs who turned poverty into a badge of honor inverted some prejudices that Alexandra Shepard notes 'could make witnesses of little or no worth highly vulnerable to discrediting techniques'; her survey of social evaluation in church courts shows that 'More routinely the bottom end of the social hierarchy was elided with the depths of the moral hierarchy, and poverty was often readily linked with dishonesty' (2008, 81-82). In Requests, in contrast, plaintiffs stressed their economic vulnerability in a form of what Scott calls 'symbolic jujitsu' (1990, 98). Moreover, while surely not all of them entered into their agreements thinking of traditional forms of patronage, they rhetorically labored to suggest that their antagonists have violated a social contract even if a formal contract did not exist or worked against them.¹⁶ Scott casts himself as an antidote to theorists who overstress false consciousness, among whom he includes Pierre Bourdieu. While Bourdieu's work primarily tries to account for the durability of domination, often focusing on social reproduction more than resistance, he also consistently points out that 'the "great" can least afford to take liberties with the official norms and they have to pay for their outstanding value with exemplary conformity to the values of the group' (1990, 129). Plaintiffs poor in economic and social capital could still draw upon this specific bank of cultural capital, this reservoir of collective values, and so might hope to benefit from such exemplary conformity.

¹⁵ Such abuse of status is the subject of the third case Lamar Hill examines in his article on debt litigation. A Cumberland tailor did business with a local gentleman and 'whether he liked it or not, [he] had little choice but to extend unsecured credit' (2007, 147).

¹⁶ Tim Stretton's study of women in the Elizabethan Court of Requests notices a similar trend: 'the pleadings of women are marked by the variety and intensity of the imagery of weakness and poverty' and he calls that imagery 'perhaps the clearest distinction which can be identified between the pleadings of women (excepting married women) and the pleadings of men' (1998, 180). I agree with Stretton, but some male servants, laborers, and apprentices employed similar language. The emotional impact of vulnerability clearly had some hold on the judges (called Masters of Requests) and could be exploited by men as well. But the overall picture of male plaintiffs has been muddled by the large numbers of wealthier men who sued in this court, drawn by its low costs, speedy process, and ability to override common law. The concept of a 'social contract' gives Seaver's article on the breakdown of a Bristol apprenticeship its title.

The Complaint of an apprentice tricked into signing a ‘fraudulently appoynted’ indenture reinforces these points and ends with a good example of the ways economically marginalized plaintiffs shifted the debate from written documents to broad cultural values. He entered into an apprenticeship as ‘a poore younge ladd resting in fyrme hope of his future good and that his said new Master would not faile in performance of his word’. Upending the stereotypes about shifty subordinates, he explained how ‘his said master Thomas Wildsmith offered in outward shew to performe his former promise honestly’, but the young man eventually learned that he (‘beinge wholly illiterate’) had signed an agreement, ‘without anie Doubt or suspicion’, stipulating that his final payment would not be due for 100 years. This victim of an outrageous fraud still took pains to demonstrate that his high moral ground should not be misinterpreted as presumption above his low social station:

[He] beinge thereat much agreaved yet notwithstandinge thinkinge yt to bee his Dute to construe his said masters bill rather to bee a mistakeinge of the Scrivener before named then a voluntary combinacion of his master with the said Scrivener to deceave him ... [he] moved his said master Thomas Wildsmith in as humble and good manner (as became a dutifull servant) touchinge the said bill ... But receveing noe reasonable or Contentive answer from him therein he was advised it was not meet or fitt for him then to make anie great question or to contest with his said master farther until the true daye of payment should come.

This apprentice thus argued that he observed the proper decorum even in the face of a gross injustice. He patiently trusted in his master until (after seven years) he asked ‘in peacefull and quiet manner’ but received a ‘delatory and mocking answer’ from his master’s family ‘to come unto them about an hundred yeares hence’. Deportment, as reported in these pleadings, is therefore not merely window-dressing, but an alternative form of proof; lacking strict legal footing, social subordinates set their respectful manners against the domineering conduct of their masters as behavioral evidence that the conflict arose from serious breaches in the reciprocal ethics of service. Like many others, this plaintiff wanted basic but unwritten expectations of fair play to overrule the letter of the law and exploitative contracts. He admitted (like virtually all other plaintiffs) ‘that by the strict rules of the Comon lawes of this Realme hee can have noe remedy’, but he also pointed out that ‘noe man of judgement’ could defend a 100 year delay (REQ2.403.14). Such plaintiffs negotiated a tricky social and legal position created by the hazy interstices of contract law, natural law, hierarchy and equity. Self-effacing yet carefully forceful, they skillfully walked a tightrope between impotence and impudence.

Likewise, they used intense descriptions of their abjection to trigger the *raison-d’être* of this court designed for the disadvantaged. When Richard Popkin ‘beinge a poore servant’ discovered his master and mistress cheating

him by manipulating debts and tallies ‘hee perceaved hee was abused therein yett knewe not how to finde out the same Injury and wronge nor how to help himselfe’. His adversaries involved a constable, and ‘with diverse menaces and unchristian speeches threatned that he should die and rott in prison’ until he became so ‘terrified with their threateninge hee was att his witts end not knowinge what to doe beinge destitute of frends and beinge himselfe veyary poore’. Fraudulent papers remained ‘a bridle to restreyne [him] from seekinge his due’, and he ‘is Constreynd to obscure himselfe’ for fear of arrest. But even he suggested that his oppressors would ‘sett forth and Confesse the truth’ in court (REQ2.305.48). And the Complaint of two men retained to excavate a patch of ground that turned out to be ‘a quicke sande full of springes’ illustrates both the vagaries of employment conditions and the discourses of desperation. These ‘poore daie Laborers’ thought they had made a good deal with a knight who ‘greatlie entreated’ them with ‘faire speaches’ to make ‘articles covenantes and agreementes’ about digging a pond at his Highgate estate, but that agreement became a trap rather than a mutually agreeable bond. They were covenanted for the completion of the pond, rather than paid by the day, because (they claimed) the knight had tested the ground and knew the job would prove extremely difficult. The laborers soon ‘were compelled to pawne and sell their poore bedding from under them’ and were ‘scarce able to put bread into their mouthes’ yet could not complete the job. As they struggled with this Sisyphean task, the knight undid each day’s labor by driving over their work: ‘by his great and weightie carriages over the pond hedd he made spoile thereof’, so they had to daily watch how ‘the worke sunke downe and decaied instantlie’ under the carriages. The knight threatened ‘the utter ruine and impoverishment of them, their poore wives and Children ... without anie remorse of Conscience’, and he eventually had them hauled into the Marshalsea. He refused ‘mediation’ and ‘all possible perswasions’ of third parties (REQ2.402.85). Plaintiffs like these men placed their last hope in the court and asked it to restore the moral order by asserting ‘Conscience’ over contract. And such language of ruin, downfall, despair, and ‘grievous hinderaunce’ made conventional but powerful flourishes (REQ2.416.47). ‘Poore & distressed’ William Gethin of Chancery Lane spent years as ‘Covenante servant’ to a great lady, a widowed Dame, until he was mistreated ‘againste all equitie and justice & to [his] utter undoeing’. The chief abuse he recounted involved a complication of credit; in the course of keeping the household stocked he ‘was dryven at sundrie tymes to borrowe & make hard shiftes for money to paye for the same provision to advoid the clamor of the poore people that sold the same’. He assumed these were the widow’s debts, not his own expenses, but his mistress allegedly stuck him with them (REQ2.300.52). Such tensions between overlapping roles and unclear responsibilities – a servant as an extension of a master vs. a servant as an autonomous economic individual – feature prominently in the final

case I discuss, a case rooted in the ‘hard shifts’ and ‘clamor’ of early modern market culture. At their most extreme, vulnerable plaintiffs even invoked the specter of death: an orphaned apprentice was ‘meanly employed’ and deprived of ‘Competent meate drinke or lodginge’, and he ‘had perished if his friends had not provided for him’ (REQ2.391.140).

In their overall rhetorical blend – desperation and indignation leavened with politeness and humility – the Complaints resemble the petitions to charities and municipal poor relief studied by Steve Hindle; those ‘narratives of distress’ are likewise ‘far from standardized, and the scrivener or clerk who drew them up seems to have done so with the claimant at his elbow’, but they usually mix a ‘popular discourse of pity’ with an insistence on the good character, reputation, honesty, and former industriousness of the petitioner (2004, 155-162). Lawyers and clerks undoubtedly did shape the narratives of victimization submitted to Requests, though diverse historians (prominent among them Davis 1987; Gowing 1996; and Fox 2000) have provided models for productively reading court records, and Hindle himself traces the migration of discourses across pulpits, pamphlets, and petitions. Lamar Hill represents an optimistic yet careful reader of Requests documents, one who insists that ‘although the records of their litigation may be highly mediated, we can still hear with some confidence the unmediated voices of the litigants through the filters of legal counsel’ (2007, 136). In his article on four cases of debt litigation, Hill finds that ‘a world of richly textured detail is revealed that allows us to “hear” the approximate voices of the participants’ in the narratives taken down by scribes who, he reminds us, ‘were trained listeners’ (139, 155). If that sounds too confident, in practice Hill is less emphatic about authenticity and more concerned with hearing ‘multiple discourses’ and ‘overlapping voices, each speaking to a different audience, be it the Crown, the masters of requests, the opposing party, or the witnesses’ (140-141). He confirms that the masters of Requests (the judges) valued hierarchy and deference and, ‘in fact, whenever the masters applied equity they reaffirmed the hierarchical order’ (153). So much is absolutely true, but the ambivalent nature of an equitable venue that worked both for and against hierarchy – that could locally overrule a master’s will while globally validating the dominant ideologies of degree – placed subordinates in a tricky rhetorical situation. A further potential interpretive pitfall is that very few cases went to final judgment (which involved an oral stage lost to us), and those few decrees are terse, so we have no sure guide to exactly what language worked and why.¹⁷ But proceeding to final decree was rare in most courts, and Muldrew points out that in civil debt litigation ‘making a complaint with a court clerk would also have been a way of communicating the threat of litigation’, a forceful but not

¹⁷ ‘Whenever they could, the Masters encouraged alternative methods of settlement’ (Stretton 1998, 81-83).

necessarily radioactive escalation of an ongoing conversation (1998, 202, though I suspect a Requests Complaint was a more serious step). So while we should be skeptical about genuine voices in the Complaints, we may just as easily recast that apparent problem as a useful opportunity to eavesdrop on a specialized cultural language, a nuanced and polyphonic form of communication between servants and masters – communication paradoxically made more powerful by being filtered and arbitrated by a powerful institution. Listening in on this language, while being mindful that subordinates helped produce some of the multiple discourses Hill wants to track but also recognizing that some things would be imposed on them, may shed further light on the ongoing debate about individual agency in early modern England.

The difficult rhetorical task servants and the poor faced was embedded in their uncertain social position, one of only limited and contingent rights. Social historians of the Braddick and Walter school of ‘negotiation’ have followed James Scott and demonstrated (and perhaps at times overstated) the agency of low status individuals. Keith Wrightson summarizes a certain consensus about the limited power of the powerless:

they could certainly influence the terms and conditions of their own subordinate place, by contractual negotiation, by their mode of conduct in the performance of their work, and on occasion – especially when legitimate expectations had been betrayed – by open insubordination. Servants could dispute the appropriateness of the tasks allocated them, or protest at failure to pay them as promised. Apprentices could and did lay out complaints against their masters and mistresses for maltreatment or neglect. (2000, 66)

The Court of Requests gave them an important forum for such disputes (no matter how much it was clogged by run-of-the-mill debt litigation). However, attending to the formal qualities of the self-presentational and rhetorical tactics employed by subordinates within the institutional confines of the court may help flesh out these negotiations and trace the lineaments of both the opportunities and oppressions those negotiations produced. Requests was less expensive than most legal venues, but it placed other all-too-familiar costs upon poor plaintiffs. Like so many other interactions and institutions, it extracted what Bourdieu calls ‘symbolic taxes’: ‘the concessions of *politeness* always contain *political* concessions’ (1977a, 95).

Scott dismisses Bourdieu and lumps him in with less sophisticated theories of false consciousness and mystification. But for Bourdieu, ‘the seemingly most insignificant details of *dress, bearing, physical and verbal manners*’ do not instantly produce the conscious consent of deluded social inferiors.¹⁸ Instead, such symbolic taxes build a generative matrix, deep in the body, of preconscious

¹⁸ ‘Practical belief is not a “state of mind”, still less a kind of arbitrary adherence to a set of instituted dogmas and doctrines (“beliefs”), but rather a state of the body’ (Bourdieu 1990, 68).

schemes of perception and action – ‘values given body, *made* body’ (1977a, 94). These matrices Bourdieu calls ‘*habitus*, systems of durable transposable *dispositions*’ that govern human practice and, though richly improvisational, limit agency (1977a, 72).¹⁹ Gouge’s recommendations for a well ordered household also stress what Bourdieu calls the ‘small change of the compliance’ of everyday routine (Bourdieu 1990, 68). Servants, writes Gouge, must ensure ‘that all their words spoken to their master be meeke, milde and humble’, and they must always display ‘Reverence in cariage’ – standing and removing their hat, for example, as ‘a signe and token of subjection’ (1622, 598, 601-602). Such tokens may be small, but Gouge wants them to amount collectively to a subordination and ‘modestie’ transmitted in (using one of Bourdieu’s own favorite formulations) ‘the whole disposition of bodie’ (1622, 602). *Domesticall Duties* is a prescriptive text, full of authoritarian ideals, and exactly the kind of public transcript Scott insists plebeians easily see through and manipulate.²⁰ But Gouge clearly hopes the formal aspects of deference will help inculcate the constructive ‘*feare and trembling*’ subordinates should continually feel:

Feare is both as a *fountaine* from whence all other duties flow: and also as a *sawce* to season them all ... This trembling feare is needful in regard of the small love that servants commonly beare to their masters ... servants must labour to nourish it, as a meanes to keepe them from over-much boldnesse. (1622, 615-616)

From that nourished and nourishing fear, Gouge makes the short step to ‘*serving with sincerity ... in singleness of heart*’ (616). The stories of polite submission that plaintiffs offered up to Requests, and the experience of working with clerks to craft pleadings that paid lavish tribute to hierarchy, operated in at least partial complicity with the early modern world’s ceaseless labor of symbolic domination.²¹

So, on one hand, the court lent special attention to the weak, but it only seems to have listened for the rhetorical modes and micro-genres it wanted to hear: carefully articulated pleadings for mercy, *not* demands for justice between social equals. The court must therefore have been a powerful force

¹⁹ ‘Practical sense, social necessity turned into nature, converted into motor schemes and body automatisms, is what causes practices, in and through what makes them obscure to the eyes of their producers, to be *sensible*, that is, informed by common sense ... Every social order systematically takes advantage of the disposition of the body and language to function as depositories of deferred thoughts that can be triggered off’ (Bourdieu 1990, 69).

²⁰ Scott, in fact, merely inverts the process when he claims that *elites* internalize their own performances: ‘They have a collective theater to maintain which often becomes part of their self-definition’ in ‘a kind of self-hypnosis within ruling groups’ (1990, 50, 67-69).

²¹ For quick accounts of Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic power, and its contribution to hidden modes of domination, see his essay ‘Symbolic Power’ (1977b) and *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977a, 171-197).

constituting and enforcing oppressive class identities. As Andy Wood points out in a compelling article, the ‘cognitive dissonance’ produced by the public and the hidden transcripts appears ‘in the contradictory relationship between popular litigation – in which the plebian litigant was expected to identify her or himself as “powerless” – and the clear fact of plebian assertiveness explicit in the act of litigation against a gentleman, a lord or a master’. Wood stresses the negative effects on the self-conception of the poor, arguing that such language, even if ‘knowingly manipulated’, made ‘plebian litigants ... complicit in the maintenance of their own subordination, so they helped to maintain a kind of elite cultural hegemony’, and Wood thus amplifies the importance of even contrived expressions of deference (2006a, 811-812).²² No single case can tell us anything concrete about the real psychological makeup of the specific litigants involved. But they do shed light on the expectations this culture held about how subordinates should act and even how they should feel, and scholars like Patricia Fumerton have investigated the subjectivities of the many people experiencing ‘shallow poverty’, including the working poor and lower middling-sort householders (2006, xvii). Their geographic, social, and vocational mobility coupled with their economic vulnerability cultivated an ‘unsettled’ subjectivity that, according to Fumerton, pervaded the ‘multiple types of “selves”’ these individuals were forced to adapt in the ‘the shifting “ground” of an increasingly unsettled economy’ (5, 31). So Requests Complaints do afford a look at some of the fraught ‘role speculations (not role-playing)’ the working poor had to engage in, and how assuming these roles may have contributed to the more damaging or unpleasant elements Fumerton finds in “low” subjectivity’ (45, 4).²³ Enacting or wielding a public transcript may have been tactical, but tactical does not mean inconsequential.

On the other hand, Craig Muldrew’s influential research on debt litigation points in a more positive direction. He reveals that, although poor people comprised a smaller percentage of litigants, they sued people above them often. On the whole, ‘litigation became a leveling force’ in early modern England because it was instrumental in disseminating a specific type of equality that was reshaping the culture (1998, 247-253). ‘Equality in

²² According to Wood, ‘the public transcript of elite domination has the effect of continuously disconnecting how subordinates *feel* from how they *act*’ (2006a, 811). Further, linguistic expressions of weakness in the face of elite power ‘constructed a binary opposition between an apparently powerless commons and a clearly powerful gentry’ that ‘did more than simply *describe*; it *constituted*’ those power asymmetries and ‘helped to legitimate the existence of both ruling institutions – central courts – and ruling discourses – the language of paternalism’ (812).

²³ Fumerton insists that the working poor ‘necessarily *speculated* in different work roles’ to survive, since they could not ‘afford to be *role-playing*’ when their assumption of different identities and postures ‘involved serious economic investment’ (2006, 34, 51).

exchange', he explains, 'was moral in nature; it was equality of the potential to be trusted, and certainly not an equality of opportunity or wealth' (146, see also 97).²⁴ While Requests observed hierarchies of social inequality, it also validated this moral equality. When trying to reconcile 'politique inequality' or earthly degree with 'spirituall equality', Gouge writes that someone 'more excellent in the one, may be inferior in the other' (1622, 593). Though Gouge keeps most forms of equality safely contained in the sweet hereafter, marginalized plaintiffs might make the Court of Requests recognize spiritual or moral equality and even import it into 'civill and temporall matters' (593) – no small achievement.²⁵

In sum, while these documents indicate that deference may have been the real price of admission to this institution, they also show how such deference could become empowering. Even calculated or cynical performances of deference carry psychological disadvantages, but inverting the discourses of weakness and power represents subtle but demonstrable acts of resistance. And Complaints generally display a pattern of temporal movement towards greater assertiveness: they recount past injuries, humiliations, and servility, are couched in a present-tense of measured deference, and then call for future

²⁴ Muldrew's analysis of multiple forms of justice and equality provides an important context, especially the displacement of distributive justice by commutative justice. He links the former with patronage, hierarchy, and older ideas about market regulation and links the latter with civic humanism, natural law theory, increased litigation, and participation in a vibrant market culture: 'The distributive justice of patronage, benefits or charity based on inequality of status or rank' held that those in authority should be responsive to 'traditional paternalistic moral notions about the entitlement of the poor' (1998, 47). But Muldrew argues that market forces and the court system worked together to instill a growing emphasis on commutative justice and 'equalization in exchange' (44) that he clearly views as an egalitarian development, albeit one which created great hardship for some and would lead to 'a new more absolute utilitarian ideology of free trade' and self-interest (51). These two ideas coexisted, of course, and their sometimes uneasy coexistence registers in the Requests archives. Further, the Complaints indicate that, although legal proceedings might indeed have been the engine of a growing sense of equality, some litigants relied more upon older ideals of distributive justice and the obligations of their superiors – hence the rhetoric of submission, trust, deference, and powerlessness.

²⁵ Gouge's final pages constitute a forceful endorsement of this provisional equality: 'For howsoever in outward dignity there is great difference betwixt master and servant, yet as the servants of God they are of a like condition, and in many things may be accounted equal' (1622, 691). In another illustration of the ambiguities of service, he firmly decrees subordinates must meekly suffer all punishments from 'unjust masters', even 'though correction be unjustly inflicted, yet it is patiently to be endured' in this world (612); however, throughout his chapters on servants and masters, Gouge favors the language of both justice and equity (see especially 656-657, 665). He similarly attempts to thread a very fine needle when he maintains that a servant should constantly fear a master and attempt to internalize his will, *but* that servant must not become a 'parasite' or a 'fawning dog' (638). All told, even in Gouge's thoughtful and totalizing account of the social order, early modern cultural ideals pull in many different directions.

accountability and material reparations. To adopt a modern saying, plaintiffs who won (or triggered a favorable extra-judicial resolution) found themselves groveling all the way to the bank.

Let me finish with a more extended look at one case which includes three pleadings and several witness depositions (this is a relatively rare opportunity, since few cases went beyond the initial Complaint with any substance). When John Honneyborne died his widow sued his master for almost three years of wages that she said her husband never received. Reading this suit in full underscores that the Court of Requests did value facts – cold finances and technical legal rights – but also entertained more subjective considerations including pathos, motivation, fairness, and broad social codes. The two sides of this conflict engaged in a tug-of-war over that terrain: the defendant and his witnesses stressed written records and numbers, while the plaintiff and her witnesses emphasized the emotive aspect of economic relationships.

A baker in St. Clement Danes named Peter Wraxall made ‘private Comunicacion & agreement’ with John Honneyborne (‘a Jorney man and worker’ in the ‘misterye of Bakeinge’) for eight pounds yearly, and this case again exemplifies the difficulties such private agreements could create. ‘In moste humblewise complayning’ Lettice Honneyborne – John’s widow – told the court that her husband died ‘very poore’ after five years with Wraxall, leaving her almost nothing but some money owed by Wraxall. ‘Diverse & sundry tymes’ she has requested the unpaid wages, but Wraxall ‘still doth refuse contrary to all Right equity & good Conscience’. If she ‘should be deceived or yf the same should be longe detained’, she and her children will become utterly destitute. She lacks written proofs, so ‘hath noe ordynary remedy by the Course of the Common Lawes’. Nevertheless, she believes that Wraxall ‘being urged & pressed ... upon his Corporall oath Cannot denye the same but must of necessitye confesse the same to be true’ (REQ2.414.76: Complaint).²⁶

The Complaint is a bit formulaic, but effective enough that the court agreed to hear the case. According to Wraxall’s Answer (his formal defense) John did ‘come to serve this defendant in the trade of a baker’ five years ago. But later he did ‘covenant and agree’ with John for a slightly different job. To encourage John ‘to be a trewe and faithfull servant’, Wraxall ‘was perswaded to give the said John Honnyborne some better place of service as in Caryinge of his bread to his Customers and receavinge of the monyes for the same’. In this position John moved out of direct supervision in the bakehouse and enjoyed some independence at the same yearly wage, but on the condition that he ‘behave himself well in his service’. But this new relationship also allowed Wraxall some

²⁶ This suit has been archived in two separate files, which is not uncommon. The Complaint, Wraxall’s Answer, and the plaintiff’s Replication are found in 414.76, but all depositions are found in 406.47.

advantages. In answering the charges, Wraxall not only denied owing any back wages (claiming the wages were simply deducted from bread payments), but claimed that John owed *him* large sums for bread he had delivered on credit. In fact, Wraxall ruthlessly pushed a countercharge that the widow was willfully failing to pay that debt as she sold off her dead husband's belongings and hid the money. He rather snidely promised to pay the disputed wages (about 22 pounds) as soon as he receives satisfaction for over fourscore pounds worth of bread (REQ2.414.76: Answer).

The depositions of Wraxall's brother, apprentice, and another servant confirm the baker's story, and describe his accounting system. Bread tallies were kept upon 'greate broade Boardes', and as a servant brought in payments from customers his tallies were 'Strucken out as he payeth', but John Honneyborne had allegedly fallen badly behind. John had been delivering bread 'uppon truste and Creddeytt' and could make 'no Satisfaccion or Accompte' for most of it, so one day Wraxall's apprentice had made deliveries with John to try to record the amounts owed by his customers. The apprentice took the notes, which perhaps hints that John was either illiterate or not fully trusted. This note was submitted as evidence and the situation confirms how, in a cash-scarce society, middlemen relying on the complex chains of credit Muldrew describes could easily become overextended.²⁷ Nevertheless, the apprentice and another servant insinuated that Wraxall had earlier examined Honneyborne about some 'Dishoneste Daleing' concerning 40 shillings worth of yeast, and that some customers later contested the debts John attributed to them. When John fell severely sick, his master's efforts to recoup or at least clarify these debts assumed a new urgency, so at least three more times Wraxall tried to get the accounts down on paper. First he dispatched his brother to the sick man's house to interrogate him about the amounts, but 'that Reconinge was very shorte'. Then Wraxall sent his servants 'to see his table booke', but 'they Could fynd none wherein any of such his Reconinges were'. John Honneyborne, whether literate or illiterate, creditor or debtor, honest or dishonest, moved primarily in the informal economy of verbal assurances, interpersonal trust, and unwritten balances so familiar from Muldrew's work (REQ2.406.47: Depositions of John Weeks, Abraham Wraxall, and Francis Plant).²⁸

²⁷ Muldrew 1998, *passim*, but see especially 95-98. Hill finds Requests to be an excellent archive for testing Muldrew's arguments, since it shows Muldrew's 'ideal types' in conflict. The court, Hill argues, had to juggle the conflicting demands of hierarchy, equity, and credit: 'the masters were obligated to restore order, one of the principle functions of the elites. At the same time, however, they assisted in preventing the collapse of a credit economy frequently driven by the demands of deference. The balance between the interests of hierarchy and of credit was difficult to maintain. Without sufficient circulating coin the task was all the more difficult' (2007, 153).

²⁸ One of those servants reported that Wraxall sent to the Honneyborne household 'for diverse of such goods and things ... because hee [Wraxall] would have had some things

Wraxall finally brought a scrivener to John's deathbed to notarize everything John could remember of his customers' debts, but the sick man could not remember much. The scrivener was called as a witness on Wraxall's behalf, but he claimed that John 'was reputed an honeste man' and he thought the customers disputing their debts would not be doing so had he lived. He did acknowledge, though, that John probably died in Wraxall's debt, not vice versa. The scrivener's deposition records an uneasy moment of contact between the world of papers and the world of promises. As Wraxall asked him about his customers, the sick man 'Answere verry slolye, but tould [Wraxall] Justlie what was owing by some of his Customers but not what was owing by them all' while the scrivener took notes. When Wraxall could squeeze no more out of John he 'seeinge his weakenes ... used these words or the lyke in effecte vz [videlicet] I shall loose muche monney by this manes death. And soe they Came Away. And within a daye or twoe or three dayes after he departed this lyffe' (REQ2.406.47: Deposition of John West).

The defense documents (Wraxall's Answer and the depositions of his allies) steer the conflict both in theme and in mode. Instead of discussing wages, they make John's debts the central topic – indeed, a reader could forget that Wraxall is the defendant. They also employ a drier, more detached tone amounting to a tactically different mode of legal discourse, one centered on concrete facts and amounts and generally avoiding comment on interpersonal relationships. Indeed, perhaps the only emotional moment is the scrivener's account of Wraxall's cold conduct. But Wraxall sidestepped some key questions: to what extent were the men whom he calls servants acting as his representatives? They could not possibly expect frequent cash payments from bread recipients, so did they willingly assume risks themselves, or did they believe that they were extending their master's credit, not their own? In short, were Wraxall's delivery men *servants* within a full-fledged ideology of reciprocal obligations familiar from prescriptive literature, or were they considered independent economic agents in a market culture of contractual equality? Though both sides wanted money, the tension between raw numbers and social bonds represents a crucial but only partially articulated field of struggle.

This struggle becomes most evident when comparing Wraxall's defense with the discourse produced by John's widow, Lettice, and her allies. While the defense fought dispassionately, the prosecution went right for the heartstrings with emotional arguments and moral evaluations. The widow's Replication (her formal reply to Wraxall's Answer) foregrounds how John Honnyborne, falling sick, was motivated 'out of Conscience towards god & care towards his wife & children & the Defendant ... to sett all reconninges straight betweene hym

towards Satisfaccion of his debts'. The widow, allegedly, 'had pawned them: whereby yt appeared shee made some of hir husbands goods away Least [Wraxall] should Recover them from her for his Debts' (REQ2.406.47: Deposition of Francis Plant).

& his saide Master the Deffendant'. He wanted to be paid for the last three years of service, but he also wanted to discharge whatever amounts he owed his master (and under this account those were very small). Wraxall ignored him until John desperately braved 'daungerous sicknes [and] went heance to the house of the Deffendant & then & there required him to accompt' of all tallies and wages. Wraxall would not even deign to answer, but 'cuningly withdrew himself ... & went out of a backe doore' until John was 'enforced for very sicknes and faintnes to depart'. At home, John 'with weepeinge teares' told his wife the bad news. John had not yet lost faith in his master, and as he languished 'his comfort was' that his master would give his family three years' wages at the least 'for saide he wee accompted at Christmas laste' and came to that understanding after clearing up all tallies and debts. But he could not 'be quiett in his mynde' so kept sending friends to his master asking him to come meet with him. According to this document Wraxall refused until he heard that 'John was both speechles and without memory & then indeed he came & tooke ... all the tallyes and scores in the saide Johns house', but did casually acknowledge to Lettice that 'all was well' between them and that he would pay at least *some* back wages. All told, the preponderance of the Replication is given over to moral evaluations of the two men; John Honneyborne's religious sense of duty to his family and master, his diligence, and his sorrowful tears upon his return home draw a stark contrast to the rude and grasping master who ignored a dying man's pleas and only came to ransack the home and the mind of his servant for his own gain (REQ2.414.76: Replication).

Witnesses for the prosecution corroborated these accounts, and likewise spent their rhetorical energy stressing character, conduct, and sentiment. One witness said he knew nothing of the details but insisted that 'Hunneburne Carried him selfe verrye honestlie and well, dealing Justlie and uprightlie with all men' (REQ2.406.47: Deposition of Thomas Hodges). A neighbor acting as an intermediary went to the bakehouse to speak to Wraxall but received only curt answers:

Master Wraxhall I pray you Lett me Intreate you to goe unto John Hunnyburne and Lett him and you Reccon and Accompte togeather before he dies that yt maye be openlye knowne to the worlde what is betweene you and he for his poore wyffe and Childerins sakes, then the defendant Wraxalle Answered her nothings but only said he hoped he would not then die. (REQ2.406.47: Deposition of Anne Dawson)

A maid recounted a painful rebuttal when John, 'verry sycke and weake', was spurned by Wraxall who 'Onlye said to him "howe nowe" and went out of his backe doore'.²⁹ These witnesses excoriated the baker for coming too

²⁹ The scribe set parentheses around 'Howe nowe' in an attempt to set off reported speech. I have changed them to quotation marks for clarity.

late to John's house, waiting 'untill he was almoste speecheles' and then only coming to bully a dying man 'not capable of any busynesses nor A man of this world'. A sister-in-law dwelt on how Lettice felt the pressure as she grieved; the 'morninge after [she] had buried her husbande' she demanded that Wraxall's servant explain how her husband could possibly be so deeply indebted. These witnesses also described how Lettice 'wepte to the defendant sayinge that her husband and shee had often sent for him to make even togeather before god Called him'. These witnesses did address the back wages and some claimed they heard Wraxall promise to pay them, but the rhetorical tactics are clear: while the defense fixated on tallies, tears carried the prosecution's argument (REQ2.406.47: Depositions of Anne Dawson, Elizabeth Campion, and Cycelye Honneyborne).

Tim Stretton notes that, in Requests, 'judges were asked to choose between two or more conflicting representations of the truth, rather than to attempt to reconstitute the truth itself' (1998, 14). In the conflicts I have been describing between (relative) elites and the people who served them, those representations of truth not only diverge into competing narratives, but into competing visions of social organization and competing modes of expression. In the case of Honneyborne vs. Wraxall, one witness for the prosecution closed with an intriguing comment that may illuminate some of these ideological forces at work in this archive: she heard two bakehouse servants 'saye the greate Booke wherein the truthe would appeare betweene them the plaintiff and defendant was kepte out of the waye they Could not see yt. And woondered the defendant did deny to pay her husbands wages' (REQ2.406.47: Deposition of Elizabeth Campion). The statement primarily implies that Wraxall kept secret accounts while manipulating the public tallies, and thus unfairly withheld wages. But beyond that immediate meaning, the resonance these carefully corrected words have to a major trope of Christian millenarianism is unmistakable – an unknowable 'greate Booke' where absolute truth resides cannot fail to connote divine judgment. The comment retroactively elevates this story of a dying servant struggling to earn a final reward via his last reckoning with an inaccessible master to a grander scale. In this murmuring about a secret book and an unpaid debt the various issues of the case appear to coalesce: two economies (informal vs. formal), two forms of master-servant relationships (mutual obligation vs. strict economics), two modes of pleading (emotional vs. numerical), and two conceptions of justice (distributive vs. commutative).

In the Court of Requests the harsh laws of money and masters had to contend with the more charitable justice of equity, and I have stressed how those conflicts often fell out along a written-oral divide and how those conflicts were fought in the discourses of the elite. But this confrontation may hint at a radical alternative where debts, tallies, and contracts will be overwritten by the fulfilled promises of a higher justice. 'The language of spiritual accounting

also continued to be related to credit relations', says Muldrew (1998, 146), and such language plays a key role in Gouge's explication of the relationships between masters and servants; he reminds his readers that God 'will require an account of them for all that are under their government' (1622, 666). And while he grants masters wide authority, he concludes his tract by forcefully invoking Ephesians 6:9: '*your master also is in heaven: neither is there respect of persons with him*' (689). All worldly authority will end and there will finally be 'no difference betwixt master and servant', he writes, again emphasizing spiritual accounting:

The first reason which declareth the subjection of masters, in that they have a master over them, putteth them in minde of that account which they are to make, and reckoning which they are to give of the well using of their authority and of their cariage towards such as are under them. For they are but as stewards over fellow servants: every one of them therefore shall heare this charge, *give an account of thy stewardship*. (689)

Servants and laborers presumably were not often buying and studying conduct literature and household advice tomes like *Domesticall Duties*.³⁰ But Gouge articulates something of the larger cultural air they breathed, and even the dominant discourses that spoke from pulpits and political offices afforded subordinates a social position not entirely without rights and ideological resources.³¹ Servants and employees held a liminal and contradictory status; in Requests they responded to that ambiguous status with pleadings that were necessarily dialogical in the fullest Bakhtinian sense – layered and multiaccental discourse that is effective because of, not in spite of, its blend of personal utterance and cultural quotation.

³⁰ This is not to say it never happened. Ben-Amos records that 'conduct books and books of advice and instruction ... were sometimes purchased by adolescents and youths' during their periods of life-cycle service, and in church 'there were apprentices who followed the sermon intently and even took notes' (1994, 190).

³¹ Many of Gouge's points are entirely conventional, and are echoed by other conduct writers. For example, Dod and Cleaver likewise use Ephesians 6:9 to insist that masters should inflict punishment 'remembring always that they have a maister in heaven, before whom they must make an account for their doings' and repeating that 'they must yield to God their maister a straight account' (1621, sigs Z5r-Z6r). They also decree that 'obedience and service must be done with feare and trembling, in singleness of heart' while servants always 'be reverent and lowly ... in their words and gestures' (sig Aa5r).

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Power, (Im)Politeness and Aggressiveness in Early Modern Master-Servant Relations (1660-1750)

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Abstract

The article explores the ways in which in early modern England masters exercised power over servants by means of threats and reproaches. More precisely, it investigates power-(im)politeness and the power-aggressiveness interfaces using data collected manually from a non-electronic corpus of advice manuals for masters (and mistresses), servants and apprentices published in English between 1660 and 1750. As we approach the mid-eighteenth century there is a growing concern for servants' feelings and insistence on masters' empathy towards servants. This was probably due to the new form of politeness emerging in the period, one which emphasised complaisance and social harmony. From a strictly linguistic viewpoint, I argue that in these texts (but this may apply to others too) threats are not presented as inherently impolite acts but as aggressive ones, and that impoliteness is only a contextual property aggravating intimidation and affirmation of power. Whatever the master's degree of power and social status, therefore, they cannot be considered forms of 'politic unmarked behaviour'. Reproaches share with threats a potentially intimidating perlocutionary effect, but unlike threats, they are not inherently aggressive, and can be a form of politic or contextually appropriate behaviour on the part of a master.

Keywords: Historical (Im)politeness, Power, Reproaches, Threats, Verbal Aggressiveness

1. *Introduction*

Since Dorothy Marshall's pioneering article of 1929, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century domestic service in England has been the object of research largely focused on socio-historical and cultural aspects of the master-servant relationship (see, for example, Hecht 1980; Hill 1996; Meldrum 2000; Steedman 2004; McKeon 2005; Straub 2009). These studies provide useful accounts of the nature of service and mastery, of dramatic power asymmetries between masters and servants, and of the tensions arising from those asymmetries; but the patterns of linguistic behaviour enacting power and powerlessness have remained unexplored. This article adopts a historical-



pragmatic perspective in an attempt to shed light on the ways in which early modern masters and mistresses exercised power through threats and reproaches, socially-risky speech acts that, unlike requests, promises, apologies, complaints, compliments and insults (see Jucker and Taavitsainen 2000 and 2008) have received virtually no attention in diachronic speech act analysis. Power is considered here in relation to politeness, impoliteness and aggressiveness, that is, vis-à-vis pragmatic strategies which, in the case of politeness, mitigate assertions of power and the risk of subsequent conflict and, in cases of impoliteness and aggressiveness, reinforce those assertions and exacerbate risk of conflict. Although commands are the most prototypical speech acts characterising a master's role,¹ here we shall focus on acts that are unambiguously threatening to both negative and positive face (Brown and Levinson 1987, 67) and that presuppose wide power gaps between addresser and addressee.

During the period embraced by our source material, social and economic change brought about an extension of free, mobile wage-labour (Griffiths *et al.* 1996, 288), and this may have altered power relations between master and servants in ways that affected masters' behaviour. We shall here be attempting to see whether the emergence at the turn of the eighteenth century of a new form of politeness synonymous with refinement, pleasure, good taste and complaisance (as well as virtue), (cf. Carter 2001) was also a feature of the patriarchal household. Politeness was not a pervasive social requirement but expected in certain, restricted places and domains (especially in the public sphere and between equals of the middle- and upper-classes). The question is whether it was called for also in the private sphere of household government and in behaviour towards servants, and if so, how politeness principles affected the expression of threats and reproaches. More precisely, the question is whether threatening and scolding of servants were progressively discouraged and ultimately forbidden, or whether such behaviour continued to be recommended as modes of displaying authority and power but in mitigated forms of expression.

In my analysis of these texts I shall be applying current politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1987; Watts 2003) integrated with speech act theory (Searle 1969). I shall also be making specific use of Locher's approach to politeness and power, and of her notion of politeness as 'positively marked appropriate behaviour' (2004, 86),² as well as of Culpeper's (2011) notion of impoliteness as unexpected (or negatively marked) linguistic behaviour. I depart from Locher, however, in not assuming a relevance-based politeness perspective, and from Culpeper in my attempt to differentiate between

¹ 'The power of commanding is in the Master, and the duty of obeying in the Servant' (Burton 1681, 35-36); and 'To Dictate and Command, wou'd be natural enough for a King to a Subject ... a Master to a Servant ...' (Seaton 1720, 3).

² On this see Watts 1989 and Kasper 1990.

impolite and aggressive behaviour. Another primary aim of this study is to clarify the status of threats and reproaches vis-à-vis impoliteness and aggressiveness. As we shall see, although serious threats and reproaches can be both aggressive and impolite (at least according to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century parameters of politeness), aggressiveness is contextually determined for reproaches but contextually independent for threats.

This investigation has been carried out on a corpus of twenty-five advice books, most expressly addressed to masters, servants and apprentices, and all – with a single exception – published in England or Ireland between 1660 and 1750.³ Of these, nine are seventeenth-century publications, while sixteen saw the light in the first half of the eighteenth century. These manuals, sourced from *Early English Books Online* and *Eighteenth Century Collection Online*, form a non-electronic corpus; consequently, data were extracted manually, and it was not possible to draw up statistics on ratios between speech act type and total numbers of words per text or over a time span. With the exception of the first volume of Defoe's *The Family Instructor* (1715), which offers imaginary dialogues meant to be credible, these texts only describe verbal actions without giving actual examples. For this reason, Defoe's treatise on the subordination of servants, claiming to contain 'Historical cases, and Remarkable stories of the Behaviour of some particular SERVANTS' (1724, frontispiece) and a footman's diary containing what purport to be authentic dialogical exchanges between masters and servants (MacDonald 1790)⁴ have also been included.

Although advice literature is usually considered to be a source of information about social norms and ideals rather than as evidence of actual behaviour, it nevertheless offers glimpses of early modern actualities of master-servant dynamics in portraying both the ideal master and his negative counterpart. After all, the ideal does presuppose the real. In connection with this, Dodsley's advice manual of 1730 – the only work to represent a servant's perspective – and MacDonald's diary help counterbalance the bias towards the master's standpoint that characterizes the rest of the corpus. Before discussing the historical and cultural nature of (im)politeness, contemporary theoretical

³ The exception in chronological terms is Allen's *The Polite Lady* (1760). As well as manuals explicitly directed at masters and servants, our corpus comprises two from the seventeenth century (Bunyan 1663; Swinnock 1663) and one from the eighteenth century (Fleetwood 1705) offering advice about the management of domestic relationships in general (i.e. including parents and children, husbands and wives). It also includes three advice books on various aspects of life written by fathers for children (Anonymous 1664; Trenchfield 1678; Halifax 1688). Among eighteenth-century advice manuals we have one by a female author, Eliza Fowler Haywood (1743), addressed to servant-maids, and one by a male author addressed to gentlemen in general (Jones [1737?]).

⁴ Although published outside the time span under scrutiny, the diary relates events taking place between 1745 and 1779, which makes its inclusion less arbitrary.

approaches to it and the one adopted here, a brief outline of the notions of power, authority and patriarchy prevailing in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English culture will help provide a context for understanding prevailing norms of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour by superiors towards inferiors.

2. *Power, Patriarchy and Family Structure*

At least until the Civil War, early modern English society was ‘overtly patriarchal’ (Eales 1998, 4) in that adult males exercised authority and dominance both within and without the family, ‘a term used by contemporaries to include servants and apprentices as well as blood relations’ (Meldrum 2000, 35).⁵ The family was commonly regarded as a microcosm of the state, the head of the household being equivalent to the monarch and wielding kingly power within the family.⁶ The political theory of patriarchy legitimated by many religious and judicial authorities attributed to the head of a household a power natural and God-given, so that disobedience to either political or paternal jurisdiction was considered not merely disruptive of the social order but also unnatural. In instruction manuals for masters and servants patriarchal ideology was often embodied in the ‘rhetoric of place’ whereby everyone had his/her own place in the social scale appointed and ordained by God (see Griffiths *et al.* 1996).⁷

⁵ The inclusive sense of ‘family’ as ‘people living under the same roof and under the authority of a householder’ is advocated by Tadmor (2001, 22) on the basis of ‘personal, literary, documentary and prescriptive sources’ from mid-seventeenth to the early nineteenth century. Among these are Samuel Johnson’s 1755 Dictionary definition of ‘family’ as ‘those who live in the same house’ (quoted by Tadmor 2001, 19), the diary of Thomas Turner (1754-1765, 27), Haywood’s (1743) and Richardson’s (1734) advice manuals. This evidence suggests that even if servitude was slowly becoming less of a condition and more of a profession this did not necessarily mean that paternalism was dissolving or the traditional idea of the household-family concept vanishing. As Straub (2009, 20) points out, ‘As a period of transition from life-cycle to professional service, the eighteenth century saw the continuation of this tendency to think of servants as children’. Counter to this view is that of Carolyn Steedman who, focusing on a later period (from 1760 to 1830), claims that ‘servants *in* a household were not necessarily *of* the family. They were there by legal arrangement’ (2009, 18), and argues that the idea of servants as family was one of the eighteenth-century ‘Christian narratives to promote the thesis that master and servant were really relations; each part of the other’. In line with Tadmor (and with Steedman for chronological reasons), Meldrum (2000, 76) argues that if ‘a significant ideological shift occurred’ in the notion of the inclusive household family, it was only ‘in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries’, that is, after the period under investigation.

⁶ Hill cites an anonymous pamphlet of 1660 entitled *A Discourse for a King and a Parliament* as declaring that ‘Servants and labourers are in the nature of vassals’ (1975, 227).

⁷ Here is an example: ‘Be not too familiar with thy servants, neither let them be too privy to thy secrets . . . Keep a distance with discretion, that others may know their places, do thou know thine’ (Anonymous 1664, 38-39).

During and after the Civil War patriarchal theories came to be challenged by new ideas and new forms of freedom, but the notions that fathers were the natural heads of households and that masters were as fathers to their servants (relationships implying dominion but also affection) seem to have survived well into the eighteenth century (cf. Eales 1998, 5). As one anonymous seventeenth-century manual advising householders to consider servants living in their homes much in the same way as they did their own children puts it:

Reckon thy servants among thy children; the difference is only in degrees; both make up the oeconomy ... a wise servant is better than a foolish child; cast him not off in old age, when he hath spent himself in thy service ... a faithful servant does well deserve to be counted among thy friends. (Anonymous 1664, 41)

The same idea is expressed in the early eighteenth-century manual by William Darrell,⁸ who warns that 'Your Care must not stop at your Children, let it reach your menial servants; though you are their Master, you are also their Father' (1704, 15).⁹ It is also expressed slightly later by Nicholas Zinzano, who observes 'And 'tis as true that a Servant when affectionate, differeth little from a Son. Affection improves the relationship, and becomes a sort of Adoption' (1725, 52). As Hecht points out, 'in his paternal role, the master was considered accountable for the moral behaviour of his servants' (1980, 76). Literary evidence of the endurance of patriarchal ideals (but also of their post-revolutionary weakening) is Filmer's conservative *Patriarcha, or the Natural Power of Kings* (1680, 78), which states that 'the father of the family governs by no other law than his own will', a statement implying that disobedience was against the law.

Illustrative of the master-father identification was the master's legal right to enforce discipline and obedience by physical punishment: 'As for stubborn and unruly Servants, the law of England gives Masters and Mistresses Power to correct them' (Miège 1703, 288, quoted in Hecht 1980, 79). As we shall see, however, servants were also corrected by means of aggressive and impolite language (see Meldrum 2000, 92-98). Yet another weapon used to secure obedience was the threat of a bad 'character' (or no character at all), characters being essential to obtaining new employment. As an ultimate form of punishment (and manifestation of power), a master might dismiss a servant for what he considered misbehaviour. Here is an account of a dismissal from John Macdonald's *Travels*:

⁸ From the records in ECCO it appears that by 1755 this manual had gone through twelve editions.

⁹ Even John Locke, one of Filmer's strongest opponents, while arguing for a separation of kingly and fatherly power in his *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), does not abandon the idea of the householder as exercising a natural power over his family (Eales 1998, 5).

When she came, he asked her if she knew for what Mrs Innes went away? – Sir, I believe it was because John Macdonald went into her chamber to shave her head. – He turned round, and said nothing; but it turned my master against me, as I soon discovered: for, next day, a number of gentlemen met at Girvan to play at the golf or cricket. The gentlemen, after dinner, drank freely, and my master was in liquor. In the evening, when we came all home to Bargeny, he asked me for one of the clubs that was not in the chaise with the rest. I answered, sir, I suppose it is left at the inn. With that he took one of the clubs, and broke it in pieces over my back, and said, You damn'd scoundrel, provide yourself with a place. (1790, 86-87)

One effect of England's rapid economic expansion in the seventeenth and eighteenth century was to increase the need for a large and mobile labour force. Waged work and the existence of a free labour market became clearer to servants, who could now claim greater occupational freedom for themselves and became aware of their contractual power (see Meldrum 2000). This inevitably raised concerns about social and household order in terms of authority and subordination. Defoe's statement that 'the Peace of Families is ruin'd; all Household Discipline [is] at a full stop' (1724, ii) points exactly to these concerns. In his view, family order had been disrupted and servants become insupportably rude as a result of the 'Advantage of Servants Wages' (81-83). Defoe's lamentation was to be echoed by Fielding about thirty years later.¹⁰ This perceived qualitative change in labour relations may well have had an impact on master-servant relationships, but Defoe's and Fielding's complaints reveal the endurance of paternalistic values as well as the fact that these were felt to be under threat.¹¹ As Meldrum observes, 'the script for patriarchal household mastery was a rhetorical resource available to masters throughout the period [i.e. 1660-1750], a set of ideal devices that exhibited striking continuity across centuries' (2000, 40). This may suggest that, especially in a conservative and authoritarian literary genre such as that of the advice manual, little substantial change can be expected in the type of advice being offered to masters in dealing with servants. On the other hand, we may

¹⁰ Writing in 1751, Fielding denounces the fact that 'Even Servants, in Process of Time, acquired a State of Freedom and Independency unknown to this Rank in any other Nation; and which, as the Law now stands, is inconsistent with a servile Condition' (1751, xi). Like Defoe, he sees trade as the major cause of corruption and subversion: 'Trade ... hath almost totally changed the Manners, Customs, and Habits of the People, more especially of the lower Sort. The Narrowness of their Fortune is changed into Wealth ... their Humility into Pride, and their Subjection into Equality' (*ibid.*).

¹¹ See Griffiths *et al.* (1996, 1-2), who argue that during these centuries of political and socio-economic change, authority and control were contested but were revised more in form than content. In other words, those in authority re-examined and adapted their ideas of power to new circumstances, but this revision consisted more in reinventing the rhetoric of power than in any real effort to mitigate hegemony and control (4).

expect to find the growing demand for servants reflected in exhortations to masters to exercise greater self-control and adopt milder attitudes towards servants in order to avoid the risk of their leaving their places. As we shall see, this is indeed the case.

3. *(Im)politeness: its Historical and Cultural Nature*

What was meant by (im)politeness in the period discussed here? The term ‘politeness’, and associated terms such as ‘civility’, ‘good manners’, ‘complaisance’, and so on, certainly denoted a set of social, cultural and moral values (cf. Brewer 1997, 99-122), but can they also be pinned down to specific verbal behaviours and conversational norms? That they can is suggested by a reading of a number of manuals entirely dedicated to or containing sections dedicated to conversation: S.C.’s *The Art of Complaisance, or the Means to Oblige in Conversation* (1673); Walker’s *Of Education* (1673); Gailhard’s *The Compleat Gentleman* (1678); D.A.’s *The Whole Art of Converse* (1683); the anonymous *Rules for Conversation* (1683); Jones’s *The Man of Manners* (1737?); Constable’s *The Conversation of Gentlemen* (1738); Allen’s *The Polite Lady* (1760).

Although conversational politeness was not a prerogative of late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century conceptions of good manners and civility,¹² it was then that polite conversation came to be regarded as a key social activity aimed at obtaining and confirming acceptability, respect, esteem and affection. These social goals were achieved through manifestations of various moral qualities, such as modesty (S.C. 1673, 74; Crossman 1678, 61; Jones (1737?), iii, 39; Allen 1760, 83), ‘reservation, dissimulation, dexterity, patience, humility, civility and affability’ (S.C. 1673, 8); ‘good nature’ (Allen 1760, 282), and especially complaisance (or agreeableness). S.C. defines complaisance as

an Art to regulate our words and behaviour, in such a manner as may engage the love and respect of those with whom we Converse, by distributing our praises and differences, where the quality or merit of the person require it ... and by mildly suffering the errors and miscarriages of others. (1673, 2)

The ability to please one’s interlocutors by accommodating oneself to their dispositions and humours is also central to the notion of politeness in Allen’s much later manual:

¹² ‘Questions of language ... were central to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century conception of the overall “civility of a society”’ (Bryson 1998, 151). Della Casa’s *Galateo* (1558) is largely concerned with the correction of conversational faults (Bryson 1998, 152), and Jacobean conduct books, such as Cleland’s *Hero-paideia*, contain advice on how a noble man should speak (1607, 188).

she who should treat the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the sprightly and the grave, the reserved and the frank with the same insipid uniformity of behaviour, would have no more title to the character of a polite lady, than the stiff-walking dancing master has to that of the fine gentleman. (1760, 282-283)

Verbal tact (or being considerate of others) and the risk of giving offence became 'a prime concern of the polite gentleman' (Bryson 1998, 110), who must also avoid both giving and taking offence in the name of tolerance and social harmony:

For Civility consists in these things, 1. In *not expressing* by actions, or speeches, *any injury, disesteem, or undervaluing* any other. 2. In *being ready to do all the offices and ordinary kindnesses* for another. And 3ly, in *receiving no injuries or offences* from others. i.e. in *not resenting* every word or action, which may (perhaps rationally) be interpreted to be *disesteem* or undervaluing. (Walker 1673, 211)¹³

Social harmony, however, is not merely central to notions of conversational politeness at this time. As Brewer observes, politeness, with its emphasis on the need for mutual tolerance and understanding, had the broader ideological and cultural function of 'creating coherence and unity in a society characterized by change and variety' and by 'political divisiveness', 'religious and moral crisis' (1997, 98-100). As a means of avoiding social conflict, politeness involved the ability to restrain or regulate one's impulses and emotions such as pride, anger and aggression (see Elias 1978, 53) for the sake of what in modern terms might be referred to as one's own and one's interlocutor's face. As Walker puts it, 'Pride, insolence, stateliness, imperiousness, angriness, are not signs or qualifications of a Gentleman, but the scandals of *Conversation*' (1673, 225); and, as Allen advises his would-be 'Polite Lady', 'you must take care to check and restrain your propensity to anger, and never allow it to break forth into those sudden and violent transports, which are, at once, so shocking and ridiculous' (1760, 254). The opposite of anger, Allen thought, is 'humanity and good-nature ... the foundation ... of many other virtues: such as ... politeness and good-manners' (255, 261). If outbursts of anger are equated with incivility, verbal and physical aggressiveness cannot but be considered rude behaviour, as we shall see in sections 4 and 5.

Translated into conversational norms, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century civility of language consisted of, in the words of S.C., 'speaking soberly, to the purpose, and with respect, keeping silence till we are questioned, and in yielding a willing attention to what is said to us' and 'regulating

¹³ These words are almost exactly the same as those used by Jones ([1737?], 46) except for: 'undervaluing of another' (instead of 'undervaluing any other'), 'to do all good offices' (instead of 'to do all the offices'), 'not rightly' (instead of 'perhaps rationally'), 'be interpreted to under-valuing' (instead of 'be interpreted to be disesteem or under-valuing').

our discourse and our silence ... and studying brevity without obscurity ... principally flying importunity, lying and vanity' (1673, 12, 74-75). Importunity or impoliteness, on the other hand, consisted in being tedious, in not speaking to the purpose, in interrupting, contradicting and anticipating what another would say and in not being attentive to what is said to us; while vanity included boasting and presumption, the latter consisting of imposing our opinions on and contradicting others (75, 82-83; see also Jones [1737?], 28). Direct contradiction is clearly impolite and offensive, as are interrupting, anticipating the interlocutor¹⁴ and being inattentive (cf. Allen 1760, 84-85, 89, 94). Even more offensive and 'destructive of sociable Plesantry' is doubting everything someone says 'with an *unmannerly* Scepticism' (Jones [1737?], 22).

Some of these norms show striking correspondences with Grice's 'Maxims of Conversation', the guidelines for efficient communication and cooperative social interaction constitutive of the 'Cooperative Principle' (1975) which underlies many contemporary theoretical models of politeness, such as Brown and Levinson's (1987).¹⁵ Most of the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century politeness norms we have come across (showing deference, avoiding boasting and contradicting, interrupting and being inattentive) also fall into Brown and Levinson's group of positive politeness strategies, namely actions expressing solidarity with and attention to the interlocutor's desire to be appreciated and approved of (66-67).

Fewer eighteenth-century rules come under Brown and Levinson's heading of negative politeness strategies, that is, behaviour that avoids restricting or impeding the interlocutor's freedom of action (65-66). Among the counsels that do correspond is Crossman's warning against importunate or unbecoming requests (1678, 59); Jones's prohibition on interruptions¹⁶ and excessive talkativeness (1737?, 48), a prohibition also found in Allen (1760, 86); and Jones' advice to be indirect in commands, avoiding 'speaking imperiously, or using any words of Command towards the Person to whom we are speaking' (1737?, 29).¹⁷ The social imperative of complaisance and agreeableness included

¹⁴ This conversational behaviour no longer seems to be perceived as impolite.

¹⁵ The Maxim of Quality 'Be non-spurious' (speak the truth, be sincere) is expressed in 'Flying lying'; the Maxim of Quantity 'Don't say more or less than is required' is represented by 'speaking soberly' and 'studying brevity'; 'speaking ... to the purpose' embodies the Maxim of Relevance 'be relevant'; speaking 'without obscurity' is part of the Maxim of Manner 'Be perspicuous; avoid ambiguity and obscurity' (from Brown & Levinson 1987, 95).

¹⁶ Interruptions threaten both positive and negative face (Brown & Levinson 1987, 67).

¹⁷ Actions to be avoided in the name of 'that Agreeableness which has the Power to conciliate the Applause and Affection of all People' are not keeping promises or promising what one does not intend to or cannot do, loud laughing and drollery (Jones [1737?], iii, 37, 18); the former damage one's own negative face, the latter one's own positive face (see Brown & Levinson 1987, 67-68).

a gentleman's capacity to accommodate to any social rank. The need to adjust matter and manner of discourse to the intellectual and social level of one's interlocutors, and thus avoid giving offence, is 'a pervasive theme of writing on sociable discourse during the seventeenth century' (Bryson 1998, 163), and one which seems to persist into the eighteenth century. Jones, for instance, writes that

Good Manners is defined a Science in instructing how to dispose all our Words and Actions in their proper and true Places. But, nothing can be said ... with Civility, without four Circumstances are observed: First, That every one behave himself according to his Age and Condition. Secondly, That Respect be had to the Quality of the Person with whom we converse. Thirdly, That we consider the Time; and Fourthly, The Place where we are. ([1737?], iii)

Domestic servants were considered to be both intimates and inferiors, as is implied in S.C.'s counsel: '... with our Domesticks and Confidants we must be free, with strangers distrustful, and more reserved, we must honour Superiours, respect our equals, and towards our Inferiours use Courtesie and sweetness' (1673, 177-178). Freedom in addressing servants did not allow for expressions of anger towards servants in company, however, for public reproofs disturbed social harmony: 'Talk not at table any ungrateful or impertinent discours, nor be angry with your servants, nor do any thing which may interrupt the cheerfulness of the company' (Walker 1673, 218). Similarly disturbing was the use of direct or imperious commands to servants at table, where mitigating expressions are recommended: 'When you would address yourself to the Sideboard, the Footman in waiting must be told, *Sir, pray let me have a Glass of Beer or Wine, &c.*' (Jones [1737?], 6). According to J.B. reproaches are to be avoided both in public and in private, as they 'lessen ... People's good Opinion of themselves' (1747, 10), an explanation which seems to echo the modern concept of threatening positive face. A similar appeal to use mildness and easiness towards servants in both contexts is found in Lingard (1670, 27) and in Allen (1760, 243, 254).

It is worth noting that in our manuals threats are not mentioned as examples of uncivil verbal actions, which may suggest that they were considered something more than impolite. The shift in emphasis away from the positive politeness insisted on in early modern English culture to the negative politeness proper to contemporary anglo-centric conceptions of polite verbal behaviour (cf. Taavitsainen and Jucker (2008) is not the only point of divergence between older and newer conceptions of conversational politeness. A more crucial difference seems to lie in the idea of politeness as 'pleasing those with whom we converse' (Allen 1760, 282), a concept which becomes more apparent during the course of the eighteenth century. Giving and receiving pleasure is an aesthetic component that has clearly been lost in today's notion of politeness. Another difference from the conception of politeness now prevailing in western culture

lies in its ideological, instrumental function in ‘creating and maintaining a strictly hierarchical and elitist social structure’ and ‘enforcing social differences’ (Watts 2003, 33; see also Elias 1978).

With the exception of its aesthetic and ideological functions, however, verbal politeness has over time preserved its associations with deference, respect, and consideration for others. The notions of verbal (im)politeness described here represent what Watts (1992; 2003) calls ‘folk interpretations’ of (im)politeness, or ‘first-order (im)politeness’. We are now going to look at conversational (im)politeness from a sociolinguistic, metapragmatic perspective (i.e. Watt’s second-order (im)politeness), by considering some currently-held theoretical interpretations of the phenomenon *per se* and vis-à-vis power.

4. *(Im)politeness and Power Today: A Theoretical Overview*

4.1 *(Im)politeness*

Today’s meta-pragmatic notions of second-order politeness do not seem to depart dramatically from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ‘folk’ conceptions. Lakoff (1975), Leech (1980) and Kasper (1990) for example, see politeness as a strategy for avoiding conflict and minimizing antagonism in interaction. In Brown and Levinson’s (1978; 1987) model, undoubtedly the most influential, politeness has both egoistic and altruistic aims in that it involves concern for one’s own and for the other’s face,¹⁸ while Fraser and Nolen (1981) see politeness as deference, an attitude expected by participants in conversation. What is expected is unmarked and appropriate to a given context, and tends to go unnoticed; when participants violate the rights and obligations of the conversational contract, their behaviour becomes marked and impolite. These linguists seem to emphasize the negative, self-effacing aspects of linguistic politeness, while others (such as Hill *et al.* 1986 and Sifianou 1992) stress its pro-active aspects,¹⁹ that is, showing consideration of others’ feelings, giving mutual comfort, promoting rapport and satisfying shared expectations.²⁰ In addition to these synchronic approaches aspiring to cultural universality and validity, there have been developed theoretical perspectives on (im)politeness which attempt to account for cultural specificities and diachronic variation. The first proponent of a cross-cultural pragmatic approach was Blum-Kulka (1982), followed by Blum-Kulka *et al.*

¹⁸ ‘Face’ is ‘the public self-image that every member [of a society] wants to claim for himself’ (Brown and Levinson 1987, 61). This notion of face is based on Goffman (1955, 1967).

¹⁹ See also Kerbrat-Orecchioni’s (1997) notion of face-enhancing acts.

²⁰ See Eelen 2001 for a critical survey of these and other approaches to politeness.

(1989), while the historical pragmatic approach was inaugurated by Jucker's (1995) edited volume *Historical Pragmatics*. Situated at the crossroads between pragmatics and historical linguistics, studies using this approach examine conventions of language used at earlier stages of the language, and have mainly focussed on speech acts in historical contexts (see especially the first issue of the *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, Jucker and Taavitsainen 2000). More recently, Culpeper and Kádár (2010) have opened up the new sub-field of 'historical (im) politeness research' to which this article can also be ascribed.

To return to the view taken by Fraser and Nolen (1981) – which has been re-elaborated by Kasper (1990) and by Watts (1992; 2003) – unmarked appropriate behaviour is termed 'politic behaviour', while polite behaviour is considered a marked surplus with respect to the norm. According to this view, which I partly share, unmarked, politic behaviour should be the same as expected behaviour, but not necessarily the same as polite behaviour. The latter is marked appropriate behaviour (Locher 2004, 90), whereas impolite behaviour is comportment that is unexpected in some situation or role relation, and negatively violates the norm. Culpeper's definition of impoliteness too hinges on unexpectedness and its emotional consequences. For Culpeper degrees of politeness, impoliteness and aggressiveness in interaction are largely influenced by power relations (2011, 189), which in the master-servant relationship are fairly institutionalised and predictable. Since politeness can be used as a strategy for mitigating power and aggressiveness and protecting face, a short overview of the literature on power and (im)politeness in the workplace will be helpful to our analysis.

4.2 *Power and (Im)politeness*

The power-(im)politeness interface is not a new issue in linguistic research, but literature on the topic has focussed mainly on contemporary manifestations of power and the inter-relationship with politeness rather than on impoliteness (Bousfield and Locher 2008), and on institutional and professional settings rather than on private ones (Harris 2003; Holmes and Stubbe 2003; Locher 2004; Mullany 2004). Eighteenth-century domestic service represents a special type of occupational context because of its liminal position between the professional and the familiar. At least until the mid-eighteenth century, it was regarded as pertaining more to what we would now think of as the private sphere; as William Blackstone stated in 1765: 'The three great relations in private life are, 1. That of *master and servant* ... 2. That of *husband and wife* ... 3. That of *parent and child*' (410). The fact that the work-place coincided with the home might have contributed to this view, although this was also the case with many forms of trade, such as shop-keeping.

The mixed status of the servant, seen as both 'individual agent selling his or her labor for the best available price' and 'as part of the family, working for motives of affection and loyalty' (Straub 2009, 6) was, in the view of some

historians, responsible for tensions in the master-servant relationship becoming particularly acute in the eighteenth century (Hecht 1980, 77).²¹ The literature of complaint against servants in this period suggests that these tensions arose out of masters' attempt to impose control and exact loyalty, and servants' attempts to win or preserve their independence and limit their obligations. The key concept for understanding the dynamics of power and politeness between employer and employee is freedom, which masters could claim for themselves and which servants had temporarily relinquished.

Present-day interpretations of power do not differ dramatically from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ones: both involve control, social status and manifest or latent conflict. Control is central to Brown and Gilman's definition of power: 'One person may be said to have power over another in the degree that he is able to control the behaviour of the other' (1960, 255, quoted in Locher 2004, 2-3). For van Dijk control entails some restriction of action whereby 'the exercise of power by A results in the limitation of B's social freedom of action' (1989, 20). The exercise of power can be intentional and strategic, claims Wartenberg (1990). This is typically the case with threats, which restrict the action-environment of the addressee coercing him/her into doing or not doing something. Power can also be exercised unintentionally, however. This is the case 'when asymmetrical power roles ... reflect societal norms or ideologies' (Locher 2004, 9), as in the master-servant relationship. Ideologies are cultural constructs that take power differences for granted (Fairclough 1989) but, since power is negotiable, it is hardly ever exercised without meeting some degree of resistance. Hence the possibility of conflict, which Lukes (1974) identifies as a clash between the interests of those who exercise power and those over whom power is exercised. Reproaches are examples of actions that can be performed to further the interests of both the more powerful and the less powerful. Power is manifested on a gradient: it can be exercised very bluntly or with varying degrees of softness. As we shall see, reproaches and threats stand at the upper end of this gradient, immediately preceding physical force. In the section that follows, we shall consider threats and reproaches vis-à-vis impoliteness, aggressiveness and power.

5. *Threats*

Threats belong to the class of commissive speech acts which commit a speaker to take some future action directed at a hearer; threats in particular have 'the perlocutionary intention of intimidating the hearer ... and with the

²¹ More than any actual increase in tension, what may have been specific to the eighteenth century was, according to Straub, 'the emergence of a social consciousness of those tensions', which 'came to be called the "servant problem"' (2009, 2, 5).

presupposition (preparatory condition) that it is bad for him' (Vanderveken 1990, 183; see also Searle and Vanderveken 1985). Together with insults, threats are the most face-threatening of social acts, because they impinge on both the addressee's negative and his/her positive face by impeding freedom of action and diminishing his/her image (Brown and Levinson 1987, 66-67). They are also the acts most frequently associated with speakers in positions of power (Harris 1984; Song 1995; Culpeper 1996) and with coercive and manipulative communicative strategies (Limberg 2009, 1376),²² as they put psychological pressure on the addressee in an effort to elicit or discourage some action (Tedeschi 1970; Benoit 1983; Wierzbicka 1987).

In our data, explicit mention of threats is made in five manuals only: three of them, all published soon after the Restoration, have a strong foundation in Holy Scriptures. Bunyan, invoking apostolic authority, bids masters forbear from threatening servants who are 'guilty of ... miscarriages'. As a deterrent, he reminds masters that they too have a 'Master in Heaven':

Take heed thou carry nor thy self to thy Servant, as he of whom it is said, he is such a Son of *Belial* that his Servants could not speak to him; I Sam. 25.14, 15, 16, 17. And the Apostle bids you forbear, to threaten them, because you also have a Master in Heaven ... wherefore do with, and to your Servants, as you would have your Master do with you. (1663, 61)

Here the negative consequences of threatening befall the master in the afterlife. The idea that threatening behaviour will lead to social disapproval or loss of face (such as by being considered a 'Son of *Belial*') is suggested as a secondary deterrent, while possible damage to the equilibrium of master-servant relations is not an issue.

Swinnock, who like Bunyan was a preacher, starts his discussion of threatening behaviour from the same premise – 'Consider, that thou hast a *Master in Heaven*' (1663, 109, 113) – but then takes a different tack. The arguments he uses to dissuade a master from threatening are, firstly, that it might 'expose him to contempt from his Servants', and secondly, that

There is no such vast difference betwixt thy self and thy servant, as thy haughty spirit would suggest ... *Master* and *Servant* are made of the same mould, and have the same maker ... Though there be a *civil* difference, there is no natural difference; for he is the same flesh, thy *own flesh*. (1663, 110)

²² More than any actual increase in tension, what may have been specific to the eighteenth century was, according to Straub, 'the emergence of a social consciousness of those tensions', which 'came to be called the "servant problem"' (2009, 2, 5).

The first of these points to the (secondary)²³ negative perlocutionary effects of threatening, that is, loss of the servant's esteem or affect. The second argument points to the master's sense of superiority/haughtiness, a mental state represented as unjustified before God. A threat thus becomes a gratuitous, arbitrary and abusive exercise of power. There is no degree of power, however high, that can justify threats as politic behaviour.

Unsurprisingly, in these manuals dissuasion is all master-oriented, and shows no concern for the possible negative perlocutionary effects of threats on servants, who are treated as if they were marginal participants or non-persons (cf. Steedman 2004). In a way, these manuals seem to embody the haughtiness they criticise in masters.²⁴ We have to wait until 1730 for Robert Dodsley's *Footman's Advice* to offer a new perspective on power and impoliteness. Dodsley, a servant himself, attempts to arouse empathy for servants in order to dissuade masters from threatening and reproaching, which are depicted as inhumane actions:

I am persuaded, if some Gentlemen could ... imagine all those galling Reproaches, imperious Menaces, and degrading Jeers, with which they daily flout and revile poor Servants; I say, if they would but imagine all these Things as levell'd at themselves, and reflect what Emotions would be rais'd in them upon such Usage, they would certainly treat us with more Candour and Humanity. (1730, 12)

We have now to establish the threat-(im)politeness interface in the context of the idea of mastery that emerges from these sources. In late seventeenth-century manuals, good conduct is synonymous with Christian behaviour, that is, behaviour characterized by kindness and mercy. Kindness involves forgiveness, indulgence and understanding of human weaknesses; 'learn of the Lord Jesus to carry yourself well to your Servants, that your servants may learn something of the kindness of Christ by your Department to them', Bunyan advises masters (1663, 63-64). Equivalent to this is the eighteenth-century notion of tolerance, in which mercy (or compassion) seems to coincide with humane behaviour (namely absence of cruelty) and mitigated manifestations of power. As Swinnock puts it, 'God teaches us ... to mix our authority with clemency, for he hates tyranny' (1663, 109). In Allen pity and compassion are associated with politeness and good manners (1760, 261), and one definition

²³ Primary perlocutionary effects are those, such as fear or intimidation, produced in the addressee immediately upon performance of an act of threatening. These may give rise to secondary perlocutionary effects projected onto the addresser, such as contempt – especially in cases of systematic threatening.

²⁴ In terms of (im)politeness, this lack of concern for the servant's face had probably to do with the view that since servants had renounced their freedom by contract, they could not lay claim (negative) face concerns (that is, freedom of action and freedom from imposition).

of ‘mercy’ in the *OED* is ‘kind [i.e. polite] and compassionate treatment in a case where severity is merited or expected’.²⁵ Yet mercy and politeness differ in terms of their relations to power. While politeness is a mitigating strategy that affects the way some act is performed, mercy is an attribute of the more powerful, and expresses beneficial authority and power. As such, its mitigating function can only be realized by not performing verbal acts that are detrimental to those who are in a subordinate position.

In fact, the moderate exercise of power does not consist of mildness in threatening, but in avoiding threatening altogether, as recommended by Swinnock and Bunyan. One can, on the other hand, be merciful in threatening by abstaining from performing the action expressed in the threat (i.e. giving up commitment):

forbear threatening; or, rather, as the original word signifies, remitting their threats; that is, not always executing the harsh declarations they have made, or resolutions they have taken up, against them, but restraining and receding from the severe sentences they have denounced in their wrath ... (Delany 1744, 208)

As observed by Harris, unlike directives, which can be politely attenuated in force and range from requests to orders, threats are ‘always at the fierce end of any scale, unless used facetiously’; this implies that ‘there is no degree of intensity in threats’ (1984, 251, quoted in Limberg 2009, 1380). Although one might object that serious threats too may be formally mitigated by using polite linguistic and paralinguistic devices such as indirectness, polite formulae and tone of voice, these strategies do not necessarily mitigate the perlocutionary, intimidatory force of a threat. Indirect reproaches and commands, for example, tend to be milder because indirectness leaves more options for non-compliance (Leech 1983). But when a threat takes an indirect form, its force is only made opaque, and by no means attenuated, as shown by this example from the first volume of Defoe’s *The Family Instructor*. A master is addressing his apprentice, Thomas, who refuses to tell him how he spends his time during his evenings at a neighbour’s house:

Ma. ‘... *Thomas*, I must talk with you a little; I have observ’d it ... here in the House, that your Conduct is alter’d very much from what it us’d to be, and you seem dull and melancholly, I must know what is the matter with you: If you do not like your Business, tell me honestly, *Thomas*; tho’ you are bound, I will not keep you against your Will; I have a Respect for you, and for your Father, and I won’t force your Inclination; if you are willing to go, *Thomas*, you shall; and therefore I would have you speak plainly, what is it you dislike the Trade for?’

Tho. No Sir, I don’t dislike the Trade at all; but and you please to let me go I shall be very—
[Here his Master interrupts him. (1715, 232)]

²⁵ <<http://www.oed.com>>, accessed 8 January 2015.

What to the modern reader might seem an act of liberality on the master's side, is in fact meant as a threat, as becomes clear from the master's exchange with Thomas's father:

Ma. ... If I challenge him with his going out, and pretend to demand a strict Account of his time, and he refuses, what can I do, but threaten to turn him away? And that it seems he desires, and yet he will not tell me the Reason of it neither ... (244)

This leads us to query the current tendency to include threats among forms of impolite behaviour (Limberg 2009) and classify them as intrinsically impolite acts (Leech 1983, 83; Brown and Levinson 1987, 65). Swinnock (1663, 110) qualifies threatening as 'fierce', which seems to suggest that 'aggressive' could be a more appropriate descriptor than 'impolite'. However, the fact that he opposes cruelty and rigour to kindness and courteousness (114) points to a cultural tendency to consider violence as a breach of politeness,²⁶ a tendency which persists in anglocentric frameworks of politeness. It is true that impoliteness and aggressiveness are sometimes seen as overlapping, so that the dividing line between the two is often blurred. Yet, it seems to me that it is possible to distinguish between them and that threats are useful for this purpose. The reason why threats cannot be adequately accommodated within a theory of impoliteness (unless they are mingled with insults) is that their perlocutionary aim and effect is intimidation, not offence. In fact, while offensiveness is a perlocutionary effect shared by aggressiveness and impoliteness, intimidation is a prerogative of the former only. For the same reason, there is hardly any context in which they could be considered politic or appropriate behaviour.

In the context of mastery, threats may represent the end-point on a scale of power and aggressiveness (cf. Harris 1984, quoted in Limberg 2009). In the following example threats are seen as an exasperated form of reproach, and are described as being uttered with utmost severity, resentment and passion, and with intent to make servants more careful: 'In all Cases Reproof is to be reasonable, and therefore as free from Passion, as may be ... for which reason St. *Paul* cautions Masters against it, advising them to forbear threatening, and putting them in mind, that they also have a Master in Heaven' (Anonymous 1718, 9).

In our next example, violent rage prompts a threat and follows a command. A colonel has a daughter who is secretly in love with his coachman. Upon seeing the coachman 'take her out of the Coach in his Arms, and holding her in his Arms a good while, kiss her several times, and she ... give him leave to do it, as long as he wou'd', the colonel

²⁶ This is evident in Seaton (1720, 179-180): 'Fighting (i.e. shedding of blood) ... is ... brutish and disorderly, with respect to that Civility and good Behaviour, which are strictly required in all Families that are well regulated'.

run in upon them, *Unhand her, Villain!* Said he to the Coachman, *or I'll this Minute send you to the Devil:* The Fellow (surpriz'd you may suppose) set her down, but gave his Master the most impudent Language imaginable; and which the Gentleman not able to take, gave him a large Cut over the Face, with his Sword. (Defoe 1724, 179-180)

Here the colonel's threat to send the coachman '*to the Devil*' reinforces the directive and coercive force of the command to unhand the daughter, and is effective in that it obtains the desired behaviour, but it then triggers in the addressee a face-threatening reaction aimed at restoring his own face. The physical violence which follows the coachman's 'impudent' reaction seems to confirm that threats, together with strong insults, occupy a position at the upper end of a scale of aggressiveness, beyond which lies only physical aggression. However, in that it is triggered by anger, the threat would also be considered impolite according to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century conception of politeness as a means to self-control and restraint of passions.

The same can be said about our next example, where a sarcastic threat is reinforced by a menacing gesture that does not induce the desired action in the addressee, nor, apparently, the intended perlocutionary effect of intimidating him. The participants are the same as in the previous example, and the pattern is also the same: threat – impudent reply – physical reaction. The coachman is telling the colonel that even if he is now 'a poor Servant', he was born 'a Gentleman' and came of 'a good Family', and therefore it was not dishonourable for his daughter to become engaged to him:

for, Sir, *says he* [the coachman], I have as good Blood in my Veins as yourself, with some other Language, which the Colonel cou'd not bear; upon which, he took his Sword in his Hand ... and opening the Door, said (with a little Smile) Then, Sir, if you don't immediately get out of my House, I'll let some of your Gentlemanly Blood out for you, and that presently too.

Sir, *says the Coachman*, I am none of your Servant, *now*, but as good a Man as your self: This provok'd the Colonel farther, and he rose up ... and thrust the Villain out of his Door, and kick'd him down the Steps. (Defoe 1724, 182; emphasis added)

The two above examples illustrate impoliteness eliciting aggressiveness, both verbal and physical, and show that the two phenomena are often in a cause-effect relation. More importantly, the second example seems to confirm our questioning of the status of threats as impolite acts. It shows that in fact polite linguistic devices – such as the euphemistic mock politeness²⁷ expressed in 'I'll let some of your Gentlemanly Blood out for you' – far from minimizing the speaker's commitment, transmit to the addressee a perlocutionary,

²⁷ The speaker himself offers to do something that is unfavourable to the addressee.

intimidating intent, adding sarcasm to the threat and aggravating the speaker's manifestation of his authority and power.

Threats are aggressive unless used in jest and habitually by the more powerful speaker:

This Gentleman, in reproving his Steward ... us'd this extraordinary Expression, almost upon all Occasions, Prithee *Humphry*, don't be sawcy; I can't bear your insolent Tongue; *I'll kill you*, you Dog, if you talk so to me, I tell you, *I'll kill you*; this he often said in Jest, after he had us'd it pretty much. (Defoe 1724, 203)

Whether exaggerated and jocular threats preserve some of their aggressive quality – especially in the eyes of an external observer – or whether they lose it completely is for the modern reader hard to say.

6. *Reproaches*

In Vanderveken's classification, reproaches are placed among assertive speech acts, and described as being used 'to accuse with the special mode of achievement of adding personal displeasure as a punishment for the wrongdoing' (1990, 179). In Brown and Levinson reproaches are classified as impolite because they threaten positive face, 'by indicating that the speaker does not care about the addressee's feelings' (1987, 66). Like threats, reproaches are issued from a position of authority, especially moral authority. But it is possible that, as in the case of threats, 'aggressive' is a more appropriate descriptor for reproaches than 'impolite'.

We mentioned earlier that masters were responsible for both the physical and spiritual welfare of their servants. In their roles as moral instructors, they had a duty to 'correct them [servants] in their faults' (Delany 1744, 189, 209). The prototypical speech act serving the function of correcting is the reproach. This is evident in Swinnock, where reproof is necessary in case of lying or swearing: 'Reproof is due to a servant sinning, as much as his diet; nay, a servant that will not be corrected with words, must with blows, Prov.29.19' (1663, 122). Reproaches are seen here as the last step before physical punishment, that is, before physical aggression.

In the more secular *Advice of a Father*, on the other hand, all physical punishment of adult servants is prohibited: 'if he [the servant] be at mans Estate, strike him not; blows become neither thee nor him' (Anonymous 1664, 41). In handing out reproaches, moreover, the pragmatic variables of addressee, entity of fault and time are to be taken into account: 'In Reproving, mind the person, and the time, nothing requires more prudence, than a right Reproof; if he be above thee, let it be with the more meekness, and in much humility; with thy equal thou may'st be the more bold, and bolder with thy inferiour' (21-22). Although meekness (or moderation) is deemed less necessary when

addressing an inferior, a reproach always entails the risk of conflict. This is acknowledged in the exhortation to be prudent (quote above) and (quote below), to choose the appropriate time or avoid reproaches altogether unless necessary: 'Be sure to take the fittest season; without great reason reprove none' (22). Exceptional in our corpus is the idea that a public context aggravates the force and severity of a reproach, which shows clear concern for the servant's feelings: 'Rebuke in private; publick reproof hardens; and he is most prone to offend, who is past shame' (41). Reference to the negative consequences of reproaching publicly (which tends to exacerbate servants' faults rather than amend them) shows instead concern for the master's face, as in the observation that a private reproach is usually more effective than a public one: 'when alone, a man may be willing to hear of that which [*sic*] he would not have another hear of' (22).

Same or perhaps greater sensitivity to the servant's condition and feelings is found in Fleetwood, who emphasises the servant's (dis)comfort. Again, the negative effects of excessive reproofing are highlighted. The master is

not to persue them with perpetual contumely and reproach ... It is one of the worst ways in the World of shewing our Superiority by giving ill Language, and words that become no body, to receive. The condition of Servitude is of it self grievous enough, without the additional evil of being on all occasions treated with contempt and scorn; and if the truth were known, the Service is not the better perform'd, for such perpetual chidings and upbraidings, especially in so unseemly manner ... Servants that perform their Duty, do it better with good words, and live more comfortably. (1705, 407)²⁸

Fleetwood opposes 'perpetual reproach' to 'equal' usage, that is, 'such usage and treatment as is fair, good-natur'd and humane' (406), to be achieved with good words and sensibility. It follows that perpetual reproach is inhumane, a quality more appropriately classed as aggressive than impolite. Reproaches tend to be aggressive when accompanied by strong emotion and especially when mingled with insults: 'his Master ... being provok'd at his Ingratitude: *You ungrateful Dog*, says he, did I take you to run at my Horse Foot, and can you talk thus to me; and with that ... flew to his Cane' (Defoe 1724, 198). In this example, the imminent physical aggression makes the aggressive force of the reproach clearer.

More moderate is the following reproach, uttered after good words have proved ineffective and the master has lost patience. The servant has been unjustly insulted by another master (i.e. not his own but his master's

²⁸ The term 'unseemly' is ambiguous in its reference between reproach and contumely. Of course, it may well refer to both, given the tendency shown in these manuals to consider aggressiveness indecent and thus impolite.

neighbour);²⁹ and wants to vindicate his damaged reputation and credibility. His master tries to dissuade him with a reproach that points to the dramatic power and status gap between himself and his servant:

so I gave him good Words, and seeing he was heated ... I endeavour'd to calm him; but I found it would not do, he insisted, that he was resolv'd to do himself Justice; why you Fool, *says I*, what do you mean by doing your self Justice? You don't pretend to put yourself upon an equal Foot with this Gentleman, and go and demand Satisfaction of him, do you? ... I will do myself Right without Fighting, *says he*. (Defoe 1724, 27-28; emphasis added)

Neither the reproach nor the insult 'you Fool' seems to offend the servant, who has just told his master that what he 'said to him was nothing', for he was 'his Master'. It seems that when verbal abuse is habitual and comes from a familiar and acknowledged superior, it may fail to cause offence even if the words used are in themselves perceived as offensive. In other words, the addressee may choose not to take offence at insults or reproaches, but abusive force remains a property of the verbal act.³⁰ This means that the offensiveness of a speech act cannot be measured by the addressee's reaction or be equated with the addressee's degree of offendedness, as Culpeper (2011) suggests.

For the anonymous author of *Instructions for Masters, Traders, Labourers*, reasonable and just reproofs are those delivered without passion and proportionate to the fault and the person. In discouraging masters from passionate reproofing, this conduct book emphasises what we would describe as the negative perlocutionary effects on good-tempered servants and on their future performance. In the case of an accident, for example, 'the very Accident it self is Grief enough, without the Addition of a Master's Passionate

²⁹ Here is the antecedent. The servant in question had caught the servant of his master's neighbour opening the gate and driving horses into his own master's ground. The two servants were then called before the two masters and the neighbour's servant denied the charge, levelled by the first. At this the neighbour 'flies out in ... Rage at my Man ... and then it was *Damn me*, I won't believe a Word you say, you are a lying Dog, you see my Man denies it; my Servant then offer'd to go before a Justice, and swear it, then he flew out again, you swear it! you are a Rascal, *G – Damn me*, I won't believe your Oath, no more than your Word, and there he went storming, and swearing, and raging about the House, and calling my Man a thousand Dogs and Villains ...' (Defoe 1724, 25).

³⁰ Even if the master's intentions are good and he speaks in the interests of his servant, the epithet comes from a superior and is uttered in earnest. These contextual factors do not cancel or diminish the intrinsically negative, offensive semantic content of 'Fool' (cf. the use of the more offensive 'you Dog' in the episode with the coachman). Different is the case of insults of solidarity among friends, where the aim is clearly jocular, and where pragmatics override semantics and cancels their offensive potential; even then, insults must be as exaggerated as possible in their semantics to avoid the risk of being taken seriously and causing offence (see Labov 1975).

Resentments, which only serve to Change the Grief into Confusion, and instead of making a Servant more careful, puts him beyond himself, and makes him not know what he does' (1718, 8).

In our next example a just reproach is given without temper. A gardener has not executed his master's order to make a hot-bed. His master tells him 'that he expected, when he order'd a Thing to be done, it shou'd be dispatch'd, and not the Time spent at Backdoors, and Chatting with Companions, &c' (Defoe 1724, 214). Passionate reproaching is explicitly associated with aggressive, impolite behaviour in our next example, where it is opposed to mildness and affability. Here the master is dissuaded 'from being the Aggressor' through the master-centred argument of power impairment: 'behave to them [Servants] with Mildness and Affability; not passionately abusing them, or peevishly cavilling with them, to gratify your own splenetick Humour; but ... reprehending Faults with Temper ... For nothing more impairs Authority than too frequent, or indiscreet Exertion of it' (Barnard 1740, 60). This example shows that even if reproaches are more often considered aggressive than impolite, polite linguistic or paralinguistic devices can attenuate their force; unlike threats, therefore, serious reproaches are not intrinsically aggressive.

In Delany, as in Fleetwood, excessive reproaching is again stigmatized as inhumane:

... that teizing vexatious humour of some masters is carefully to be avoided, that dwells eternally upon a fault, and delights in perpetual taunts and insults, upon the conduct and character of such as are in subjection to them. This ... is hateful and inhuman ... and is a sure argument of an abject mean mind. (1744, 217)

It is worth noting that both here and in Barnard reproaching is represented not as the expression of a feeling of superiority, but of a humoural imbalance in the master, 'splenetick' in Barnard, and 'vexatious' in Delany.

7. *Conclusions*

The aim of this article was to explore the discourse dynamics of power, (im)politeness and aggressiveness as considered in texts dealing with master-servant relationship published in English during the second half of the seventeenth and the first half of eighteenth century. The study paid more attention to the masters' side of the story, and chose to focus on two speech act types prototypically associated with impoliteness, aggressiveness and pronounced power asymmetries, namely threats and reproaches, both of which have received little attention from a synchronic viewpoint and have also been surprisingly neglected from a historical pragmatic perspective. This article is therefore a contribution to both fields of study, the socio-historical and the pragma-linguistic. Based on data extracted

manually from more than twenty-five advice manuals for masters, servants and apprentices published between 1660 and 1750, it has attempted, firstly, to see how social and cultural changes (i.e. greater mobility and wage labour for servants and the rise of a new culture of politeness) are reflected in the manuals in terms of writers' attitudes to masters' reproaching and threatening. Secondly, it reassesses the status of reproaches and threats vis-à-vis impoliteness and aggressiveness. Our data show that the use of threats was strongly discouraged and stigmatized as being associated with a sense of pride and superiority that has no natural justification. Threats are presented as an immoderate, abusive form of exercise of power to which no one should feel entitled. A chronological shift in the rhetorical strategies and arguments used to dissuade masters from threatening servants can be observed between earlier and later manuals, a movement away from the spiritual appeals of earlier manuals to the more secular concerns for the master's face, and especially for the servants' feelings, which we find in later ones. Seventeenth-century manuals insist on after-life consequences of threatening, which is represented as a sin, and on the negative social consequences of threatening for the master's positive face, as masters may lose the servants' affect and esteem and this will diminish their power and authority. In the eighteenth century emphasis is on the inhumanity of threatening and the master's empathy towards servants.

A similar change is observable in the case of reproaches, which are often associated with threats as expressions of anger. Reproaching for moral faults is seen as necessary in earlier manuals, but discouraged as socially risky in later ones. Greater emphasis on the contextual variables and on empathy for the servant's feelings is again manifested as we approach the eighteenth century, a change that seems to reflect the rise of a polite culture calling for sensibility and refinement.

In terms of socio-pragmatic status, harsh threats and reproaches can be considered impolite by eighteenth-century parameters of politeness, as they lead to social conflict, disturb social harmony and reveal lack of self-discipline and control of emotions and impulses. However, semantic and pragmatic descriptors such as 'fierce' for threats and 'inhuman' for reproaches seem to place them closer to aggressive behaviour than to impoliteness. In particular, in eighteenth-century manuals dealing with polite conversation threats are never mentioned, while reproaches are, which suggests that threats were seen as belonging to a class of behaviour well beyond impoliteness. This, plus the fact that, like reproaches, threats are often represented as preceding physical violence, led us to hypothesise that they are in fact forms of aggressive behaviour and to question the contemporary consensus of linguists about their status as intrinsically or contextually impolite acts.

Our conclusions are therefore that in our corpus the use of polite linguistic and paralinguistic devices in serious threats was not seen as attenuating their intimidating perlocutionary force: indirectness, for example, makes their

force opaque, not weaker; that euphemisms and mock politeness were seen as tending to imbue threats with sarcasm and to aggravate a speaker's display of power without mitigating the speaker's commitment or intimidatory intent; and finally, that the perlocutionary aim and effect of intimidation seems to be associated with aggressiveness, not with impoliteness, though threats can also be impolite if they contain abusive expressions. Somewhat different is the case of reproaches, which constitute politic behaviour on the part of a master when uttered with mildness, and become impolite and aggressive when mixed with insults and uttered in an angry tone of voice. Their possible perlocutionary effect of putting a servant 'beyond himself' and making 'him not know what he does' shows their aggressive perlocutionary potential, but the fact that their offensiveness and expressive force can be attenuated by polite linguistic and paralinguistic devices shows that, unlike threats, they are not intrinsically aggressive.

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Tell Your Story to No One: 'Re-Servicing' Virtue in the Magdalen House

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Abstract

The article probes the amphibious character of the 'slippery' servant-maid who methodically migrates between servitude and prostitution. It focuses in particular on the revision of the servant-maid/prostitute in the 1759 novel *The Histories of Some of the Penitents in the Magdalen House*, published concomitantly with the opening of the Magdalen Hospital for Penitent Prostitutes as an aid in its object of re-training fallen women for domestic service. The literary re-imagining of *Histories* is analysed here through its engagement with the most significant *topoi* in master-servant relations recurring in both anti-servant literature and domestic conduct manuals as well as within the larger context of the so-called *Pamela* controversy.

Keywords: Eighteenth Century, Magdalen Charity, 'Pamela' Controversy, Prostitution, Service

Now, is it but reasonable to suppose, that such women will be found faithful and excellent servants, whose woeful experience hath taught them the sad consequences of deviation from virtue; whose minds have been diligently cultivated with the best instructions, and whose industrious way of life in, and attendance upon, the house, must necessarily qualify them for all menial offices. Nor have we any doubt but the virtuous and humane, nay, any such who perhaps can assist this charity in no other way, will at least endeavor to assist it by employing the women in their services; of whom at least they may be assured to have a faithful character, and whose former way of life may certainly, by proper measures, be preserved an inviolable secret.

William Dodd, *An Account of the Rise, Progress, and Present State of the Magdalen Hospital, for the Reception Penitent Prostitutes*, 1769

1. *Introduction*

It is safe to say that one of Daniel Defoe's pet peeves was the servant class, against which he orchestrated a long catalogue of complaints over a number of



different works either directly or indirectly addressing the ‘servant problem’.¹ Defoe’s concerns for the ‘Insufferable Liberty’ and ‘Universal Degeneracy’ of servants intensively and intriguingly narrow their target onto the character of the ‘slippery’ servant-maid, accused of methodically migrating between service and prostitution:

Many of them rove from place to place, from bawdy-house to service, and from service to bawdy-house again, ever unsettled and never easy, nothing being more common than to find these creatures one week in a good family and the next in a brothel: This amphibious existence makes them fit for neither. (1725, 7)

The focus of this essay is the relationship between servitude and prostitution as meticulously examined in the anonymous 1759 novel *The Histories of Some of the Penitents in the Magdalen House. Histories* (Batchelor and Hiatt 2007) was published concomitantly with, and indeed as a sort of ‘public relations vehicle’ for, the opening of the Magdalen House for Penitent Prostitutes in Goodman’s Fields (Grossman 2000, 247). The founding of this charitable institution was preceded by an impassioned debate aimed at identifying the social categories fuelling prostitution but more centrally concerned with the possibility of re-training prostitutes for legitimate trades, the most important of which, as my epigraph shows, was domestic service.²

In each ward of the Magdalen hung a plaque commanding the penitents to ‘Tell Your Story to No One’ (Compston 1917, 199). On entering the charity the penitents had to give a *single* detailed account of themselves, and, following this confession-like ritual marking their desire for purification and transition, they were re-named. The words on the plaque were aimed at protecting the women from their past, but also hinted at the seductive power of storytelling. In its bid to aid the Magdalen’s re-servicing of its *real* inmates into pardonable and potentially re-employable members of society, *Histories* had to do precisely the opposite and create imaginary connections with its protagonists through storytelling. The novel is composed of four first-person accounts; three are by women who have worked as prostitutes either in a brothel or walking the streets, while the anonymous Madgalen Two is a kept mistress. Gathered together after their daily labour, the women in turn tell the stories of their fall from virtue and the steps which led them to voluntarily enter the Magdalen House. Interestingly, as if to bring these characters into sharper focus, the only two women explicitly named, Emily and Fanny, are those who have moved from service to prostitution

¹ The beginnings of what, in the nineteenth century, came to be called ‘the servant problem’ are clearly detectable in commentators’ grievances from the preceding century; see Straub 2009, chapter 1.

² The charity published yearly lists citing its successes and failures so that subscribers could keep track of its progress (Dodd 1776, 325-326).

or vice versa. Since Jennie Batchelor and Megan Hiatt's important 2007 edition, *Histories* has received growing critical attention, but has so far not been read, as it is here, as a surprisingly articulated response to the social, economic, and ultimately narrative issue of de-coupling the servant from the whore.

2. *Prostitution and Service: Histories and the 'Overwriting' of the Pamela Controversy*

The ubiquitous visibility of female servants catering to England's expanding middle classes, and the seasonal surpluses of unskilled female labourers tempted by easy transition into prostitution, were often classed, by tormented eighteenth-century observers, as categories reciprocally feeding on one another (see Kent 1989, 111-128, and Lewis and Ellis 2012, 1). The servant-maid turned prostitute served to throw into relief anxieties about growing inurbation, changing marriage patterns, conspicuous consumption and the risks these posed to social order as well as to the proper separation of the public and private spheres. As the author of *Pretty Doings in a Protestant Nation* explains:

The Town being overstock'd with Harlots, is entirely owing [*sic*] to those Numbers of Woman-Servants, incessantly pouring into it from all Corners of the Universe, and those Debaucheries practis'd upon 'em in almost all Families that entertain them ... so that a poor Wench who serves for four or five Pounds a Year Wages, shall be liable to go through as much Drudgery, as a Livery-Horse, that's let out to a City Prentice for a Sunday's Airing. ('Father Poussin' 1734, 4-5)³

What is highlighted here is not simply the vast numbers but the systematic objectification of these women; in a similar vein, Richard Steele's *Spectator* had placed on the same perceptual plane the 'provisions' the narrator has come to pick up from the country and a young girl he witnesses being inveigled into prostitution through the promise of service: the girl, writes Steele, 'had come on the same wagon as my things' (No. 266, 4 January 1712). These writers offer a version of the two most popular kernel narratives for the servant-maid/prostitute: she is either seduced and lured into prostitution because it offers relief from the 'drudgery' of service, or she doesn't even make it into service and is tricked into a brothel by one of the many bawds patrolling the coaching inns or the register offices.

My argument on the 're-servicing' of penitent prostitutes within the Magdalen House will be built up by intertwining several strands of material. I shall try to re-trace the contours of the particular anxiety the figure of the servant-maid/prostitute elicited, showing how it concentrated especially around a number of recurrent concerns which became commonplaces in pamphlets, tracts

³ This work, which the title page says 'was written originally in French by Father Poussin', has been attributed to Bernard Mandeville.

and in both anti-servant literature and advice manuals. These concerns take the form of *topoi*, or expand into kernel narratives, which may in turn become more closely analysed sequences of events. I will be looking at the *topoi* of clothes, conspicuous consumption, thrift vs. idleness, productive and unproductive labour; I will examine the image-clusters which develop around the idea of the house, the space where the work of both servant and prostitute is carried out, with the related issues of 'giving notice' and intra-mural relationships between masters and servants; also, I shall concentrate on the way *Histories* transforms the inevitable 'progress' of the harlot into spiritual development, thereby confronting the servant-related issues of love across the social divide, pregnancy and education.

By dialoguing indirectly with the *topoi* and kernel narratives of the 'servant problem', *Histories* provided fictional bolstering for the charity's reformative scheme. Its reassessment of the character of the 'slippery servant-maid', however, could not be complete without tackling some of the issues related to its most renowned literary representative, Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*. The fascination with and fetishisation of this character found its most eloquent expression in what critics have dubbed the 'Pamela controversy' (Keymer and Sabor 2005, 2). The fevered textual responses (five in 1742 alone) to Richardson's best-selling novel demonstrate its status as a 'frame breaking work', and the bitterness of the controversy it generated was certainly prompted by the novelty of 'the new social paradigm it had presented' (Keymer and Sabor 2005, 87). However, Richardson's insistence on Pamela's exemplarity and uniqueness (all servant-maids should behave like Pamela but not all should expect to marry their master) bucked the established narrative of the servant-maid prostitute to the extent that all anti-*Pamela* narratives force the Pamela figure firmly back into whoredom, singling out her virtue as a 'sham', irredeemably corrupted *before* and *beyond* the textual action. The servant-maid 'acts' innocent, just like the prostitute; she 'performs' submissiveness and love, her real object being gain and social status. The actual instruction *Pamela* conveys, as Fielding's Parson Tickle text explains in *Shamela*, is that servants should 'look out for their masters as sharp as they can'. Harnessing traditional grievances against the servant-maid, he adds that the consequences of this will be 'the neglect of their business' and 'the using all manner of means to come at ornaments of their persons' (Ingrassia 2004, 239-240). As if in response to these accusations Richardson demonstrated his continuing interest in the servant-maid prostitute figure not only by penning the *Preface* to *Histories* himself,⁴ but by becoming one of the charity's governors in 1760.

⁴ While the identity of the author remains uncertain (Barbara Montagu, Sarah Fielding and Sarah Scott have all been discussed), she most probably belonged to the bluestocking coterie of Richardson readers and 'fans' residing in Bath.

The *Pamela* controversy highlighted one further obstacle to disentangling the love of money from that of morality: servant-related discourse sold well. As Solomon Lowe shrewdly pointed out to Richardson himself, his novel had been of great 'service to your very Bretheren' (Keymer and Sabor 2005, 1); the most venal body, in other words, may have been that of the text itself. Undoubtedly, many were keen to profit from the interest in and commercial value of all things *Pamela*. Eliza Haywood, for example, no stranger to bestsellerdom, wrote both *The Anti-Pamela; Or Feign'd Innocence Detected* (1741; Ingrassia 2004), and its antidote, as it were, the conduct book *A Present for a Servant-Maid* (1743), which went through seven editions in six years. Because her dramatic works and her fiction contain no particularly cruel indictment of servant-maids behaving badly, one might question the sincerity of Haywood's motives in advising the servant class, and whether the author herself may not be, Pamela-like, performing: Haywood's subtitle itself, *a Sure Means of gaining Love & Esteem*, hits an uncomfortably ambiguous note.

Swift, in his *Directions to Servants* (1731), and Fielding, in *Shamela* (1741; Ingrassia 2004), had also engaged with the conduct manual tradition and with aspects of the 'servant problem' many detected in *Pamela*, but while they had flattened incongruities into a satirical set of rules, *Histories* more compellingly incorporates the casuistical tradition re-kindled by Richardson as well as his tendency to 'entangle and perplex' (Keymer 1992, 140). Defoe's 'amphibious' maid is here shaded into a more nuanced, individualized, portrait: 'tho' the profession of a prostitute is the most despicable and hateful that the imagination can form; yet the individuals are frequently worthy objects of compassion'.⁵ In this sense *Histories* is a hitherto unnoticed voice in the *Pamela* controversy. It takes a character readers would have been attuned to and – to borrow William Warner's phrase – 'overwrites' the fictions she evoked through a pattern of alternative critical paradigms, re-deploying them 'towards higher cultural purposes' (1998, 203, 193). Because the main profession for which the Magdalen charity was hoping to prepare its inmates was domestic service, in its formal organization the House attempted to counter some of the most common accusations levelled against the servant-maid-turned-whore. Its success depended on this over-writing of established categories, on this re-making of the prostitute into a law-abiding labourer and of the servant-maid into a true servant (following Colossians 3:23) to the Lord rather than to men. In my analysis of the *topoi* related to the 'servant-problem' I shall try to show how fiction and practice worked at sometimes similar, sometimes different, paces to this end.

⁵ Batchelor and Hiatt 2007, 3; all subsequent references (indicated parenthetically) will be to this edition.

3. *Clothes*

The first *topos* I shall consider lies at the core of the ‘servant problem’. The custom of handing down clothes to female domestics excited, commentators believed, a dangerous vanity and pride which blurred class-lines: the well-dressed servant-maid ‘remained the whipping girl for vague social ills throughout the century’ (Buck 1979, 109). A variety of texts, from *Some Considerations Upon Streetwalkers* (1726) to *Sermons to Young Women* (1765), suggested reprising the Greek and Jewish habit of visually marking prostitutes through dress; in *Every Body’s Business* Defoe makes an impassioned appeal to extend this distinction to ‘Women-Servants’, while in *The Great Law of Subordination Consider’d* he advocates a ‘Badge of ... Servitude’ (1725, 18; 1724, 291). According to this master narrative, clothes, by descending the social ladder, allowed servants to climb it. The change, however, was merely an exterior one, a surface-mutation which posed a variety of risks. The *Great Law* mentions that of laxity on duty – ‘I have been at Places where the Maid has been so dizzied with these idle Compliments ... that she has not regarded her Mistress in the least’ (21); for another costly reciprocal emulation – ‘by their Extravagance in Dress, they put our Wives and Daughters on yet greater Excesses’ (15); and finally prostitution: ‘This makes the Girl take the first Offer to be made a Whore, and there is a good Servant spoil’d’ (16). As Chloe Wigston Smith has argued (2013, 111-144), Defoe’s pamphleteering on this subject was linked to the 1719-1721 ‘calico crisis’, which saw wool manufactures and weavers engage writers to campaign against competition from calicos and silks imported by the East India Company. This writing consolidated the stereotypes of earlier discourse against luxury. Whores and wool, apparently, did not go hand in hand, not only in terms of consumption, but also of production, and Defoe places alliterative blame on those female servants who ‘love sporting more than spinning’ (1728, 42). The fashion-conscious servant-maid thus became a dangerous consumer and shape-shifter.

Pamela’s agonizing over which of her different bundles of clothes she may take away from Mr B’s house (Letter XXIV) references this debate, attempting to dispel any implication that the heroine is prostituting herself: to keep B’s gift of clothes would reify her, making her buyable, and therefore sellable. By having her set aside clothes that do not strictly ‘belong’ to her, Richardson overwrites the short-circuiting of literary associations with whore narratives in which the prostitute is arrested for leaving the brothel with clothes that are not her property. The episode clearly states the separation between Pamela’s past and present status. However, the simple garb she chooses over the rich silks of her past, though plain and neat and ‘working class’ in shape, reveals her discernment and taste, leaving the door open to charges of vanity. The clothes *topos* focuses insistently (and ambiguously) on the issue of surface vs. depth, appearance vs. reality, which is the central theme of anti-*Pamela*

and *Pamela*-related writing. Syrena Tricksey, Eliza Haywood's fictional servant-maid whore, for example, is said to 'surpass the most experienced actresses on stage' in feigning modesty, and while in her advice manual, *A Present for a Servant Maid*, Haywood advises her readers to 'take care that all your Looks and Gestures correspond with what you say', her wording allows for the possibility of signifiers being appropriated (Ingrassia 2004, 53; Haywood 1743, 44). The problem of Pamela's duplicity, and consequently of the veracity of her virtue remained viscosely attached to her garments; fabric and fabrication were perceived as intimately connected.

Histories attempted to break this mould and dispel such accusations. The first penitent, Emily, struggles with vanity, though it is a vanity that comes from being loved by a man such as she imagines her master's son, Mr Markland, to be, rather than from the rich clothes he gives her (25). That Emily's modesty is a pretence is, for example, taken for granted by her mistress: 'I never in my life knew a very demure girl come to any good' (17). Later, she is forced to learn the hard way about 'acting innocent' when, tricked into a whore-house she makes an impassioned plea to her first client to be spared, only to find that he thinks he is being treated to some brothel theatricals aimed at exciting his lust (39). Sartorial modesty also disconcertingly works *against* Emily; attempting to see if, instead of prostituting herself, she should 'have any better success as a higher degree of beggar', she dresses herself neatly, but immediately attracts an offer from a gentleman which she in the end accepts: 'I often thought the clean simplicity of my dress, (for I had no ornaments) pleased more than the tawdry decorations of women who generally follow that course; for while a man courts our vice, his reason hates our impudence' (48).

Another traditional concern in this debate, that it is the surface of dress which causes the prostitution of the body, moving, from outside to inside, the seduction of silks anticipating the seduction of men, is problematized by *Histories*. The clergyman Thomas Seaton had pointed out that whenever the servant-maid 'takes a Pride in Being viewed with Admiration, and bewitching the Hearts of the Unwary, she her self lays the first Stumbling Block in their Way' (1720, 145). However, when the third Magdalen, Fanny, who interestingly comes from an adoptive family of virtuous spinners, is tricked out in the brothel with expensive clothes and fashionable fripperies, she retains her rural simplicity (the 'desire to be genteel was not so strong in me', 103); though she dresses the part she does not *act* the prostitute. On the other hand, when she is made to pretend that she is a sexually inexperienced maid and put to service in the Lafew family, she truly does become a virtuous servant.

Defoe had argued that if the servant-maid's dress 'were ... suitable to her Condition, it would teach her Humility, and put her in the mind of her Duty' (1725, 16). In its fusion of experiment and experience (see Van Sant 1993, 16-44), the Magdalen Charity seemed to adopt this strategy, expecting its inmates to discard their prostitute's garb and dressing them in a 'uniform

of light grey, of a durable but soft and agreeable manufacture, and in all their dress be as plain and neat as possible' (Hanway 1758a, 22). Clothes were marshalled as a powerful tool for re-working the women from the outside inwards: 're-clothing the prostitute's body was a symbolic process, intended to precipitate and subsequently enact the reformation of the Magdalen character' (Batchelor 2005, 140). Thus, re-dressing the women amounted, literally, to re-dressing the vexed matter of Pamela's clothes and the dangers they had not succeeded in covering.

3.1 *Conspicuous Consumption, Thrift vs. Idleness and the Spiritual Cleansing of Labour*

The overwriting of the servant-maid prostitute as Magdalen hinged on her rehabilitation in terms of conspicuous consumption, an issue intimately connected with the debate on servants' clothing, with the *topos* of thrift vs. idleness and with the larger question of productive and unproductive labour. Haywood, punning perhaps on the word 'service', urges her readers to avoid what 'drain[s] your purse as well as waste[s] your time ... all [those] things that are invented merely for the gratification of luxury, and are of no other service than temporary delight' (1743, 40). Reformer and magistrate Saunders Welch, who participated in the public debate leading to the establishment of the Magdalen, took his cue from Defoe, who had fustigated the servant-maid for 'Throw[ing] all her Income upon her back' (1725, 16), and traced a straightforward transition from her acceptance of the gift of clothes to her insistence 'on high wages'. This, Welch argued, 'induces them in difficulties ... for the whole of their wages [are] generally spent in clothes', and if 'they are thrown out of place', they have no other resource but 'to pawn or sell their clothes, and then prostitute their persons' (1758, 5-6). The servant-maid-turned-prostitute scared commentators because of the void she created in the economy. Domestic servants, as Adam Smith would argue later in the century, actually produced nothing but the leisure of their superiors; their work 'consists in services which perish generally in the very instance of their performance' (1976, II, 675). Prostitutes went one step further by commodifying themselves and 'performing' an unproductive labour for personal material gain. This unleashed in many writers not so much a fear of unrestrained female desire as a terror of women trading in something fluctuating and intangible, turning youth and beauty into money without real toil (Rosenthal 2006).

The received narrative of the servant-maid/prostitute had ossified through 'the 1690s, 1710s and 1720s [when] it was commonly thought that London was experiencing a crime-wave'; and the upper-classes grew increasingly fearful of London servants, in particular of 'female servants ... especially when unemployed' (Meldrum 2000, 63-64). Gradually, however, a shift had taken place in the perception of 'the evils of prostitution' so that the phrase was now understood as referring not to the damage caused to society

and family but to the woman herself. Following the dictates of the new sympathetic philanthropy (see Nash 1984, 617-628, and Andrew 2014, 98-127), reformers began to foreground the grim realities which underpinned female self-trade, and sentimental discourse transformed the 'consuming whore' into 'childlike victim' (McKeon 2005, 194). The main focus of this shift was work; unless a new character was carved out for the unproductive prostitute, hers would be literally 'labours lost' to the nation;⁶ as one 'Mr. Marchant' pointed out, it would be 'a Crime of the deepest Dye, to deprive the Country of the Benefit of their Labours' (1758, 12). Within this context, the figure of Defoe's amphibious servant-maid, 'fit for neither' service nor the Mandevillian 'public service' of whoredom, had to be assessed afresh.

Histories presents its prostitutes not as spendthrift servants but as good economists and productive labourers. Emily explains that she 'was desirous of putting [her] lover to as little expense as possible, therefore took but one servant' (25). The regularity of her *ménage* allows her to save 100 pounds, so when Mr Markland abandons her she sells some clothes unsuited to her new way of life and turns the parlour into a haberdasher's shop (31). Defoe had accused out-of-work maids of turning whores because they were incapable of 'living too long on their own hands' (1728, 24), but Emily does tolerably well in her business until the bailiffs arrive. At this point not only does her domestic bliss turn out to be a sham, it is also a credit bubble built on a lie: her lover had paid for nothing.

Markland's upper-class *sprezzatura* is contrasted with the decent behaviour of the ex-prostitute Fanny, who, having decided to leave keeping and enter the Magdalen, carefully defrays the expenses of her lodgings and pays off her servants (127). Thrift and frugality are positive markers of femininity and decorum in contrast with conspicuous consumption, for they signal the potential for reform in the servant-maid/prostitute, but it is rejection of idleness which definitively marks her out as a successful inmate. Pamela is never actually *seen* working, a fact which preserves her potential status as wife with its oxymoronic yoke of enforced leisure and unpaid labour. *Histories*, eschewing the uniqueness of Richardson's exemplar, goes about things differently. Fanny describes herself as 'no enemy to employment', and enters the Magdalen charity without there being any real need for her to do so, since her benefactress, Mrs Lafew, had offered to settle her in a state of ease. She worries, however, that she may be thought to have been swayed more by the temptation of ease than by a sense of her crime and, challenging common notions about prostitutes' unwillingness to work, she embraces moral re-training, not least because it allows her to hedge her expenses (the Magdalens were paid for their manual labour) before re-entering the marketplace:

⁶ I am referring to the title of Steedman 2009.

What more can be wanting to my felicity! My temporal concerns are all supplied in the most perfect manner; and I have every means for providing for my future welfare ... I hope I am not so bad a worker, but that I shall rather be a benefit than an expense to the society. (128)

The Magdalen placed great emphasis on its campaign against idleness – traditionally felt to be the main attraction of whoring – but one of the central questions asked by those who wished to re-service the prostitute was exactly what *type* of employment might be best suited to encouraging the silent workings of inner spiritual reform (see Batchelor 2004, 1-20). Just as the uniform was to work from the surface inwards, so the ‘habit’ of wage labour would, in the Charity’s plan, intimately transform strollers into strivers. John Fielding’s proposal in his 1758 *Plan for a Preservatory and Reformatory, for the Benefit of Deserted Girls, and Penitent Prostitutes* to subject penitents to a relentless regime of industry, sewing, washing and ironing met, however, with ridicule in a pamphlet addressed to the magistrate by a ‘Reformed Rake’. The writer, who subscribes to the ‘slippery-maid’ school of thought, mocks Fielding for having

so little studied to recommend your Project to those to whom it is meant for, that the very Preamble is enough to deter every Girl that has flown from Labour, and rather embraced Prostitution, Debauchery and Disease, from indenturing herself for Seven Years to the greatest of Drudgeries – the Wash Tub!

The Rake is certain that, while ‘Fornication is punished with Fine Cloaths’ and ‘Washing and hard Labour are the Reward for Chastity’, within months the inmates of the Reformatory will ‘fly from the soap-suds’ back into whoring’ (*A Congratulatory Epistle* 1758, 21-22).

Servant-maids and soap are also intriguingly bound together in Defoe’s polemical tracts. While *Every Body’s Business* sees the rise in the cost of household soap as yet another fallout from the expensive silks and satins chosen by servant-maids, *Augusta Triumphans* more darkly describes the sexual tension as old masters ‘stand slaving among a parcel of drabs at the wash tub’ (1725, 11; 1728, 42). Indeed, the erotic power of the weekly wash is also evoked by the anti-*Pamela* novel *Memoirs of the Life of Lady H-----, the celebrated Pamela, etc.* (1741), in which the Mr B character catches Pamela as ‘she is washing. The weather being hot her bosom was naked, for she imagined nobody saw her’ (13). In contrast to these lubricious visions, the penitents in *Histories* firmly re-connect the idea of washing to the cleansing from sin of Psalm 51 (‘here have all my misfortunes ended; and here I hope, by repentance, to wash out my sins’, 182), the daily employment actually succeeding in re-making not only the women but their social character (‘I hoped a course of regularity would ... wash out the infamy from my reputation’, 51). Laundry-work in the Magdalen was a labour-intensive skill designed both practically and metaphorically to eliminate the stains and smooth out the creases.

4. *House, Bawdy-House, Prison and Home*

The extended image-cluster of the house serves as the backdrop against which to read a number of important *topoi* connected to the servant-maid prostitute. The house may be a home, its fragile boundaries unable to contain the young woman, ever ready to roam; it may become an enclosure, or a prison; it may be a brothel, and hopefully, even a reformatory. Enticing master and apprentice out of the house, away from their duties as patriarch and labourer, the prostitute was 'a disturbingly liminal figure' who inhabited 'the carefully policed but largely spurious, ideological boundaries between the public world of commerce and the private sphere of sexuality and domesticity, between the economic and the erotic' (Jones 1997, 204). A merely visual encounter with such a woman, the reformer and co-founder of the Magdalen, Jonas Hanway, feared, was enough to alert to what was wrong within the orderly familial space of the home:

Shall we not become fearful of our own domestics, our own children, and yet more terrified at the faces of each other, when we meet in the streets or roads, even under the meridian sun? (1776, 61)

Such visibility, moreover, Defoe had fretted, created a dangerous association between the prostitute and the English woman in general:

Go all the world over, and you will see no such impudence as in the streets of London, which makes many foreigners give our women in general a bad character, from the vile specimens they meet with from one end of the town to the other. (1728, 28)

The journeying to and from the house to the brothel in which the slippery-tailed maid is said to excel is re-enacted in *Histories* in a neat parallel structure aimed at exploring the possible outcomes of these opposite transitions: Emily goes from service to brothel, while Fanny moves from brothel to service. And, as kept mistresses, both servant-maids are briefly put in possession of a house and servants of their own.

The first house-related *topos* deployed by *Histories* figures the uncertain position and threatening status of young female domestics within the household. When Emily, on her father's death, first seeks employment with 'a Lady' in the neighbourhood, she meets with a stark refusal: 'if she had no sons, or I was less handsome, she would receive me into her house' (13). At Lady Markland's, where she eventually finds a place, her arrival immediately prompts a debate as to whether domestics should be protected or feared, the mistress's accommodating position interestingly pinpointing the servant-maid's allure as a useful ploy to keep the master from roving. To a friend's ironic suggestion that she must not be of a jealous disposition, Lady Markland responds: 'No indeed, but if I was, it would be no reason why I should be

plagued with an ugly face about me; for Sir George must see handsome ones abroad, if I suffered none but Hottentots at home' (14). This Mandevillian sleight of hand (if the whore is a necessary evil to keep the middle-class woman pure, the servant-maid may be usefully prostituted to keep the middle-class male indoors) in effect turns the matriarch into a bawd who pre-selects Emily for her husband's – or as it will turn out, for her son's – domestic pleasure. Tacitly referencing the commonplace, unchallenged in the advice manuals of both Haywood (1743) and former servant Hannah Woolley (1673), that maids were fair game for their masters, and that it was up to them to resist seduction or even rape, *Histories* forces the reader to reflect on the moral premises of this assumption.

Closeness between master and maid bred within the house enclosure was delicately bound up with the issue of time devoted to labour. Whereas the satirical *Anti-Pamela* presents a grotesque role-inversion in which it is the manipulative Syrena who pulls the strings of the men of the household, placing herself at exactly the required points and times for amorous encounters, *Present to a Servant-Maid* grants it may be difficult to escape a persistent master within the confines of his house, 'Being so much under his Command, and obliged to attend him at any Hours, and at any Place he is pleased to call you', but does not expand on how to avoid these 'Importunities ... [which are] not easy to surmount' (Haywood 1743, 44). As Patrick Delaney lectures, 'your Time and Strength are no longer your own, when you are hired; they are your master's and to be employed in his service' (1750, 192). If Thomas Seaton concedes that 'It will sometimes happen that a Master of a Great House is young, and wanton, and Bold, and Rakeish; freely resigning himself to the Steerage of his Lusts' (1720, 44), in her section on 'Chastity', Haywood, perhaps more urbanely, advises servant-maids to vary their denial 'according to the different characters and persons who solicit them' (1743, 45). Though Seaton believes 'it cannot be hard for the Women that are always in the Family to discern when he's in this Humour, and contrive not to be where he may possibly come ... If sought for by him they must conceal themselves' (1720, 63), Emily's story, much as Pamela's had, repeatedly questions this simple solution: Mr Markland 'took every opportunity of finding me alone' and some bribery furthers his cause by 'multipl[ying] opportunities for his coming into her room' (17).

Rather than offering protection, therefore, houses may constitute dangerous traps for the unsuspecting. Haywood's *Present* opens by urging her 'Dear Girls' not to enter a house unless they wish to stay, but also alerting them to the dangers which may lie behind the domestic façade: 'There are some houses which appear well by Day, that it would be little safe for a Modest Maid to sleep in at Night'; here the 'country habit' of young girls is 'immediately stripp'd off, and a gay modish one put on in the stead; and then the design'd victim, willing or unwilling, is expos'd to sale' (1743, 2-3). This tableau, the missing scene between Plates One and Two of *The Harlot's*

Progress, is re-enacted in Fanny's story, where the brothel-keeper Madam Tent calls her mantua-maker for a fitting within minutes of Fanny's arrival. Hoping to profit from the girl's innocent awkwardness and make the best bargain of her virginity, she later makes her 'drink tea in the parlour with the gentlemen who came to the house' (99). Provocatively, *Histories* contrives to highlight certain moments in which house and 'house of ill repute' seem to overlap: far from being the basis of conjugality, domestic abodes are often breeding grounds for vice. Emily, for example, having become used to the Marklands' late entertaining, is deceived by the fact that the 'family' here 'take great pride in the great concourse of people and the late hours' (36) into thinking that the brothel she has come to is a respectable house. Conversely, Fanny is tricked by Madam Tent into 'marrying' Mr. Mastin in the brothel, and when the bawd forces her to 'marry' another man, she is grotesquely wracked by guilt towards her 'real' husband.

As with the brothel into which Emily is lured, the house may also become a prison from which it is impossible to escape. The young servant is first cajoled, then threatened, beaten and almost blinded by the other prostitutes in an attempt to break her into the trade; then attention and care, which in a normal domestic environment would be dedicated to an injured servant, are lavished upon her to prevent her from repelling customers. It is a scenario Haywood also envisages: if the young woman 'refuses the shameful Business ... and prefers the Preservation of her Virtue ... which way can she escape? She is immediately confined, close watched, threatened, and at last forced to Compliance' (1743, 3).

Overall, the free-spirited and exceedingly mobile wenches Defoe denounces contrast strongly with the imprisoned and oppressed prostitutes in *Histories*. This appears especially in the history of Magdalen Four, where the house-as-prison motif is developed in the decaying mansions of the battered rake she is forced to marry. Her parents virtually sell their daughter to this man, and she is led to the altar 'more dead than alive' – a phrase often used to describe the first unwilling act of prostitution. Here the house, referred to as 'a gaudy prison' (135), a 'splendid slavery' (136), mirrors Mr Merton's perverted (old, decrepit and outmoded) libertine principles, but it is also used to evoke, obliquely, the state of 'matrimonial whoredom'. The woman's rich trappings of jewels and clothes serve only to attract other men, and when this slave finally succumbs to adultery, she is discovered and repeatedly imprisoned in filthy garrets and freezing servant-quarters, maltreated and malnourished. The dark nights of the soul which she experiences in these confinements anticipate the isolation that she must undergo at the Magdalen House; but while this safe haven will offer the penitent the opportunity for proper repentance, Mr Merton's houses only afford 'despair, remorse, resentment'.

The Magdalen House set itself up as a "Place", a "Hospital", a "Charity" and an "Asylum" ... terms often used apparently interchangeably, even in the same passage' (Peace 2012, 142). The selection process through which

penitent prostitutes became its inmates, however, and the *Rules and Regulations* which they had to abide by in order to keep their place, echoed – indeed almost aped – the formalities of a servant’s admission into a household or the *formulae* of apprenticeship. Robert Dingley, a silk-merchant and one of the key advocates for the Magdalen, laid down in his *Proposals for Establishing a Public Place of Reception for Penitent Prostitutes* that once the petitioner had been examined, if her ‘character’ was ‘found proper’ she ‘must be bound Apprentice, or articed Servant to the Matron, for seven Years, but with a reserve to be dismissed, never more to be re-admitted’ (Dingley 1758, 12). As with servants on entering a household, on being admitted to the Magdalen prostitutes had to relinquish their personal property for safe-keeping, and accept a no-visitors policy (Hecht 1980, 127-138). The ‘minute surveillance’ (Vickery 2009, 306) masters and mistresses customarily subjected their servants to – a quasi-medical scrutiny aimed at assessing character and trustworthiness, and, crucially, at detecting pregnancy – translated, in the actual practice of the reformatory, into inmates being regularly paraded before the public eye during Sunday Mass at the Magdalen Chapel, and carefully observed for signs of ‘improvement’, ‘progress’ or ‘lapsing’. House and prison however, were not to be superimposed, and to pre-empt accusations, letters from its actual inmates were published: ‘Don’t think our house is a place of confinement, for our benefactors won’t keep anyone against their will, nor detain them a minute’ (Dodd 1776, 28). Another accusation, that by offering asylum the charity would in fact encourage vice, is silenced in *Histories*, which stresses that ‘to be one of its inhabitants is certainly less eligible to a woman, who does not want to hide her head from shame, than the commonest service; and that to a person still viciously, or even gaily inclined, it would be the most dismal prison’ (5), a statement that cleverly evokes the slippery servant-maid narrative only to deny it yet again.

The overlapping of house and prison also proves useful for comprehending *Histories’* place in the *Pamela* controversy. Pamela’s drama of servitude is largely played out indoors, in Mr B’s two houses, which sometimes approximate to prisons, sometimes to brothels. Incarceration is a key concept for understanding Pamela’s migration from servant to wife (Folkenflik 1999); the solitude of her Lincolnshire confinement engenders her realization that she can only hope to improve her position, indeed attain freedom, through ‘truckling matrimonial subservience’ (McKeon 2002, 380). Just before marrying Mr B, she asserts ‘he shall always be my Master; and I shall think myself more and more his servant’ (Richardson, 1976, 271). This disturbingly conservative closure has led some critics to seek ways of rehabilitating Pamela’s agency by focusing on how ‘with her incarceration comes self-employment and the creative power of writing’ (Sussman 2012, 170). On the other hand, the penitents in *Histories* embrace what Hanway later called ‘solitude in imprisonment’ (1776) as an enabling forward drive leading them, now

emancipated from both the heterosexual love plot and the exitless condition of prostitution, *out* of the house and into the world of wage labour.

5. *Giving Notice*

Linked to the idea-cluster of the house and its variously permeable boundaries is the *topos* of 'giving notice'. For Hannah Woolley service was essentially a training ground for marriage and therefore required stability, which in turn guaranteed a good reputation: 'Be not subject to change, For a *rouling-stone gathers no Moss*; and as you will gain but little money, so if you ramble up and down you will lose your Credit' (1673, 214), while Haywood advises against giving notice and paints a grim picture of the young maid wandering, a monad in the marketplace, 'without character, without money, without Friends or Support' (1743, 4). For Defoe, willingness to leave one's place heralded a dangerous class disruption and meant 'that we shall have scarce a servant left, but our wives, &c., must do the household-work themselves' (1728, 27), while *Pretty Doings in a Protestant Nation* clearly links quitting with whoring: 'Now Hussey a Month's Wages or a Month's Warning, / And to Bed with your Master every Morning' ('Father Poussin' 1734, 5). Servants in search of employment were said to be looking not for work, but for a 'place'. This 'place' where the physical work of service was carried out was, moreover, often analogized with that 'proper place' which servants had to be constantly reminded of or taught: the pert servant-maid, ever-popular on stage, is one of the period's enduring gripes. 'This way of conceiving labour' was 'static, intransitive, and hierarchical, less an activity than a dependence ... [and] clearly helped to restrict social mobility' (Robbins 1986, 53). Defoe was especially disgusted by all aspects of rapid transition fuelled by pride; the quick change of clothes that transforms the coquettish maid into the mistress, all the 'clopping and changing' that turns into 'whoring and thieving' (Defoe 1725, 7) signal a dangerous volatility. His project is to limit wages, but his complaints are always about wantonness:

Is it not time to fix them, when they stroll from place to place, and we are hardly sure of a servant a month together? Is it not time to prevent the increase of harlots, by making it penal for servants to be harboured in idleness, and tempted to theft, whoredom, murder, &c., by living too long out of place? (1728, 27)

This need to 'fix' them is the apex of a litany of complaints against servant-maids' increasing propensity to 'give notice', which 'encourages a roving temper, and makes them never easy' (1728, 25), and against the apparent facility with which they migrate in and out of service:

for if the Bawd uses them ill away they trip to Service, and if the Mistress gives them a wry Word, whip they are at the Bawdy-House again so that in effect they make neither good Whores nor good Servants. (1725, 7)

Defoe's words may have been motivated by economic considerations, but there is also in this misogynistic tirade a real nostalgia for some fading image of the faithful family retainer obliterated by these 'slippery-tailed' strollers, who, 'if they are not restrained from quitting service on every vagary', in one swift downward spiralling movement

will throw themselves on the town, and, not only ruin themselves, but others; for example, a girl quits a place and turns whore; if there is not a bastard to be murdered, or left to the parish, there is one or more unwary youths drawn in to support her in lewdness and idleness; in order to which, they rob their parents and masters, nay, sometimes, anybody else, to support their strumpets; not to mention the communication of loathsome distempers. (1728, 26)

Both Fanny's and Emily's stories contravene this kernel narrative by showing how difficult it actually is for the women to leave the brothel; far from offering a sanctuary from the indignities of servitude, prostitution constitutes a deeper and more binding form of service in which women are held ransom for debts incurred, and their bodies constitute the only viable payment for their apprenticeship. While Emily pleads with the brothel madam to allow her to 'submit to the lowest offices in her house, or rather what she considered to be the lowest, and perform the part of her menial servant, till she herself should acknowledge that I had amply paid my debt' (38), the bawd remains unmoved, explaining that here the only possible service is that which she herself, who has 'taught every passion, as well as every principle, to be subservient to her interest' (37), is proficient in. Even when freed from the brothel, Emily finds it impossible to return to honest service. Earlier narratives, such as *A Genuine Epistle Written Some Time Since to the Late Famous Mother Lodge* (1735) clearly stated that when a fallen woman *did* attempt traditional occupations such as service, she soon tired of dragging out such 'a Starving Life' and turned (and remained unrepentantly) prostitute. Emily, on the other hand, decries the 'hard fate' of being 'willing and able to work, and yet to starve for want of employment' (47):

when I offered myself, one said, 'I was too handsome'; another, 'that I appeared too genteel for such a place as I offered for' ... and 'there must be something very bad in my conduct, or I could not be reduced to such low services'. [Others] asked, 'What recommendation I had? Who would give me a character? In this manner I was repulsed from every door ... I offered my labour at half price, but even my industry was made an argument against me, 'I must be very bad to be reduced to that, and they supposed I intended to steal the other half of my wages'. (43-44)

6. *Progress vs. Inevitability*

Histories seeks to debunk Defoe's accusations by reversing gears on the servant-maid's dangerous mobility and transforming the inexorable downward spiral which 'giving notice' led to into a spiritual progress. Earlier prostitution

narratives had developed the fatal 'seduction-into-prostitution' step into titillating accounts of triumphal careers followed by successful retirement or marriage (Ellis 1996, 177-179).⁷ *Histories*, on the other hand, displays strong interest in complicating this clear-cut either/or solution, and engages with the Hogarthian principle of life as a 'progress', shaped by both circumstances *and* choice. By doing so it also ties into reformers' keenness to understand new forms of prostitution, which women were most vulnerable and which combination of circumstances ultimately forced them into the trade:

the first step into that way of life oftener proceeds from weakness than from vice; and that if the beginning of their misfortunes, or rather their crimes, have been owing to a want of steadiness in themselves in the practice of virtue, many of their subsequent vices have arisen from the affectation of too overstrained a chastity in others, who, unlike their Maker, ever ready to accept the repentant sinner, and to heal the contrite heart, exclude them from the means of reformation, by hunting them out of every way of obtaining an honest subsistence, till the only alternative left them, is either to owe their support to a continuance in vicious courses, or to die martyrs of chastity. (3-4)

In re-writing the hitherto tacitly accepted subtext of prostitutes' *innate* propensity to vice *Histories* attempts to separate the idea of progress from that of inevitability, the 'disease, death, eternal destruction' (Dodd 1776, 4) which usually concluded the harlot's career and the seduced servant's tendency to 'End her miserable days in an Hospital or Work-house' or to 'find her Death-bed on a Dunghill' (Haywood 1743, 3). Emily clarifies this: 'criminal as I had been, my detestation to this way of life was as great as if I had been more consistently virtuous' (38). To demonstrate the penitents' progress in gaining consciousness of their errors, biblical allusion is used throughout the novel, while literary quotation, either in the shape of epigraphs or of *staccato* commentary on the action performed by the more educated women, functions as an ironic critique, signposting the development of the plot as a systematic disappointment of illusions, an eschewal of romance, an invitation to ponder the differences between the ideal and the actual, allowing room for posthumous rethinking, re-reading and growth (Greenup 2008).

6.1 *Illness, Love and Spiritual Development*

Played out against the vision of progress promoted by the novel are the themes of illness, of erotic love between master and maid and of spiritual development. Illness, the 'litmus test of household relationships' (Meldrum 2000, 89), receives

⁷ The fact that both Fanny's name and the initial stages of her story also appear to reference that other famous prostitute, John Cleland's *Fanny Hill*, also puts readers on the look-out for alternative endings.

prolonged examination in Fanny's story. Here the traditional fear of contagion spread by prostitution is 'treated' intra-murally, within the Lafew household where the former prostitute comes to work and falls in love with her married master. The metaphorization of illness – in this case the scarlet fever which all members of the family catch in turn – as developing love, first the wrong, then the right love, also resonates with other important issues relating to the 'servant problem': the responsibility masters should feel for the physical and spiritual health of their servants; how far the bond of loyalty between servant-maid and masters should extend; the closeness of servants and children of the family; the scrutinizing of servants to determine their true character.

When Mrs Lafew falls ill, Fanny nurses her with the kind of loyal devotion we are told Pamela expended on her beloved mistress, but which was not unheard of in real households (Meldrum 2000, 170). Mr Lafew is greatly affected both by his wife's illness and his servant's devotion: 'while he grieved, I was inconsolable, and he was charmed with such a proof of my affection for the great object of his' (111). Haywood is very specific with regard to sickness in the family, recommending the maid to 'add to your Attendance a softness of behaviour, which may convince them you are truly concerned for them' (1743, 34). But Fanny is not merely performing the part of the good servant; her love for the family that has (unknowingly) saved her from the brothel leads her to try the experiment of saving their four-year-old daughter by sharing her bed and forcing the fever to break:

How nobly was I rewarded! The deadly coldness of the poor babe had chilled me; but the inexpressible joy I felt from seeing him so much obliged, and hearing myself placed so very high in his estimation, warmed my heart and renewed the vital heat, which was so much suppressed by having almost a corpse in my arms. (112)

These images of warmth then subtly develop into the mutual passion which blossoms between Mr Lafew and Fanny, precipitated by the physical closeness of the sick room. When Fanny herself finally succumbs, he visits her, displaying much remorse that 'having so long escaped the infection, I should at last catch it from him' (116): good masters, as social historians have documented, were expected to show solicitude towards sick servants (see Hecht 1980, 97 ff.). But as the scarlet fever abates, the sexual relationship begins:

the knowledge of my love for him, which was too apparent, extinguished his esteem, while it excited his tenderness; and the affection which was founded on my apparent virtues, increased on the appearance of a weakness ... the sickness ... gave rise to love, which instead of ceasing with it, increased daily; and continued undisputed till I proved with child. (117)

Fanny is moved to a house set up for her by Mr Lafew, where she gives birth to a boy. Here she enjoys great happiness, but during a long period of absence on his part she falls ill again. She is discovered and nursed back to health and,

with health, to virtue by Mrs Lafew who, since Fanny's own maid cannot write, even undertakes the task of answering in disguised handwriting Mr Lafew's anxious enquiries. By her example and by her religious instruction Mrs Lafew fulfils her duty as a good mistress; thus the 'progress' of the illness and the spread of the prostitute's malady are stemmed and transformed into a spiritual development. This forward dynamic, however, is only possible because Fanny is *sensible* to instruction; indeed, *Histories* reworks the traditional image of erotic love as sickness into the sentimental deployment of fever as a marker of sensibility (Ward 2007, 15). Whereas Pamela's education takes place *off stage*, before the action begins, forcing growth and transformation exclusively onto Mr B, Fanny is taught the paths of repentance and religion by her mistress's example and by an account of Christian revelation which brings her first to despair, and then to hope. Mrs Lafew, however, does what Pamela sometimes fails to do: she carefully distinguishes between the power of man and the power of God by acknowledging 'the greatness of the temptation ... no common share of religion and virtue could resist Mr Lafew's superior power to charm' (126).

The *topos* of love 'across the divide' is used in *Histories* to resolutely oppose misreadings of the servant as enamoured of riches rather than romance, a familiar refrain of anti-*Pamela* writing. Indeed, for all their focus on avarice and pretence, both Fielding's Shamela and Haywood's Syrena Triksey had seemed to enjoy the game of love rather than that of money; in Fielding this is funny, in Haywood it begins to look serious, even slightly tragic. *Histories* takes the argument one step further and entirely subscribes to the idea of economic indifference, thus anticipating the later eighteenth-century tendency of servant literature to mirror children's literature by separating 'moral satisfaction from immediate financial compensation' and substituting 'narratives of moral autonomy and class stability' for 'narratives of economic autonomy and class fluidity' (Straub 2009, 22). Before the penitents are 'cured' of their love, however, and before they have attained what amounts to middle-class regulation of desire (a virtue also traditionally boasted of by bawds and prostitutes), the novel makes at least two provocative points about what Sarah Maza has termed the 'eroticism of inequality' (Straub 2009, 197). Emily's earlier habit of service briefly turns her, while she is being 'kept' by her former master, Mr Markland, into a model sentimental wife, enduring and patient (a subtle evocation of the more disturbing qualities in Pamela's married state), while Mr Lafew's *ménage* with Fanny is intriguingly described as *better* than his marriage with Mrs Lafew because it includes sexual passion (and is, in effect, an out-of-wedlock version of that between the reformed B and Pamela).⁸

⁸ See Binhammer 2009, 57. Jennie Batchelor argues that it is precisely this erotic side to her nature that has the 'potential to make her a better mother' (2012, 165).

7. *Pregnancy and the Novelistic Solution*

Histories also tackles a *topos* which comprehends both conflict between surface and depth (appearance vs. reality) and ideas of illness/progress: that of pregnancy. In Defoe's terse evaluation the result of a sexual relationship between master and maid was 'a bastard to be murdered, or left to the parish' (1728, 26). To avoid involving the masters of the house in any scandal, a maid found to be pregnant was normally dismissed immediately – though recent archival findings suggest nuances in the application of this norm (Fairchilds 1984, 90; Hill 1996, 60; Meldrum 2000, 100-117).⁹ Court cases for breach of promise were often instigated by outraged fathers lamenting their daughter's loss of service (Staves 1980-1981, 110); this was a move which emphasized finance rather than fornication, economic worth rather than moral value (significantly, the two lower-class Magdalens in *Histories* are fatherless, while the two middle-class ones are disowned by their fathers). Moreover, confessions of pregnancy often displayed how limited the language available for the accused women was and how the 'question of their own honesty was never far from the surface' (Gowing 1998, 75). Indeed, in many accounts, both fictional and non-fictional, the servant-maid drops off the narrative plane following an unwanted pregnancy, only to reappear, before a horror-struck audience, at a trial for child-murder: 'the typical infanticidal mother was an unmarried servant' (Jackson 1996, 49; Sharpe 1998, 110; see also Amussen 1988, 113).

In the course of its literary campaigning for the Magdalen Charity, *Histories* presents some unexpected solutions to these issues, ones which gloss over the unpleasantness presented by this area of the 'servant problem'. Dismissal, for example, is a strategy Mrs Lafew pointedly refuses in Fanny's case, and poverty does not constitute a risk for either Fanny or Emily after they become pregnant: they are both willingly provided for – at least at first – by their lovers. More importantly, however, *Histories* goes vigorously against the grain of the stereotype in describing all the prostitutes as loving and tender mothers. The language Emily uses to speak of her brief out-of-wedlock happiness strikes a very different note from the discourse of crime or sex usually associated with the fallen woman:

our fondness for [the child] was equal; and instead of our affection being lessened, by having a third to share it with us, each seemed to look on the other's being a parent to this little darling, as a new merit, which caused, if possible, an increase of fondness. (29)

⁹ The pregnancy/dismissal commonplace is obliquely evoked by Pamela, who cannot understand why she is being asked to leave B Hall, when 'Squire Martin in the Grove has had three lyings in, it seems, in the house, in three months past; one by himself, and one by his coachman, and one by his woodman; and yet he has not turned one of them away' (Richardson 1976, 57).

Emily is willing to part with her 'own life' rather than with her son (42); Magdalen Four becomes a prostitute out of 'true maternal love' (179); Fanny, far from considering infanticide at any stage of her life, is described as 'naturally fond of children' (109). Her willingness to share a bed with the Lafew's sick daughter both transforms her into a child of the family (thereby referencing the literature which enjoined masters to consider servants as their children), and prepares her to be a mother herself. Even more intriguingly, however, on entering the Magdalen, Emily is assured that though she must part with her child, he will be 'educated and provided for' (51). Here we have a consolatory fiction, a 'novelistic' solution which conveniently writes the children of the servant-maid/prostitute out of the picture. However, as the modern editors of *Histories* have pointed out, no such institution existed: 'it is a fantasy of both penitence and charity, intended to generate both reformation and sympathy' (Batchelor and Hiatt 2007, xvii). If impregnated servants were being forced to kill their children, the novel is telling us, they should be offered an alternative solution. In this sense, the value of the Magdalen as a 'scheme', or a 'Plan', as reformers were fond of terming their proposals, may be said to outstrip its impact as an actual institution; however limited the actual success of the charity in improving the lives of these women, the campaign for the scheme led to changes in the way they were perceived and written about.

8. *Masters and Servants: From Household to Magdalen House*

The relationship between masters and servants, and in particular the issue of servants' education within the family, is central, in *Histories*, to the testing of the ready-made template of the servant-maid/prostitute. Pamela had worried that all her 'learning and education [would] be of little service' (Richardson 1976, 66) and in his writings on prostitution, Saunders Welch, himself of pauper background, had highlighted over-education in the middling classes as one of the causes of whoring (1758, 5). If Fanny's story illustrates the risks inherent to the old paternalistic relationship between masters and servants, Emily's period of service in the Markland family does the same for the more modern, less affective, and increasingly contractual agreement described by Bridget Hill (1996, 5). Fanny enters a household where contractual and affective relations between master and servants coincide; but, Eliza Heywood argues, if masters behave with affability, then 'not to love would be the highest Ingratitude' (1743, 31). Even Thomas Seaton concedes that it may be hard to 'withstand ... One, whom there is naturally a Tenderness in disobeying', and that because of this tenderness there may be 'a readier Submission than ... otherwise' (1720, 145). Observing the Lafews, Fanny cannot 'imagine greater happiness [could] be enjoyed in the marriage state ... the pleasures of mutual love being increased by the joy they took in their lovely offspring,

which they beheld with equal tenderness' (108). Into this circle of love she wishes to be admitted, and this is presented as a sign of the young prostitute's improvability and willingness to exchange mercenary love for something purer ('I felt both love and gratitude towards them', 110). If bad servants are those who remain separate from the family and are therefore potentially disloyal, ignorant Fanny is a good servant, who 'internalizes the values, behaviors, beliefs, and even aesthetics of his or her employer's family' (Straub 2009, 19). However, it is this very quality that makes her so desirable to her otherwise virtuous master and plunges her once again into whoredom.

The lessons in love Fanny learns at the Lafews' contrast vividly with Emily's apprenticeship, but while the one becomes a whore because of the *excess* of love within the family, the other does so because the venal relationships which dominate the Markland household leave her spiritually stranded, 'for every servant was bought to [Mr Markland's] interest' (20). The Marklands and their servants exemplify Haywood's belief that 'Tho' [Corruption] begins at the Head, [it] ceases not its Progress till it reaches the most inferior Parts' (1743, *Preface*), and indeed Emily is 'Sensible of [her] own weakness, and how far everyone was combined for my destruction' (21):

Sir George and my Lady, by winking at the intrigues of their servants, and speaking lightly of religion and virtue, banished both from their family, and became not only answerable for their own faults, but for those which their examples encouraged in their domestics. (17)

In contrast to this failure in master-servant relations (also criticized by Defoe 1724, 15), *Histories* stresses the virtuous middle course held by Magdalen Two, thus paradoxically, with an incredibly bold stroke, making the kept mistress the best mistress:

I was not too indulgent, in order to blind their eyes to my failings, nor mean enough to wish to make them feel their inferiority, by adding weight to the burden of servitude I made them neither my companions nor my slaves; but enabled, by the happy composure of my mind, to preserve a just medium. I treated them as persons to whose happiness it was my duty to contribute, without putting them out of their sphere. (75)

The description of the Markland's domestic regime, on the other hand, reads (almost paragraph by paragraph) like a grotesque negative of the programme counselled in manuals such as Jonas Hanway's *Advice from Farmer Trueman to his Daughter, Mary, Upon her going to Service*. Hanway explains 'the necessity of attending to religion' (1760, 57); warns against 'carelessness in devotions' (59), the 'danger of neglecting the Sabbath' (60), 'reserve in talking of devotion' (89), 'shame in doing what is right [which may lead] to do wrong' (85); and exhorts to 'Resolution in regard to prayer' (85). Emily, a clergyman's

daughter, tries to attend to recommendations such as these, but is (almost by a collective family effort) stripped of her religious beliefs one by one before she is seduced: 'were it not that they sometimes attended the parish church on Sundays', she observes, 'I should not know whether the family I lived in was Jew, Mahometan, or Christian' (1760, 17). Entirely abdicating her role as matriarch, Mrs Markland even mocks Emily, treating 'piety ... as enthusiasm, strictness of manners as folly'. Indeed, 'she never knew a puritanical servant who did not turn out a whore or a thief; and that she wanted not to have her jewellery stolen to feed a Methodist parson; or her cloaths pawned, to furnish out their weekly contributions' (18).

Emily's attempts at conduct-manual behaviour are presented as failures by *Histories*, and simplistic prescriptivism is generally condemned: 'My religion was rather founded on habit than reason. I had been told *what* I should do; but my father's continual occupation abroad had prevented his teaching me *why* I was to do so' (18). To counter the dangers arising from lack of family cohesion, the Magdalen House offered the penitent prostitute opportune spiritual re-training within a different kind of family. John Fielding's *Plan* visualized the Matron as 'a good mother to all her Family' (1758, 24), while Hanway's *Thoughts* stress the role of the charity governors as father figures, and the force of their 'parental love' (1758b, 30). This love, *Histories* promises, creates a safe haven where

Equal distress, and equal relief, begets a sort of mutual affection; while their hearts overflow with gratitude to their noble benefactors, (noble, if not by blood or descent, intrinsically so from the generous benevolence of their worthy hearts) they rejoice not only in their own deliverance, but in that of all they behold. (10)

9. *The Reformed Servant-Maid and Other Domestics: Distinguishing the General from the Particular*

Finally, in order to allow the reformability of the servant-maid/prostitute to shine forth, and to aid the reader in the all-important task of distinguishing the general from the particular, the cultural stereotype from the deserving individual, her behaviour is often contrasted with that of other domestics. All four of the narratives that make up *Histories* are stocked with a striking array of servant characters who either confirm or critique the types of intra-domestic relationships and cultural stereotypes of contemporary drama, fiction and conduct literature. Some bad servants propel the plot, such as Magdalen Two's maid, who steals all her money, thereby forcing her first almost into service, then almost into streetwalking but ultimately into the charity (87). Another bad servant is the jealous nursery-maid who tells Mrs Lafew that Fanny is pregnant by her husband (117). Other – good – servants, such as Sally, the sympathetic servant-maid turned jailor, who helps Magdalen Four escape

(163), or Emily's sister's servant, a good-natured girl who 'could not forebear joining her tears' with those of the young prostitute (43), act, through their projective identification with the Magdalens' plight as textually created readers, tutoring real readers into a just sense of pity. The behaviour of the servant-maid/prostitutes, Emily and Fanny, is carefully scrutinized against that of these other servants.

Tying in with the conspicuous lack of viable mother figures, the housekeepers in *Histories* are all relentlessly unpleasant characters. The Marklands' housekeeper, for example, is a perfect representative of those bad servants condemned in Colossians 3:22 – and in Haywood (1743, 12) – for obeying only with eye-service, as man-pleasers. The woman is held in great esteem, as she understands nothing 'better than flattery' and though 'she was an assiduous watch over the other servants, yet her first attachment was to her own interest, of which she was never neglectful' (14). She is also unchaste, and her very public intrigue with her master's *valet-de-chambre* shocks and disgusts Emily. This below-stairs debauchery is portrayed as similar to the type of visual education virgins received in brothels to prepare them for business (see Cleland 1985, 60-71). But this bawd-like figure pales in comparison to Mr Merton's housekeeper in the story of Magdalen Four. The viciousness of this 'extravagant, wasteful, idle, insolent' and almost grotesquely vindictive servant is explained by the fact of her having been the master's mistress, and having continued in this dual role until shortly before he married the younger woman whom she 'looked upon as the cause of her being degraded into servant, and an interloper on her rights' (144). The unredeemability of this particular 'amphibious maid' once again serves to underscore the argument made by *Histories* (as well as by the Magdalen Charity) in favour of a humane capacity on the part of readers and funders to distinguish between received narrative patterns and individual cases.

10. *Conclusions*

Though the instruction given to the penitents in the Magdalen house was to 'Tell Your Story to No One', *Histories* does indeed tell a story and, as regards the servant-maid/prostitute figure, it is a very different one. As Carolyn Steedman has observed of a later period, 'Street-walking by dismissed maid-servants was a cultural text, not a sociological observation' (2009, 151). The work *Histories* carries out in relation to the 'slippery maid' problem is that of a fiction scrutinizing a fiction, teasing out what appeared as overblown anxieties, creating an alternative narrative and clearing an important rhetorical space for the realization of the ideals of moral 're-servicing' urgently championed by the Magdalen House.

If many of the problems *Pamela* had failed to solve were connected to centuries-long misogynistic anxieties about surface/depth, it is also true that, following the publication of Richardson's bestseller, these problems

had become inextricably entangled with the more specific discourse of the servant-maid/prostitute and even more so with that of women's writing. Pamela's writing, too intimately bound up with the fabric of her clothes, had not entirely succeeded as a touchstone of her innocence. The strategy adopted by *Histories* to obviate this issue was to invoke the ultimate bugbear of the 'servant problem', that is the fear of the tattling servant whose tale breaks through the boundaries of the family home (Mr B's insistent suspicion), and play it off against the prohibition on story-telling used by the Magdalen House as a crucial reformatory tool. To do so, it uses speech rather than writing and the private audience of the community of penitents as its sounding board and test of truth. Thus it creates a powerful narrative weapon to tell the 'true' story of the servant-maid turned whore to the widest possible public and to the best possible advantage. Expanding on the idea of the Charity as a perfect experimental terrain, *Histories* becomes a space where errors may be judged, the limits of the conventional marriage plot usefully tested, and where the 'other' may be progressively appreciated not as monolithic but as consisting of degrees of otherness which resonate importantly with the self.

Though unsuccessful in making the slippery servant-maid less slippery, what the *Pamela* controversy *did* establish was that the ambiguous sexuality of Richardson's maidservant was essentially a matter of close reading and textual interpretation, and that the reason why ideological stakes were being played so high was that readers tended to elide the maidservant's sexuality with female sexuality in general (Straub 2009, 81). While Emily's and Fanny's stories contain large narrative portions in which the women are employed in domestic service – and are therefore told, to use Bruce Robbins' phrase, 'from below'¹⁰ – the stories of the other two penitents hint at issues more germane to slavery than to service (slavery to vanity, slavery to love, slavery to parental tyranny, even the clichés of slavery in lovers' speech), thereby subtly extending to women in general both the cautionary lesson and the re-birthing project aimed at the character of the servant-maid prostitute.

Through its insistence on progress vs. inevitability and on the possibility of 're-servicing' prostitutes, *Histories* also makes a bid to create a new readership. It does this by inviting careful scrutiny of the several responsibilities as well as of the 'extenuating circumstances' (9) which have led to their fall: by demanding, in other words, what Richardson called 'attentive' readers (Carroll 1964, 315). By urging these readers to reconsider the clear-cut boundaries between vice and virtue, *Histories* forwards Richardson's ideal of a text as something that should 'new-Model the Affections of the Reader', an operation which 'was often viewed by eighteenth century reformers as a re-modelling' (Koehler 2005, 14-15). Thus, in encouraging casuistical analysis, *Histories* helps to

¹⁰ Robbins also uses the phrase 'servant topoi', but in a different sense (1986, 54).

bring reader (who would also have been a potential subscriber or employer) and character closer to each other; by showing that as regards comportment, and in its sexual subtext, there is no *innate* separation of wife from whore or of maid from mistress. In these 'modern moral subjects', as Hogarth called his Progresses, differences may be more blurred, more contextual, and less dependent on free will: 'the different degrees in which we rank our guilt and theirs may possibly proceed from self-partiality: For if we take into account their superior temptations, and inferior advantages towards the repressing them, the balance may not, to an All-seeing eye, appear in our favour' (5).

The charity depicted in *Histories* levels and 'uniforms' its inmates and their carefully examined progresses: 'all are in much the same state, tho' brought to it by different steps' (9). In this tight-knit community of women a utopian experiment is underway: class distinction is achieved through virtuous industriousness and emulation is no longer exemplified by that pernicious desire of the maid 'to go as fine as her mistress' or the vanity of those who seek 'place or precedency'. Here, the only 'title' they 'can pretend to claim' is 'priority of reformation' (52). Though this narrative did not always reflect actual practice, its importance cannot go unnoticed: by powerfully questioning the cultural superimposition of sexual innocence onto virtue, *Histories* firmly locates exemplarity in the penitents' teachability and willingness to embrace change. Prostitution is just a step, but not the last one, in the moral progress of these women's lives.

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A Comparative Perspective

‘The Purgatory of Servants’ (In)Subordination, Wages, Gender and Marital Status of Servants in England and Italy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

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Abstract

Over the last fifty years, historians have been trying to understand differences between the characteristics of servants and their working conditions in different regions of pre-industrial and industrial Europe, differences which seem to be crucial to explaining discrepancies among those regions with respect to important aspects of life, such as the presence of the so-called European marriage pattern, the strength of family ties, the role of the family in providing assistance to its members in need of care. However, modern scholars are not the first to be interested in such diversity of domestic service: so were people who lived in early modern times. So far, their opinions have been neglected, yet they offer precious evidence of how our ancestors imagined European diversity, a crucial theme not only for cultural and social historians but also for contemporaries trying to understand continuities and discontinuities in representations of Europe. I will give examples of the ideas circulating in early modern Europe about servants and servant-keeping in Britain and Italy, making reference to other countries, too, especially France. The sources used are mainly printed texts, particularly travel books, a literary *genre* that often expresses prejudices and stereotypes. I will evaluate the perspectives of the authors used, drawing on my previous studies on the social history of domestic service, especially as regards the key issues of marriage and family formation.

Keywords: Britain, Domestic Servants, England, Italy, Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries

1. *Introduction*

Especially during the last fifty years, historians have been trying to understand differences between the characteristics and conditions of servants in different parts of Europe, differences which have come to be considered crucial to explaining differences in important aspects of life in pre-industrial and



industrialising societies in various parts of the ‘old continent’: aspects such as the so-called European marriage pattern, the strength of family ties, the role of the family in providing assistance to its members in need of care, etc. (Sarti 2007 and 2014). However, it is not only modern scholars who have focussed on the diversity of domestic service in different areas: a number of authors who lived in past centuries also tried to pinpoint those differences. In 1814, for instance, *Abbé Grégoire*, the former ‘constitutional’ priest who took part in the French Revolution and fought against slavery, published a book entitled *De la domesticité chez les peuples anciens et modernes*, which described the transformation of domestic service over time and tried to make clear differences among the working conditions and legal positions of servants in different countries, regions and cities.¹ As well as, and possibly even more than scholars, travellers and visitors have also tried to identify servants in different contexts. Their opinions are precious sources for understanding the ways in which our ancestors imagined European diversity – a topic of deep interest to both cultural and social historians, and a crucially important issue for contemporaries (such as decision-makers) trying to understand continuities and discontinuities in the representation of Europe. Yet these opinions have so far been neglected by those who study domestic service.

In this article I shall give examples of the ideas that circulated in early modern times about the characteristics of servants and servant-keeping in Britain and Italy, making some reference to other countries, too, especially France. The focus is on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though I shall also be mentioning examples from other periods. During the early modern period the notion of ‘the servant’ was ambiguous and controversial (Sarti 2005b), but it was an expression in constant use, and one which some writers (especially jurists) went to some trouble to explicate. Different kinds of servants were ubiquitously present in early modern societies, as was the notion of service. The very fact that people made comparisons between the characteristics and status of (various types of) servants in a number of contexts and countries confirms that – despite its blurred boundaries – the category of the servant was a crucial one for early modern representations of society.

Many of my comparisons between servants and servant-keeping in Britain, Italy and, to a lesser extent, other countries, are taken from travel books, a literary *genre* that often expresses prejudices and stereotypes, and also contributes to circulating and strengthening preconceived ideas (see, for example, Speake 2003). This will not represent a problem for us here – rather the contrary – since the focus of the article is precisely on ideas and

¹ The book sought to contribute to the formation of ‘good domestics’ (Grégoire 1814, I-VIII). I am grateful to Patrizia Delpiano for her useful suggestions, and to Jeanne Clegg both for her suggestions and for revising my English.

representations. At the same time, however, I shall evaluate the specific vantage point of the authors of the books used as sources, comparing some of their views with the findings of historians of domestic service in early modern Europe and drawing on my own work in the field.²

First, I shall focus on ideas about servants and servant-keeping in England as expressed by both English and foreign writers, especially French and Italian, showing how these ideas evolved over time and the differences between the internal and the external gaze. I shall then focus on Italy, analyzing the views of Italian customs expressed by travellers from Britain. I will show both how they differ and what they have in common, and evaluate whether their representations of the differences between domestic service in the two countries were consistent with the points made by the observers of social conditions in England. Finally, I shall compare early modern representations of the national characteristics of domestic service with the findings of recent historians, showing that – at least in some cases – these early representations turn out to be consistent with modern ones, particularly as regards the (crucial) issues of marriage and family formation.

2. *'The Purgatory of Servants'*

According to an ancient proverb, possibly dating from the sixteenth century (Hyman 1962, 212), England was 'the paradise of women, the hell of horses and the purgatory of servants'. The *Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* (Speake 2008) attributes the earliest known occurrence in print of this version of the proverb to Fynes Moryson (1617). Moryson mentioned the proverb in his well known *Itinerary* through Europe, explaining that English 'ride Horses without measure, and use their Servants imperiously, and their Women obsequiously' (1908, IV, 169). The proverb was cited in other books of the same period, such as William Camden's *Remaines concerning Britaine*, originally published in 1605. Camden presented the saying as a French one, and believed it to be fairly accurate: 'The Frenchmen are not altogether untrue and unfavorable to England in this their proverbiall speech, *England is the paradise of women, the purgatory of servants, and the hell of horses*' (1636, 16; italics in the text). French authors such as Jean Nicolas de Parival (1658, 25) do indeed refer to the proverb.

A slightly different version of the saying is also mentioned by the Italian historian and satirist Gregorio Leti (1630-1701). A convert to Protestantism, Leti spent several years in Switzerland, from where he was forced to flee first to France and then to England; there he published a work entitled *Del Teatro Brittanico* (1683) which offended Charles II, causing him to be expelled and to

² For the list of my publications see <<http://www.uniurb.it/sarti/>>.

take refuge in Amsterdam (Bufacchi 2005). *Del Teatro Britannico* commented extensively on the condition of servants in England, which, Leti maintained, was once said to be the purgatory of servants but was no longer so. Yet he believed that in England wages were better than in Italy and France, and that maid-servants in particular were so well-dressed that they looked like women of higher social strata. Servants were normally hired by the year and could leave their masters (or be fired) only after serving the whole of the agreed period (and giving warning three months in advance). On being hired, a certificate from the previous master was required. Thanks to these certificates, English masters placed greater trust in their servants than did the French and Italians, who were more cautious and suspicious. As a consequence, English servants were better protected by their masters than were the Italian and the French. Yet English masters forced their servants to work very hard, and punished them harshly if they were insolent or disobedient; killing one's master or mistress was punished as if it were a treason against the State. While on the one hand there were no longer slaves in England and foreign slaves became free as soon as they landed on its shores, the condition of some peasants – called villains (*villani*) – was truly servile. Another category whose condition appeared to Leti very harsh was that of apprentices. Yet while 'villains' experienced long-life bondage (*servitù*), apprentices were normally bound for seven years or even less, according to their contracts (1683, I, 454-456).

Thus Leti identified several types of workers who might be included in the wider category of servants: general servants (male and female), slaves, villains and apprentices. He also compared these categories with each other within the English context as well as with similar categories in Italy and France. Finally, he adopted a gendered perspective, dealing separately with menservants and maids. Trying to summarize his comments, one might conclude that, while he considered the economic and material conditions of English servants to be better than those in Italy and France, he judged their working conditions to be harsher because of the hard labour required of them, the strict obedience demanded by masters, the severity of punishments inflicted, and the lack of freedom to leave a place. In a sense, in illustrating conditions in England he describes a more paternalistic and hierarchical society than the Italian and French: a society where servants were more integrated into masters' households and received better protection, but were less free and independent. In the countryside, too, Leti noted the survival of 'villains', whereas rural Italy was in his view characterized by rent.

This effort to pinpoint differences is certainly interesting, particularly if one considers that Leti took – almost plagiarised – his information about England from Edward Chamberlayne's *The Present State of England* (first published anonymously in 1669 and then republished several times), which also included a chapter on servants. From this well-known book Leti made a kind of critical *pastiche*, translating some sentences, rendering words and

concepts that might have been obscure to the Italian reader with descriptive sentences, adding many comments and comparisons with Italy and France that allow us to understand how the condition of servants in England appeared to the eyes of an Italian who had lived both in Switzerland and France. For instance, Leti's argument that conditions in England were not better than elsewhere, since everywhere they were servile and down-trodden (Chamberlayne 1683, I, 454), was not to be found in Chamberlayne's account. On the other hand, the passages in which Leti argued that the present condition of English servants was better than it had been in the past, when England really was the 'purgatory of servants', are very similar to passages in his source (1676, 299).

3. *'The Proverb should be turn'd'*

From the late seventeenth century on the idea that England was no longer the purgatory of servants was becoming increasingly common in the works of English writers. There were in fact growing numbers of complaints that Albion had turned into a servant paradise, as was maintained by Daniel Defoe in 1724. In his well-known, anonymously published *The Great Law Of Subordination Consider'd*, he asserted that 'the Proverb should be turn'd, and we should say, it is the *Purgatory of Wives, and the Paradise of Servants*' (7). Through the fictional device of ten 'familiar letters' written to his brother by a Frenchman who had chosen to live in England (44, 199), Defoe argued that a dramatic change had affected the master-servant relationship, making it very different from what used to be and from what was in all other countries:

Nothing is more visible, nor indeed, breaks in so far upon our Civil Affairs in this Nation, as the surprizing Difference that there is in the Behaviour of Servants of every Rank and Degree among us, from what it was in former Times; from what it is now in other Nations; and from what, indeed, in the Nature of the thing, ought to be every-where. (8)

Defoe made clear that in speaking of 'Servants of every Rank and Degree' he meant first of all 'Apprentices, as well the Apprentices to Merchants, and more eminent Trades-Men, as the Apprentices to meaner People; such as Shop-Keepers, Handicrafts Artificers, Manufacturers, &c.'; secondly 'Menial Servants such as Cooks, Gardeners, Butlers, Coachmen, Grooms, Footmen, Pages, Maid-Servants, Nurses, &c. all kept within Doors, at Bed and Board; that is to say, such as have Yearly or Monthly Wages, with Meat, Drink, Lodging, and Washing'; thirdly, 'Clerks to Lawyers, Attorneys, Scriveners, &c. and to Gentlemen in publick Offices, and the like' as well as 'the Labouring Poor, that is, of Servants without Doors'. In other words, the change had not affected only 'a few Footmen, and Cook-wenches', but 'the whole Body of the Nation' (8-9). This change, far from being welcome, was the cause of general complaint and grievance: despite the

fact that their wages had doubled or even tripled, servants had become insolent and saucy, prone to drunkenness and cursing, idle and neglectful. Defoe spent three hundred pages describing in detail the causes, features, consequences of, and the possible remedies for the crisis that had rendered England peculiar among nations: 'Servants are more at Command, and more subject to their Masters, or more easily to be punish'd in other Countries' (258).

The main cause of growing insolence on the part of servants was, Defoe thought, 'the unseasonable Lenity, Kindness, and Tenderness to Servants in this Country' (258): the English had 'the uneasiest Servants', because they were 'the easiest Masters in the World' (260). Another cause lay, however, in a misunderstanding of English liberty, and in the spread of swearing and drinking to excess that had started during the Restoration (59). While the English were 'universally bless'd with real and valuable Liberty, more than any Nation in the World', many made the mistake of thinking that this liberty authorised them 'to indulge their Wickedness' and 'Freedom to Crime, not a Security against Oppression and Injustice' (18). The consequences of the lack of subordination in servants were far-reaching:

Husbandmen are ruin'd, the Farmers disabled, Manufacturers and Artificers plung'd, to the Destruction of Trade, and Stagnation of their Business; and that no Men who, in the Course of Business, employ Numbers of the Poor, can depend upon any Contracts they make, or perform any-thing they undertake, having no Law, no Power to enforce their Agreement, or to oblige the Poor to perform honestly what they are hir'd to do, tho' ever so justly paid for doing it. (2)

Without effective remedies, the poor would 'be Rulers over the Rich, and the Servants be Governours of their Masters', Defoe denounced: 'Order is inverted, Subordination ceases, and the World seems to stand with the Bottom upward' (17-18). To stop all these abuses, he suggested that severe fines be imposed upon masters who did not dismiss or send before a Justice of the Peace servants who became drunk, swore and cursed, or who dismissed them with a certificate of good behaviour; in his view, such masters too should be 'liable to make good all Loss or Damage which the said Servant, or Servants, shou'd occasion in the next Place they go to, or where they were receiv'd by Virtue of that Certificate'. Certificates should be issued to all at the end of every hiring period, and nobody should be hired without a certificate (a Justice of the Peace being entitled to give a certificate if a master unjustly refused it); they should always mention the reasons why a servant had been dismissed, and those with negative certificates should not be allowed new places for six months. Servants guilty of swearing at, cursing or threatening their masters and mistresses, should 'upon legal Conviction, be transported for 21 Years, not to be in the Master's Power to remit the Sentence, and the Master not prosecuting to forfeit 500 l.' (294-297).

In the last letter of *The Great Law of Subordination Consider'd* Defoe explains that, though he had intended to deal also with women servants, whose behaviour had 'grown up to be as great a Grievance as the other', he had already written more than he had intended to and therefore 'must forbear dwelling any longer upon this Part' (284-285). The following year, however, he published a pamphlet under the name of Andrew Moreton, Esq., complaining about 'the Pride, Indolence, And Exorbitant Wages Of Our Women Servants, Footmen, etc.' (1725). *Every Body's Business Is Nobody's Business* (another proverb) denounced the fact that

Women servants are now so scarce, that from thirty and forty shillings a year, their wages are increased of late to six, seven, nay, eight pounds per annum, and upwards; insomuch that an ordinary tradesman cannot well keep one; but his wife, who might be useful in his shop or business, must do the drudgery of household affairs; and all this because our servant-wenches are so puffed up with pride nowadays, that they never think they go fine enough: it is a hard matter to know the mistress from the maid by their dress; nay, very often the maid shall be much the finer of the two.³

'The fear of spoiling their clothes' had, Defoe accused, reached such a pitch as to make them 'afraid of household-work', while 'their extravagance in dress' caused masters' wives and daughters to indulge in excessive expenditure in order to 'go finer than the maid'.

Defoe also added that any maid newly arrived from the countryside would be advised by a 'committee of servant-wenches' 'to raise her wages, or give warning' and made sure by 'the herb-woman, or chandler-woman, or some other old intelligencer' that they could 'provide her a place of four or five pounds a year'; as a result she would immediately give 'warning from place to place, till she has got her wages up to the tip-top'. Another abuse took the form of the vails which, having originally intended 'as an encouragement to such as were willing and handy', had become a 'perquisite', while the rising wages of female servants were also making 'a mutiny among the men-servants', who wanted their wages raised too. The system had become one of 'a month's wages, or a month's warning': if maids were not happy with a master, they would 'go away the next day', whereas if the master did not like them, he 'must give them a month's wages to get rid of them'. This instability in staffing caused 'a great inconvenience to masters and mistresses'; employers were 'always at the mercy of every new comer' with power to inspect their private lives and divulge their family affairs. Even greater problems loomed: 'in a little time our servants will become our partners; nay, probably, run away with the better part of our profits, and make servants of us vice-versa'.

³ For this and subsequent passages of *Every Body's Business* no page numbers are given. References are to <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2052/2052-h/2052-h.htm>>.

Another of Defoe's complaints was that in addition to demanding high wages, maid-servants saw themselves as entitled to so-called 'poundage', and would even rob a master's household. Besides, they often tried to seduce their master's sons and other young fellows, ruining many families. On the other hand some gentlemen were 'so silly, that they shall carry on an underhand affair with their friend's servant-maid', which led 'to their own disgrace, and the ruin of many a young creatures' who, being flattered, carried 'themselves with the utmost insolence imaginable'. Servants' restless habits often caused their own downfall: 'from clopping and changing, they generally proceed to whoring and thieving', being forced to 'prostitute their bodies, or starve' when they were out of place. Many servant women 'rove from place to place, from bawdy-house to service, and from service to bawdy-house again'; they lived an 'amphibious life', 'ever unsettled and never easy, nothing being more common than to find these creatures one week in a good family, and the next in a brothel'.

Yet these creatures had become 'their own lawgivers': 'nay' – Defoe added – 'I think they are ours too', even though 'nobody would imagine that such a set of slatterns should bamboozle a whole nation'. Despite 'all these inconveniences', however, he admitted that 'we cannot possibly do without these creatures', and went on to suggest some remedies. 'The apparel' of the women-servants should be regulated in such a way that the mistress could be clearly distinguished from the maid, a goal that could be reached by obliging the maid to wear a livery or a 'dress suitable to her condition', one which 'would teach her humility, and put her in mind of her duty'. In addition it 'would be necessary to settle and limit their wages' and some 'encouragements and privileges given to such servants who should continue long in a place':

Servants should be restrained from throwing themselves out of place on every idle vagary. This might be remedied were all contracts between master and servant made before a justice of peace, or other proper officer ... Nor should such servant leave his or her place (for men and maids might come under the same regulation) till the time agreed on be expired, unless such servant be misused or denied necessaries, or show some other reasonable cause for their discharge. In that case, the master or mistress should be reprimanded or fined. But if servants misbehave themselves, or leave their places, not being regularly discharged, they ought to be amerced or punished. But all those idle, ridiculous customs, and laws of their own making, as a month's wages, or a month's warning ... should be entirely set aside and abolished. When a servant has served the limited time duly and faithfully, they should be entitled to a certificate ... nor should any person hire a servant without a certificate ... A servant without a certificate should be deemed a vagrant; and a master or mistress ought to assign very good reasons indeed when they object against giving a servant his or her certificate.

Having complained – somewhat misogynously – almost only about maid-servants, Defoe made clear that 'though, to avoid prolixity', he had 'not mentioned footmen', 'the complaints alleged against the maids are as well

masculine as feminine', suggesting that both women and men servants should work 'under the very same regulations'.

Some of the claims by Defoe are consistent with the points made by Gregorio Leti forty years earlier: English servants' wages were good (too high, according to Defoe), and maid-servants were so well-dressed that they seemed ladies of a superior class. Other claims, however, are not. According to Leti English servants were disciplined, worked very hard, could not easily leave their masters before the end of the contracted term, and could be hired only if they produced a certificate from their previous master, whereas according to Defoe they were insubordinate, idle and unstable. Nor did Defoe refer to the issuing of certificates as normal practice, as did Leti (and Chamberlayne); rather, he presented it as a custom that ought to be reshaped in order to make it an effective means of controlling servants, and universally enforced.

We may therefore wonder whether during the roughly forty years that separated Defoe's books from Leti's much had changed in England, or whether the differences mainly depended on the different vantage points, expectations and cultural backgrounds of the two authors. Certainly, Defoe was not alone in complaining about servants. As noted by Turner, in almost any period of history 'it is possible to find the well-to-do sighing for the "constant service of the antique world", but in eighteenth-century England, indignation against the new breed of servants was unusually shrill' (2001, 13). Grievances about the (alleged) growing insubordination and insolence of servants had indeed multiplied.

4. *The Gaze of Foreigners*

This self-perception on the part of the English was sometimes shared by foreigners, at least in part. The *Abbé Le Blanc*, who visited England between 1737 and 1744 and then published a description of the country, maintained, for instance, that because the English were intolerant of any form of dependency, they were the people least suited to being servants: they were good masters but bad *valets* (1745, I, 146). Later French writers, however, considered the treatment of servants in England to be particularly harsh. In 1797, for instance, Toussaint Guiraudet remarked that in England masters wielded greater authority than they did in France, and that servants were more disciplined, respectful and obedient (189). And in 1800 the baron de Baert-Duholant, who had visited Britain in 1787-1788, also stressed the authoritative status of English masters in his *Tableau de la Grande-Bretagne, de l'Irlande et des possessions angloises dans les quatre parties du monde*. On one hand he was very impressed by the enormous quantity of beer drunk by English servants and by their drunkenness (which is consistent with the observations of Defoe some years earlier). On the other, he noted the strict authority invested in the head of the family, and the fact that masters required

prompt submission and imposed exacting standards of service and decency on their servants, whom they kept at a distance withholding all signs of familiarity, though feeding, dressing and paying them well (1797, IV, 176, 196-197): a picture of master-servant relations similar to Leti's of almost a century earlier. Some forty years later, Tocqueville in *De la démocratie en Amérique* argued that France and England were the countries where master-servant relationships were respectively the most and the least hierarchic in the world (1848, 30).⁴ Obviously we should take account of the fact that the comments by Guiraudet, Baert-Duholant and Tocqueville were all made after the French Revolution (which – despite all the emphasis on freedom and equality – had a contradictory impact on domestic service, see Sarti 2012). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries England appeared to the eyes of many Europeans to be the reign of liberty. In the nineteenth century, on the other hand, it was perceived as economically very dynamic, but often as socially and politically conservative in comparison with other countries, especially the United States and France. It is thus surprising that French and Italian writers frequently expressed ideas about English servants and servant-keeping that remained quite stable over time and often differed from British self-perceptions.

As already mentioned, some of the views the English held of themselves were developed through comparisons with what they believed was happening in other countries, so that by looking at how they saw servants and servant-keeping in other countries we can also learn a great deal about their self-perceptions. Let us now focus on British evaluations of Italy, which though obviously not as yet in the eighteenth century politically unified was nevertheless perceived as a nation.⁵

5. *Servants and Masters in Italy: British Views*

'They [Italians] are very temperate in their Diet, and Drunkenness esteem'd the greatest of all Crimes; so that such as are given to drink are taken for Monsters, and judg'd unfit for human Society', writes Dr Ellis Veyard in his account of his journey through Europe and the Levant in the 1680s, in the course of which he also visited Italy (1701, 263; Villani 1996, 65-66). Some decades later Samuel Sharp, former surgeon at Guy's Hospital in London, asserted that in Naples servants did 'know nothing of the superfluities so

⁴ 'J'ai toujours considéré l'Angleterre comme le pays du monde où, de notre temps, le lien de la domesticité est le plus serré, et la France la contrée de la terre où il est le plus lâche. Nulle part le maître ne m'a paru plus haut ni plus bas que dans ce deux pays'.

⁵ On the tradition of the Italian tour see, for instance, Brilli 2006; Sweet 2012; on comparisons among nations Cabibbo 2010.

common amongst our poor; I mean the excessive use of strong and spirituous liquors: 'I do not remember' – he declared – 'to have seen in the streets one drunken man or woman, if I may except a few soldiers, and a few *Valets-de-Place*' (1767, 106). In Venice servants were 'never drunk', commented the British diarist, traveller and friend of Samuel Johnson, Hester Lynch Piozzi, who visited Italy in the 1780s (1789, 186). In sum, the very fact that Italian servants (like their masters) were usually not drunk was a kind of surprise for several travellers. The notice they take of Italian sobriety reveals and confirms that at home they were accustomed to drunken domestics. Defoe had associated drunkenness with insubordination and careless service, so one would expect that Italian servants, being sober, were more likely to be submissive and to serve carefully. English travellers often maintained that in Italy social hierarchies were undisputable; this was evident, for instance, according to several British writers, in the fact that Italians generally avoided marrying anyone of a lower social class.⁶ Hester Lynch Piozzi argued that the 'gulph' between social classes was 'totally impassable', and 'birth alone' could 'entitle a man or woman to the society of gentlemen and ladies' (1789, 107). She believed that the efforts made by the arch-duke of Tuscany 'to close this breach of distinction, and to draw merchants and traders with their wives up into higher notice than they were' were destined to be unsuccessful, because 'the prejudices in favour of nobility are too strong to be shaken here, much less to be rooted out so'. 'The very servants' – she wrote – 'would rather starve in the house of a man of family, than eat after a person of inferior quality, whom they consider as their equal, and almost treat him as such to his face' (98). In Florence gentlemen's servants would even dispute whose master should be served first 'ripping up the pedigrees of each to prove superior claims for a biscuit or macaroon' (299). In her view there was in Italy 'a firmly-fixed idea of subordination' (107).

In a society that – in the eyes of many British travellers seemed rigidly hierarchic, servants were seen as playing a crucial role in the display of status and wealth. Italian nobles – so several British writers claimed – were fond of splendid and even extravagant equipages and employed large staffs: 'The Cardinals, and all the Italian Princes in general, spend the best part of their Revenues in expensive Equipages, and numerous Trains-of Attendants, to make their Greatness appear to the World', wrote Dr Veyard in 1701.⁷ Several decades later, Arthur Young, who visited Italy in the late 1780s, confirmed that the greatest part of the incomes of Florentine elite families were 'consumed in keeping great crowds of domestics', though – at least in the case of the Ranuzzi family – he denied that they kept expensive equipages (1792, I, 246).

⁶ Veyard 1701, 262; Nugent 1756, 17; Smollett 1766, 220.

⁷ Veyard 1701, 201, see also 263; Molesworth 1738 [1694], xxii; Nugent 1756, 16, 153; Sharp 1767, 108-109, 113, 177, 209; Moore 1781, II, 132-133.

Equipages and liveried servants in general were used to display status in public not only by the aristocracy, but also by other classes. Hester Lynch Piozzi observed that once, while going to church, her Italian servant explained to her that he could tell that an elegant woman walking near them with two liveried footmen was not noble (actually she was the wife of a rich banker) by observing the servants: 'you may see – added he – that she is no lady if you look – the servants carry no velvet stool for her to kneel upon, and they have no coat of armour in the lace to their liveries' (1789, 97-98). While, on the one hand the type of servant employed revealed one's status, on the other, according to Samuel Sharp, having a footman was a kind of prerequisite to distinguishing oneself at the lower echelons of society. This, at least, was the case in Naples: 'every body here has the rage of keeping a footman, down to a sett of housekeepers, who hire one for the Sunday only; and there are some who hire one for an hour or two only; so that there are servants who let themselves out to three or four different masters on the same Sunday, it suiting one master to have his servant in the morning, another at noon, and a third after dinner' (1767, 105). In other words, domestic servants were seen by English travellers as crucial in a society which paid as much attention to appearances as did Naples and Italy in general.

In the eyes of British tourists, Italian nobles appeared also very ceremonious, to the point that 'all persons of the first Rank' kept 'masters of Ceremonies' (*Maestri di Camera*) to instruct them how they ought to carry themselves on all occasion' (Veryard 1701, 263). Richard Lassels, a Catholic priest who served as tutor to several British nobles during their travels through Europe, also held Italians to be respectful people, with a 'Natural gravity and Civil Education' (1670, 14). He remarked that in Italy masters never beat their servants, but remitted them to justice when a fault required punishing. According to Hester Lynch-Piozzi, punishments inflicted on servants, as on other people who had committed crimes, were not too severe. Referring to Venice she noted that the authorities hanged nobody, and neither did they punish prisoners condemned to work on roads and public buildings who insulted passengers for refusing to give them alms. 'Here is certainly much despotic power in Italy, but, I fancy, very little oppression; perhaps authority, once acknowledged, does not delight itself always by the fatigue of exertion', she commented (1789, 108). Furthermore, despite the rigid hierarchies, there was a surprising degree of familiarity between masters and servants:

the strange familiarity this class of people think proper to assume, half joining in the conversation, and crying *oibò** [* Oh dear!] when the masters affirms something they do not quite assent to, is apt to shock one at beginning, the more when one reflect upon the equally offensive humility they show on being first accepted into the family; when it is expected that they receive the new master, or lady's hand, in a half kneeling posture, and kiss it ... This obsequiousness, however, vanishes completely upon acquaintance. (7)

Another source of surprise was the fact that servants were often left without any particular task and were rather idle: 'nothing conveys to a British observer a stronger notion of loose living and licentious dissoluteness, than the sight of one's servants, gondoliers [she was speaking about Venice], and other attendants, on the scenes and circles of pleasure, where you find them, though never drunk, dead with sleep upon the stairs, or in their boats, or in the open street' (186). Some years later, Arthur Young, clearly expressing ideas about productivity then becoming current, pronounced Florentine nobles' employment of great trains of idle, lounging pensioners 'taken from useful labour, and kept from productive industry' to be 'one of the worst ways of spending their fortunes, relatively to the public good, that could have been adopted': 'how inferior to the encouragement of the fine or the useful arts', he concluded (1792, I, 246). Idleness in servants might also lead to lack of respect towards their masters: while sitting in antechambers they often played cards and seemed 'but little inclined to lay them down when ladies pass through to the receiving room' (Lynch-Piozzi 1789, 70).

The complaints that English servants were the laziest and least respectful in the world was not confirmed by British travellers' observations and comments on the ways of a foreign country like Italy. In their view Italian servants were sober, and people had 'a firmly-fixed idea of subordination' (Lynch Piozzi 1789, 107), but at the same time appeared to their eyes lazy and disrespectful. While Leti had considered the master-servant relationship in England to be both more hierarchical and more familiar than in Italy, many British travellers turned this judgement upside down, arguing that in Italy social hierarchies were very rigid but that there was a great deal of familiarity between masters and servants.⁸ At the same time, however, and despite their complaints about the laziness of English servants, while noting that Italian domestics were often idle and were not severely punished for their faults, they implicitly agreed with Leti's idea that British servants were forced to work very hard and were severely punished. Another point made by Leti was that English servants were more closely integrated into their masters' families than were Italians.

Other features of Italian servant-keeping that surprised the Britons indirectly confirm this point. Some travellers, for instance, were astonished to find that even the most elegant palaces were almost completely devoid of staff overnight due to the fact that many servants were married and/or had their own households in which to spend the night: 'when evening comes, it is the comicallest sight in the world to see them all [i.e. all the menservants] go gravely home, and you may die in the night for want of help, though

⁸ For a provocative analysis of master-servant relationships in eighteenth century England see Steedman 2007.

surrounded by showy attendants all day' (Lynch Piozzi 1789, 70). The very fact that in Italy many of those whom the Britons would define as 'indoor servants – were married and lived out was noteworthy to British visitors.⁹ In Naples 'it is almost universal fashion to keep their men-servants at board wages, not admitting them to sleep in their [i.e. of the masters] houses', wrote Sharp (1767, 100); 'the greater number of men servants, belonging to the first families, give their attendance through the day only, and find beds and provisions for themselves', according to Moore (1781, II, 134); in Florence, many servants are 'married, with their families, as in Spain', commented Young (1792, I, 245); in Italy as a whole 'most of these fellows [servants] are married too, and have four or five children each', wrote Lynch Piozzi (1789, 69). The high numbers of men-servants was also stressed by English witnesses, implicitly suggesting that British domestic personnel was more feminised. 'If eight servants are kept, we will say, six of these are men', noted Hester Lynch Piozzi (1789, 69). It is significant that some twenty years earlier, writing of Naples, Samuel Sharp had considered the features and arrangements of domestic service in that city to be crucial to understanding its peculiar demography. His interesting analysis deserves to be quoted at length:

Naples contains three hundred, or three hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants ... and I suppose it is the only metropolis in *Europe* which furnishes its own inhabitants: All the others are supplied with people from the provinces, the luxury and expensiveness of large cities being so great an impediment to marriage and populousness, that they would all, in the ordinary course of nature, be depopulated in a few years, were they not annually recruited from other parts; but in *Naples* the case is different, from a singular custom amongst the gentry in hiring married, in preference to unmarried servants. In *Paris*, or *London*, very few servants can hope to be employed who are not single, and, therefore, an infinite number of this class of people pass their lives in celibacy, as the instances are but rare, in those cities, where footmen and maid-servants can support them-selves after marriage by a different occupation. In *Naples* it is almost an universal fashion to keep their men-servants at board-wages, not admitting them to sleep in-their houses: This naturally leads them into marriage, as it gives them a settlement so essential to the character required here by all ranks of masters; but what seems still more to facilitate matrimony, in this order of people, is, the prodigious number of young women ready to accept the first offer; for in *Italy* they are not taken into service, as in *England*. A Nobleman who keeps forty men-servants, has seldom more than two maids; and indeed, it is so much the province of the men to do the house business, that they are employed

⁹ The theme was also present in French publications: an anonymous article published in 1759 in a section called 'Extrait des Livres, Journaux et Lettres d'Italie' of the *Journal Economique* observed that in Rome cardinals and princes had domestics 'qui sont en grand nombre, sont presque tous mariés, & tiennent leur ménage en ville, où ils se retirent le soir, après avoir fait leur service pendant la journée' (Tableau 1759, 417).

all over the country, even to the making of the beds. This circumstance, with the difficulty a woman has to acquire her living here by any other means, is the reason why they seldom make an objection to the certain poverty attending matrimony. The swarms of children in all the streets, inhabited by the poor, are such as will necessarily result from this practice; and as a married couple, though they have six or seven children, never occupy more than one room, the extreme populousness of *Naples* must, consequently, follow from such causes. (1767, 100-101; italics in the text)

Sharp here associates the composition of the Neapolitan domestic servant population as to gender and marriage status with the peculiar demography of the city. As we shall see, modern scholars too often use domestic service to explain the demography of pre-industrial Europe. But before moving on to that issue, let us consider some other features of Italian servant-keeping that surprised English visitors.

According to the doctor James Moore, Neapolitan aristocrats kept huge staffs: 'no estate in England could support such a number of servants, paid and fed as English servants are'. In his view, they could only employ so many domestics because 'the greater number of men servants, belonging to the first families, give their attendance through the day only, and find beds and provisions for themselves', and because 'here the wages are very moderate indeed' (1781, II, 134). A few years earlier, Sharp had mentioned the wages of servants in Naples to give 'an idea of the starving life of the major part of the poor', adding that 'fashion of vails' was 'in a manner unknown, except by great chance, or at the beginning of the year, when they receive a few trifling perquisites' (1767, 103-104).¹⁰ A couple of decades later, Thomas Watkins asserted that in Rome the wages of the 'numerous beggars in livery' were

¹⁰ See also Sharp 1767, 103-105: 'SIR, To give you an idea of the starving life of the major part of the poor, I shall only mention the wages of servants ... A *Neapolitan* Gentleman pays his footman five ducats a month; a Nobleman, perhaps, fix: All the Quality who keep pages, give them six or seven ducats, with a livery once in two years, and another for *gala* days only, which lasts ten years; but neither shoes, stockings, nor washing; With this sum they subsist themselves and families, for their pay includes board-wages; nor are the tables or the Gentry so amply provided here as to admit of the least depredation, as is the case in *England*, where married servants generally maintain their wives from their master's larder. Now a ducat is about three shillings and nine-pence, five of which make something less than nineteen shillings, the whole monthly income of far the greater number of livery servants in *Naples*'; 'The generality of servants marrying very young; their wives are, for the most part, blessed with numerous progeny, the cares of which are a sufficient occupation for the wife, so that the labour of her hands can add but little to their stock. The rent of a room for a month, is a ducat, which leaves exactly fifteen shillings for cloathing and maintaining the whole family. After this detail, it will not appear strange that they seldom have either meat or fresh fish, but find themselves under the necessity of feeding chiefly on the produce of gardens, a cheap sort of cheese, salt-fish, and a coarse bread, the last of which articles is unfortunately as clear or dearer at *Naples* than at *London*'.

'small'. Yet, in contrast to Sharp, he thought that they were low because of 'the certainty of their being made up to them by the contributions they draw from foreigners' (1794, 403) in the form of vails (*mancia*). Wage rates were commented on by other travellers too: according to both Ellis Veryard (1701, 201) and Thomas Nugent (1756, 17, 41) domestics of the Italian aristocracy were generally hired at board wages, that is given cash in lieu of meals (Hill 1996, 70). Sharp in effect confirmed this tendency, though his picture was more nuanced: in Naples, 'in the great families a few of the upper servants are not at board-wages, but are dieted by their matters, for the convenience of consuming what remains at table'. The rest, however, were at board-wages: 'I shall close this account of the lowness of servants wages, with remarking, that they all prefer a carline (four-pence halfpenny) a day for board-wages, to the being maintained by their masters; by which one may judge with what vile provision they can subsist' (1767, 105-106). A few years earlier, Nugent had reported that in Rome the so-called *staffieri* (footmen) were paid two and a half or three *julios* a day at board wages (1756, 41). In the 1780s, Hester Lynch Piozzi reported that in Milan the pay of the 'principal figures in the family, when at the highest rate', was 'fifteen pence English a day, out of which they find clothes and eating – for fifteen pence includes board-wages' while the wage of a footman was 'a shilling a day, like our common labourers, and paid him, as they are paid, every Saturday night'. In addition, 'his *livery*, mean time, changed at least *twice a year*, makes him as rich a man as the butler and the valet' (1789, 69-70; italics in the text).

Summing up, British visitors generally considered the wages of Italian servants to be very low, sometimes similar to those of English staff, never higher. In this their comments tend to confirm the idea suggested by Leti that servants' wages were normally better in England than in Italy. Furthermore, while visiting Italy they did not on the whole (Rome was an exception) complain about vails, whereas these were a source of much discontent in eighteenth-century Britain.¹¹ English visitors frequently remarked on the

¹¹ For further comments on perquisites in Italy see Brillì 2006, 127, 149; Sweet 2012, 71. In the 1750s and 1760s especially English masters and servants engaged indeed in the so-called 'great vail controversy'. Vails claimed by servants from their masters' guests were not only a burden that visitors increasingly judged to be intolerable: they also constituted an income that undermined masters' authority by making servants almost independent of them, or so claimed John Shebbeare, interestingly writing under the pseudonym of an alleged Italian Jesuit, Batista Angeloni (1756, 41). Though initially not unanimously, masters subsequently made huge efforts to eradicate the use of tips, which was strenuously defended by servants in protests and riots such as those which took place in Edinburgh in 1759-1760, and in Ranelagh Gardens in London in 1764. Yet by the 1780s the practice had been almost entirely rooted-out, especially in upper-class households; see Marshall 1929, 23-26; Hecht 1980, 158-168; Hill 1996, 74-90; Meldrum 2000, 202; Horn 2004, 206-210; Straub 2009, 131-137, *passim*; Richardson 2010, 88-89.

fact that most Italian servants were at board-wages, implicitly suggesting that this arrangement was not as common at home. Their comments on this arrangement were often interspersed with remarks on the fact that Italian servants were mostly men, who were often married and did not live with their masters (Sharp 1767, 101). The impression one gets from reading their reports is that domestic service as performed in Italy appeared to their eyes a more proletarianised and monetised occupation than in Britain. Their reports typically focus on those servants who, according to British classifications, belonged (or should belong) to the 'indoor' staffs of noble households. In Italy, they observed, such servants were, with only a few exceptions, poor men who received low monetary wages and (paradoxically?) were live-outs: they were married, had children and were themselves heads of their own families. In a sense, they were 'masters' in their own homes and appeared to be quite independent. Although they did not question the social stratification of society, they were not particularly subservient. Like 'modern' proletarians, they went to work in the morning and went home in the evening, providing for themselves and their families the means of subsistence. They were poor, but they were breadwinners: their wives did not work as servants before marrying, nor did they have an occupation other than caring for their numerous children thereafter.¹² To a certain extent, one could say that being a servant in Italy conflicted less with the status of an independent adult man than it did in Britain where, according to the British themselves, domestic personnel was indeed more feminised.

On the other hand, in reading the comparisons between Britain and Italy in the texts I have analysed so far, one gets the impression that, though paid better than their Italian counterparts, British servants appeared (implicitly or explicitly) to be more 'infantilised': in the 'posture of children', to use a well-known description by Defoe (1715).¹³ In general they lived in, ate and slept in the master's house, got an important part of their income from vails (features of gift economies rather than commercial ones), and were normally unmarried. They seemed to be more integrated into their masters' households as 'one of the family', but in subordinate positions. Their strenuous defense of vails (which made them in part economically independent from masters), as well as their efforts to transform tips from gracious donations into obligatory taxes on guests and rights for themselves, were probably a way of expressing their growing dissatisfaction with their subordinate position and desire to affirm their independence. Rather surprisingly, while visiting Italy British travellers did not (as far as I can tell) comment on servant stability

¹² See note 9.

¹³ 'So that you put the Master entirely upon the Father's Place, and the Servants in the Posture of Children' (Defoe 1715, 276); on this issue see Straub 2009, *passim*.

or mobility, a matter which, back in Britain, was a source of great concern, and which was probably yet another way by which servants were trying to assert their autonomy. Perhaps just because they were travelling from place to place British tourists may not have been in a position to assess the degree of servant mobility – but more research is needed on this issue.

It might be surprising to find that Italian domestic service seemed to be more monetised and proletarianised than did the British. Yet we have to remember that Italy was a highly urbanised country whose economy was commercialised early. At this point however, it is time to compare the observations made by early modern writers with the findings of contemporary research.

6. *The Ideas of our Ancestors and the Ideas of Contemporary Scholars Compared*

Sharp's extremely negative picture of Italy provoked the reaction of an Italian intellectual who spent much of his life in London, was appointed Secretary to the Royal Academy of Arts and became acquainted with (among many others) Samuel Johnson and Hester Lynch Piozzi. As a riposte to Sharp, Giuseppe Baretti published a two volume *Account of the Manners and Customs of Italy: With Observations on the Mistakes of Some Travellers, with Regard to that Country* (1768). The book included a discussion of some of the points made by Sharp about domestic service and marriage, and challenged his – and other Protestant writers' – attacks on the Italian custom of sending girls to nunneries. Sharp (1767, 108-109) had indeed accused Neapolitan nobles of making 'no great demands for the education of their children' because they disposed 'of all the girls in Convents, upon very easy terms, whilst they are children, where they are left all their lives, unless they provide them husbands'. As we have seen, he had also asserted that girls did not generally work as servants. Baretti claimed that Sharp had exaggerated the numbers of women in convents both as nuns and pensioners or boarders. As for servants, he did not contest Sharp's assertion, but, on the contrary, recalled his point about the absence of unmarried servants to argue that the Italian system was better than the English one; in Italy women with no chance of marrying often became nuns and spent their lives in the protective environment of the cloister, making older spinsters almost unknown, whereas in England many women were forced to remain unmarried and, if they were poor, had to spend their whole lives toiling as maid-servants. Neither in Italy nor in England was it possible for each and every woman to become a 'lawful mother' and thus contribute to increasing their nation's population; Baretti estimates that in England as many as 5-6 per cent of women were destined to be life-long singles (1768, II, 1-9).

It is not possible within the scope of this article to compare all comments on domestic service made both by writers observing their own countries and by visitors with the findings of contemporary historiography. I shall therefore devote my remaining pages to a closer examination of an issue which has

been crucial in historical debate during the last fifty years: that of marriage and celibacy among male and female servants.

In 1965 an influential essay was published by the demographer John Hajnal, who wrote that Western Europe was characterized by a peculiar marriage pattern with a high proportion of single people and marriages at a late age. In Hajnal's view, these two features reduced birth rates, contributing to slowing down population growth and reducing population pressure. According to Hajnal, Western Europeans married late because they had to acquire the ability and means to support a family before marrying, a goal they often achieved by working as servants. Life-long single people were often servants, too. Domestic service was thus at the core of Hajnal's theory. During the years that followed, Hajnal (1983), Laslett (1983) and scholars of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure developed this model further by introducing the concept of life-cycle service, namely service performed during the juvenile phase of life, typically before marrying (Laslett 1977a, 1977b). These theories generated huge field of research. The homeostatic mechanism initially suggested by Hajnal has been found to work effectively in North Western and Central Europe, but not in other parts of the continent, such as the Eastern and Southern Europe (especially in the Mediterranean region), and life-cycle service has not been found to be common everywhere (Sarti 2007; Sarti 2014, with further references).

Interestingly enough, however, some early modern authors too had noticed the high proportion of singles among domestics, and they too had considered it a hindrance to population growth. Yet, while contemporary scholars generally think of this high celibacy rate as a positive contribution to keeping a balance between the resources available and demographic growth, early modern authors, who on the contrary usually valued population growth, took a negative view of it, and also denounced it as a source of immoral behaviour (Sarti 2008). David Hume, for instance, in his essay *Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations* (1752), argued that ancient slavery was a hindrance to populousness because it was more convenient for masters to buy grown up slaves than to breed them: 'the same reason, at least in part, holds with regard to ancient slaves as modern servants'. Moreover, noting that 'at present, all masters discourage the marrying of their male servants, and admit not by any means the marriage of the female, who are then supposed altogether incapacitated for their service', Hume argued that 'our lackeys and house-maids, I own, do not serve much to multiply their species' (1987, II, XI, 13 and 23). Even more explicitly, Moheau, in his *Recherches et considérations sur la population de la France* (1778), declared that the high number of *domestiques* was deleterious to population growth, because masters preferred unmarried servants, so that many domestics remained single and/or had no children (1994, 117).

Some of the authors of travel books analysed here also associated the gender and marital status of domestic servants with rapid/slow population growth as well as with wealth. Samuel Sharp, in particular, considered the absence of female servants and the marriage of males at a young age to be one of the reasons for the populousness of Naples and the poverty of its lower strata.¹⁴ That in Southern Italy female domestic service was not as common as in Northern Europe has been confirmed by modern scholars (Sarti 2007, with further references). Unfortunately domestic service in Naples has not so far been studied in detail, but research on other Italian cities shows that male domestic servants were common and were indeed often married and live-outs. This was the case, for instance, in eighteenth-century Bologna (Sarti 2005a). As for Rome, Angiolina Arru has shown that in the eighteenth century male married servants were numerous, yet at the same time marriage was an area of conflict between masters and servants. According to Arru conflict surrounding marriage was one of the most important factors that contributed to the feminisation of domestic personnel in the nineteenth century, when unmarried female servants living with their masters became increasingly common (1995).

Although data on this issue is quite fragmentary, and the different criteria used by different scholars limit the possibility to make geographical comparisons, it seems that Arru was not too far from the truth when she wrote, some years ago, that 'Italian cities had a higher percentage of male servants ... than other European cities' (1990, 549). Certainly, until more or less the mid-eighteenth century, quite high percentages of male servants were present in other cities as well. In Paris, for instance, according to the eighteenth-century demographer Louis Messance, in 1754 male *domestiques* were even more numerous than female ones (respectively 50.4 and 49.6 per cent), (1766, 186). Yet, after the mid-eighteenth century, Italian cities indeed had a higher percentage of men among their domestics than elsewhere (Sarti 1997; Sarti 2007). In London, however, women were the large majority of servants even in the second half of the seventeenth and in the eighteenth century (about 80 percent according to Meldrum 2000, 16), and they generally were young and unmarried (18-19) – a finding consistent with the surprise of the British travellers observing the high numbers of men among Italian staffs.

We can speculate about the reasons for this gender composition. The data available for Florence and Venice show that in the Middle Ages maid-servants were numerous; the numbers of men-servants grew from the sixteenth century onwards. By that time, demographic recovery had annulled the long-

¹⁴ This interpretation would support the hypothesis – recently put forward in a highly controversial article by De Moor and Van Zanden (2010) – that, because of its system of family formation, Southern Europe, did not enjoy the advantages of the 'European marriage pattern' that they consider as a stimulus to economic development. It is not possible to discuss this hypothesis within the scope of this article.

term consequences of the Black Death, which, had made manpower scarce and created job opportunities for women in domestic service. In addition, the republican and mercantile societies of Italy underwent a process of aristocratisation that probably resulted in increasing recourse to men-servants along lines similar to the pattern followed by Northern European aristocracies in the late Middle Ages. Furthermore, the marginalisation of the Italian economy after the conquest of America lack of alternative employment may have pushed not only women but also men into the domestic sector, while the late start of industrialisation in Italy probably contributed to keeping up numbers of men-servants in the eighteenth century (Klapisch-Zuber 1986; Romano 1996, xxi, 229-230; Sarti 1997).¹⁵

In reading the comments of British travellers on the gender composition of Italian domestic staffs, one has the impression that women made up only a small minority. These comments normally referred to aristocratic households, which my own research on parish registers, censuses and account books and other sources concerning late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Bologna confirms to have been largely made up of men: women usually constituted a third or a quarter of the staffs of such households (Sarti 1994, 70; 1999). Maids were in fact particularly numerous in non-noble families. As already stated, quantitative comparisons among different periods, cities and nations is difficult because of the blurred boundaries of the notion of what is a servant: findings depend very much on who is counted. However, we can argue that, in Italy, maids generally made up (significantly) more than half of the servants and urban domestic service was more likely to have been performed by men (of all ages), who often were married and heads of their own families, than in England. Though the feminisation of domestic personnel that was to take place in the nineteenth century was a complex – and by no means linear – process, with local peculiarities, it was a process that would reduce the size of this group of servants (Sarti 1997, 2005a, 2005b). As a result the young, unmarried, live-in maid-servant became the most common type of servant: an outcome that (paradoxically?) would associate domestic service more closely with co-residence, with strict subordination to masters (inasmuch as the number of servants who were themselves heads of families decreased), and

¹⁵ Comparing domestic service in the industrial town of Prato with that in the ‘aristocratic’ city of Florence in 1841, Maria Casalini found that in Prato domestic service was more feminised than in Florence (2001). It was not until the early twentieth century, by which time Italy was making up for its late start in economic development, that the Italian ‘difference’ as to numbers of men-servants diminished. It must be stressed, however, that the interpretative framework according to which economic development and modernisation *always* imply first a feminisation of domestic service and eventually a marked reduction in numbers of servants, or their disappearance, has proved to be incorrect; see Dubert 2006; Sarti 2014.

with female gender, thus strongly contributing to the so-called feminisation of dependency (Sarti 2003; Fraser and Gordon 1994, 309-314).

7. Conclusion

Let us go back to the comments made by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century authors. On one hand they shed light on the ways domestic service was perceived, both by those writing of their own countries and by travellers: they allow us to understand which features of service they perceived as problematic and which they found surprising. At the same time, however, they reveal that perceptions were rooted and influenced by the contexts considered. When authors compare their own countries with others, their evaluations are likely to change; for instance, complaints about English domestics being the most insolent in the world appear in a different light after reading how Italian servants were considered by British travellers. Comparison leads to inconsistencies and contradictions that disclose the relativity of all such judgements. This is indeed one of the reasons for the interest of the literature analysed in this article, which has focused on a series of early modern texts in which servants and servant-keeping in Italy and England were compared. Nevertheless, many commentators agreed that domestics were paid better in England than in Italy, where numbers of men-servants (often married and live-out) were higher than in Britain. This last point is consistent with the findings of contemporary historical research based on other sources: many other comments made by our ancestors might thus be taken as stimulating suggestions for new research.

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APPENDIX

Servants: for, about and by

Xenophon, from *The Memorabilia: Recollections of Socrates*, III, xii, translated by H.G. Dakyns

A man had administered a severe whipping to the slave in attendance on him, and when Socrates asked: 'Why he was so wroth with his own serving-man?' excused himself on the ground that 'the fellow was a lazy, gourmandising, good-for-nothing dolt – fonder of money than of work'. To which Socrates: 'Did it ever strike you to consider which of the two in that case the more deserves a whipping – the master or the man?'

Xenophon, from *The Economist*, xii, translated by H.G. Dakyns

If the teacher sets but an ill example, the pupil can hardly learn to do the thing aright. And if the master's conduct is suggestive of laxity, how hardly shall his followers attain to carefulness! Or to put the matter concisely, 'like master like man'. I do not think I ever knew or heard tell of a bad master blessed with good servants. The converse I certainly have seen ere now, a good master and bad servants; but they were the sufferers, not he. No, he who would create a spirit of carefulness in others must have the skill himself to supervise the field of labour; to test, examine, scrutinise. He must be ready to requite where due the favour of a service well performed, nor hesitate to visit the penalty of their deserts upon those neglectful of their duty.

Aristotle, from *Politics* 1255b, translated by H. Rackham

And even from these considerations it is clear that the authority of a master over slaves is not the same as the authority of a magistrate in a republic, nor are all forms of government the same, as some assert. Republican government controls men who are by nature free, the master's authority men who are by nature slaves; and the government of a household is monarchy since every house is governed by a single ruler, whereas statesmanship is the government of men free and equal. The term 'master' therefore denotes the possession not of a certain branch of knowledge but of a certain character, and similarly also the terms 'slave' and 'freeman'. Yet there might be a science of mastership



and a slave's science – the latter being the sort of knowledge that used to be imparted by the professor at Syracuse for there used to be a man there who for a fee gave lessons to servants in their ordinary duties; and indeed there might be more advanced scientific study of such matters, for instance a science of cookery and the other such kinds of domestic service – for different servants have different functions, some more honorable and some more menial, and as the proverb says, 'Slave before slave and master before master'.

The slave's sciences then are all the various branches of domestic work; the master's science is the science of employing slaves – for the master's function consists not in acquiring slaves but in employing them. This science however is one of no particular importance or dignity: the master must know how to direct the tasks which the slave must know how to execute. Therefore all people rich enough to be able to avoid personal trouble have a steward who takes this office, while they themselves engage in politics or philosophy. The science of acquiring slaves is different both from their ownership and their direction – that is, the just acquiring of slaves, which is akin to the art of war or that of the chase. Let this then stand as our definition of slave and master.

Horace, *The Odes*, Book II, iv, translated by A.S. Kilne

Phocian Xanthis, don't be ashamed of love
for your serving-girl. Once before, Briseis
the Trojan slave with her snow-white skin stirred
angry Achilles:

and captive Tecmessa's loveliness troubled
her master Ajax, the son of Telamon:
and Agamemnon, in his mid-triumph, burned
for a stolen girl,

while the barbarian armies, defeated
in Greek victory, and the loss of Hector,
handed Troy to the weary Thesalians,
an easier prey.

You don't know your blond Phyllis hasn't parents
who are wealthy, and might grace their son-in-law.
Surely she's royally born, and grieves at her
cruel household gods.

Believe that the girl you love's not one who comes
from the wicked masses, that one so faithful

so averse to gain, couldn't be the child of
a shameful mother.

I'm unbiased in praising her arms and face,
and shapely ankles: reject all suspicion
of one whose swiftly vanishing life has known
its fortieth year.

From the prologue to a law emanated by the Council of Ten transferring authority over the domestic servants of Venice to the office of the censors, 1541, Archivio di Stato Venezia, Censori, busta I, capitulary dated 1541-1790, fols. 1r-v, translated by Dennis Romano

There are multiplying daily so many complaints to the heads of this council concerning the ill condition, the assemblies, and the gatherings that the boatmen and servants of this city continuously form and the ill words that they publicly use, beside their other insolent and dishonorable habits, showing no respect for noblemen and noblewomen, or for men and women citizens, or for other persons, and with the most evil example and little honor for the city, that if something is not done, their insolence will grow even greater as they see that it goes unpunished. This matter is of such importance that everyone recognizes that it must be entrusted to a magistracy that has the authority to expedite and put in place those ordinances that seem necessary.

Michel de Montaigne, from 'De Trois Commerces' ('Of Three Commerces'), in *Les Essais* III, ch. iii, 1595, translated by Charles Cotton

Yet do I very well discern that he who has the conveniences (I mean the essential conveniences) of life for his end, as I have, ought to fly these difficulties and delicacy of humour, as much as the plague. I should commend a soul of several stages, that knows both how to stretch and to slacken itself; that finds itself at ease in all conditions whither fortune leads it; that can discourse with a neighbour, of his building, his hunting, his quarrels; that can chat with a carpenter or a gardener with pleasure. I envy those who can render themselves familiar with the meanest of their followers, and talk with them in their own way; and dislike the advice of Plato, that men should always speak in a magisterial tone to their servants, whether men or women, without being sometimes facetious and familiar; for besides the reasons I have given, 'tis inhuman and unjust to set so great a value upon this pitiful prerogative of fortune, and the polities wherein less disparity is permitted betwixt masters and servants seem to me the most equitable. Others study

how to raise and elevate their minds; I, how to humble mine and to bring it low; 'tis only vicious in extension:

“Narras et genus Æaci,
 Et pugnata sacro bella sub Ilio
 Quo Chium pretio cadum
 Mercemur, quis aquam temperet ignibus,
 Quo praeante domum, et quota,
 Pelignis caream frigoribus, taces.”

[“You tell us long stories about the race of Aëacus, and the battles fought under sacred Ilium; but what to give for a cask of Chian wine, who shall prepare the warm bath, and in whose house, and when I may escape from the Pelignian cold, you do not tell us.” — Horace, *Od.*, iii. 19, 3]

William Shakespeare, *Othello* 1.1.42-43

Iago: We cannot all be masters, nor all masters cannot be truly followed.

William Shakespeare, sonnet 57

Being your slave, what should I do but tend
 Upon the hours and times of your desire?
 I have no precious time at all to spend,
 Nor services to do, till you require.
 Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour
 Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you,
 Nor think the bitterness of absence sour
 When you have bid your servant once adieu;
 Nor dare I question with my jealous thought
 Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,
 But, like a sad slave, stay and think of nought
 Save, where you are how happy you make those.
 So true a fool is love that in your will,
 Though you do any thing, he thinks no ill.

William Shakespeare, *Henry V* 4.1, 150-163

So, if a son that is by his father sent about merchandise do sinfully miscarry upon the sea, the imputation of his wickedness by your rule, should be imposed

upon his father that sent him: or if a servant, under his master's command transporting a sum of money, be assailed by robbers and die in many irreconciled iniquities, you may call the business of the master the author of the servant's damnation: but this is not so: the king is not bound to answer the particular endings of his soldiers, the father of his son, nor the master of his servant; for they purpose not their death, when they purpose their services.

Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, 1605, translated by John Rutherford

... Day was dawning when Don Quixote quitted the inn, so happy, so gay, so exhilarated at finding himself now dubbed a knight, that his joy was like to burst his horse-girths. However, recalling the advice of his host as to the requisites he ought to carry with him, especially that referring to money and shirts, he determined to go home and provide himself with all, and also with a squire, for he reckoned upon securing a farm-labourer, a neighbour of his, a poor man with a family, but very well qualified for the office of squire to a knight. With this object he turned his horse's head towards his village, and Rocinante, thus reminded of his old quarters, stepped out so briskly that he hardly seemed to tread the earth.

He had not gone far, when out of a thicket on his right there seemed to come feeble cries as of some one in distress, and the instant he heard them he exclaimed, 'Thanks be to heaven for the favour it accords me, that it so soon offers me an opportunity of fulfilling the obligation I have undertaken, and gathering the fruit of my ambition. These cries, no doubt, come from some man or woman in want of help, and needing my aid and protection'; and wheeling, he turned Rocinante in the direction whence the cries seemed to proceed. He had gone but a few paces into the wood, when he saw a mare tied to an oak, and tied to another, and stripped from the waist upwards, a youth of about fifteen years of age, from whom the cries came. Nor were they without cause, for a lusty farmer was flogging him with a belt and following up every blow with scoldings and commands, repeating, 'Your mouth shut and your eyes open!' while the youth made answer, 'I won't do it again, master mine; by God's passion I won't do it again, and I'll take more care of the flock another time'.

Seeing what was going on, Don Quixote said in an angry voice, 'Discourteous knight, it ill becomes you to assail one who cannot defend himself; mount your steed and take your lance' (for there was a lance leaning against the oak to which the mare was tied), 'and I will make you know that you are behaving as a coward'. The farmer, seeing before him this figure in full armour brandishing a lance over his head, gave himself up for dead, and made answer meekly, 'Sir Knight, this youth that I am chastising is my servant, employed by me to watch a flock of sheep that I have hard by, and he is so careless that I lose one every day, and when I punish him for his carelessness

and knavery he says I do it out of niggardliness, to escape paying him the wages I owe him, and before God, and on my soul, he lies’.

‘Lies before me, base clown!’ said Don Quixote. ‘By the sun that shines on us I have a mind to run you through with this lance. Pay him at once without another word; if not, by the God that rules us I will make an end of you, and annihilate you on the spot; release him instantly’.

The farmer hung his head, and without a word untied his servant, of whom Don Quixote asked how much his master owed him.

He replied, nine months at seven reals a month. Don Quixote added it up, found that it came to sixty-three reals, and told the farmer to pay it down immediately, if he did not want to die for it.

The trembling clown replied that as he lived and by the oath he had sworn (though he had not sworn any) it was not so much; for there were to be taken into account and deducted three pairs of shoes he had given him, and a real for two blood-lettings when he was sick.

‘All that is very well’, said Don Quixote; ‘but let the shoes and the blood-lettings stand as a setoff against the blows you have given him without any cause; for if he spoiled the leather of the shoes you paid for, you have damaged that of his body, and if the barber took blood from him when he was sick, you have drawn it when he was sound; so on that score he owes you nothing’.

‘The difficulty is, Sir Knight, that I have no money here; let Andres come home with me, and I will pay him all, real by real’.

‘I go with him!’ said the youth. ‘Nay, God forbid! No, senor, not for the world; for once alone with me, he would ray me like a Saint Bartholomew’.

‘He will do nothing of the kind’, said Don Quixote; ‘I have only to command, and he will obey me; and as he has sworn to me by the order of knighthood which he has received, I leave him free, and I guarantee the payment’.

‘Consider what you are saying, senor’, said the youth; ‘this master of mine is not a knight, nor has he received any order of knighthood; for he is Juan Haldudo the Rich, of Quintanar’.

‘That matters little’, replied Don Quixote; ‘there may be Haldudos knights; moreover, everyone is the son of his works’.

‘That is true’, said Andres; ‘but this master of mine – of what works is he the son, when he refuses me the wages of my sweat and labour?’.

‘I do not refuse, brother Andres’, said the farmer, ‘be good enough to come along with me, and I swear by all the orders of knighthood there are in the world to pay you as I have agreed, real by real, and perfumed’.

‘For the perfumery I excuse you’, said Don Quixote; ‘give it to him in reals, and I shall be satisfied; and see that you do as you have sworn; if not, by the same oath I swear to come back and hunt you out and punish you; and I shall find you though you should lie closer than a lizard. And if you desire to know who it is lays this command upon you, that you be more firmly

bound to obey it, know that I am the valorous Don Quixote of La Mancha, the undoer of wrongs and injustices; and so, God be with you, and keep in mind what you have promised and sworn under those penalties that have been already declared to you’.

So saying, he gave Rocinante the spur and was soon out of reach. The farmer followed him with his eyes, and when he saw that he had cleared the wood and was no longer in sight, he turned to his boy Andres, and said, ‘Come here, my son, I want to pay you what I owe you, as that undoer of wrongs has commanded me’.

‘My oath on it’, said Andres, ‘your worship will be well advised to obey the command of that good knight – may he live a thousand years – for, as he is a valiant and just judge, by Roque, if you do not pay me, he will come back and do as he said’.

‘My oath on it, too’, said the farmer; ‘but as I have a strong affection for you, I want to add to the debt in order to add to the payment’; and seizing him by the arm, he tied him up again, and gave him such a flogging that he left him for dead.

‘Now, Master Andres’, said the farmer, ‘call on the undoer of wrongs; you will find he won’t undo that, though I am not sure that I have quite done with you, for I have a good mind to flay you alive’. But at last he untied him, and gave him leave to go look for his judge in order to put the sentence pronounced into execution.

Andres went off rather down in the mouth, swearing he would go to look for the valiant Don Quixote of La Mancha and tell him exactly what had happened, and that all would have to be repaid him sevenfold; but for all that, he went off weeping, while his master stood laughing.

William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, vii, 33, 1622

‘Of servants’ faithfulness in regard of their masters’, or mistresses’ bed-fellow’

So faithful ought servants be to their masters and mistresses, that if one of them should labour to use a servant in any manner of deceit to the other, the servant ought not to yield. As if a master should move his maid privily to take away jewels, plate, money, linen, or any such thing as is in her mistress’s custody. It skilleth not that the master hath the chiefest power over all the goods: a secret taking of them without the privity of the mistress in whose custody they are, is in the servant deceit, and a point of unfaithfulness. Much less ought any servants be moved by their mistresses privily to take away their master’s corn, wares, or any goods for her private use. Of the two this is the greater part of unfaithfulness.

If such deceit ought not to be used about any goods, much less about the body of master or mistress. As if a master should allure his maid to commit

folly with him, or a mistress her man, both their conscience to God, and also their faithfulness to their master or mistress should make them utterly to refuse it, and to give no place to any such temptation. *Joseph* is propounded as a pattern herein (Hen 39:7): and against the suggestion of his mistress he rendereth the two forenamed reasons: his conscience to God in these words, *how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?* His faithfulness to his master in these, *He hath not kept back any thing for me but thee, how then &c.*

To this head may be referred servants' faithfulness in making known to their master the sin of his wife, and to their mistress the sin of her husband, especially if it be such a sin as may tend to the ruin of the family, and that by the knowledge thereof, the party that is not blinded and besotted with the sin, but rather free from it, may be a means to redress it. Thus *Nabal's* servants made known to *Abigail* the churlishness of *Nabal* towards *David's* servants (1 Sam. 25:14): by which means the mischief intended against the house was prevented. Thus if servants know that their master intend some mortal revenge against another, to tell his wife thereof in time, may be great faithfulness: or if they know their mistress hath appointed to go away privily from her husband, to tell him of it, is a part of faithfulness. This may be applied to other like cases.

The contrary is yielding to masters or mistresses in any point of deceit one against another: whereunto servants are too prone, because they think to be bolstered out by the authority of the party that setteth them in work to deceive. But no authority can be a warrant for any deceit, or wickedness.

Pepys Ballads 2.178 1671-1702? (English Broadside Ballad Archive ID: 20795)

The Chamberlain's Tragedy:

OR,

The Cook-Maid's Cruelty;

Being a true Account how she in the heat of Passion,
Murder'd her Fellow-servant (the Chamberlain) at an Inn, in the
Town of Andever. Tune, Bleeding Heart. Licens'd according to Order

You that have melting hearts to grieve,
This mournful Ditty pray receive,
'Tis of a bloody Tragedy,
Unheard of Matchless cruelty.

The which I shall in brief unfold,
Therefore dear People, pray behold,
The manner of this wicked deed,
It needs must make your hearts to bleed.

Two Servants in one house did dwell,
At Andever, 'tis known full well;
A Cook-maid and a Chamberlin,
Now the relation I'll begin:

The one of them was most moross,
The other was exceeding cross,
So that with heat or passion they,
Were still at parlance Day by Day.

They acted both, like Tygers wild,
They never wou'd be reconcil'd
By any admonition, no,
Till passion prov'd their overthrow.

Behold it happen'd on a day
The Chamberlin, he took his way
Unto the fire-side, where she
Was busie at her Cookery.

To make a Toast was his intent,
But she his purpose wou'd prevent,
With Knife in Hand, but still he cry'd,
He valu'd not her haughty Pride.

This rais'd her passion more and more,
So that at length she vow'd and swore,
That she wou'd stick him to the Heart,
If he did not the Room depart:

Quoth he, Are you so resolute,
Is Blood the heat of your dispute?
Yes, that it is, you Slave, quoth she,
Be gone or I shall hang for thee.

The Chamberlin reply'd again,
Your swelling words are all in vain;
I do not fear you in the least
And thus their passion still increas'd.

Quoth she, I'll not disputing stand,
To him she ran with Knife in Hand
And wounded him in woful case,
Across his Head and down his Face.

The wreaking Blood began to run,
 But still the Cook-maid had not done;
 Till through his Ribs, she thrust the Knife,
 And so bereav'd him of his Life.

When she beheld him on the floor,
 In woful streams of wreaking gore;
 She then bemoan'd her dismal state,
 But this repentance come too late.

Thus having his destruction wrought,
 Before a Justice, she was brought,
 Who soon committed her to Goal,
 Where she the Murder does bewail.

Often with Tears she does reply
 Why did my passion rise so high,
 As for to take his Life away,
 Alas! this is a dismal Day?

How shall I answer for my crime,
 Who gave him not a Minutes time;
 To beg a Pardon for his Soul,
 In sorrow I his Death condole:

I can expect no favour here,
 Who was so cruel and severe,
 That for a trifle I should be,
 The auther of his Tragedy.

I needs must suffer for the same,
 And leave this wretched World in shame;
 But woe is me, that is not all,
 His Blood does for just vengance call.

The time I have to live, I'll spend,
 In making God my special friend,
 That when this painful life I leave,
 He may in love my Soul receive.

You Servants all both far anear,
 That does my sad relation hear;
 Labour to live in Love I pray,
 Least passion should your Lives decay.

Old Bailey Proceedings Online (<www.oldbaileyonline.org>, version 6.0, accessed 17 December 2014), 15 January 1680, trial of Thomas Gold (t16800115-1)

Thomas Gold, Theft, subcategory Burglary, 15th January 1680

The first was Thomas Gold, who was Indicted, for that he in the Company of three more, did on the 17th of December last, break into the Dwelling-house of one Katherine Harris, in the Parish of Hornzie, in the County of Middlesex, from whence, after they had secured her, by almost smothering her and her Children with the Bed-clothes, they went into the next Chamber, and bound her Servant-Maid, who whilst they were effecting of it, took by the light of their Candle, particular notice of the now Prisoner, by reason of a blow on his Nose, and a blemish in his Eye. After they had by this means secured all pursuit, they Ransacked the House, and carried away 14 Pewter Dishes, 5 or 6 Plates, fourty shillings in Money, Table-Linnen, Childbed-Linnen, and other Cloathes to a considerable vallue rub'd off, after upon another exploit, the said Gold being Committed to New-Prison, the Prosecutor having notice of such a parties being there, brought her Maid to see if she knew him, who without pausing, singled him from amongst a dozen Prisoners, whereupon he was sent to Newgate. Upon his Trial he pleaded ignorance, and endeavoured to prove his place of residence that Night, but could not, therefore upon a full Evidence, he was brought in Guilty of Felony and Burglary.

[Gold, a 'notorious offender', was sentenced to death and hanged at Tyburn on 21st January 1679]

Old Bailey Proceedings Online (<www.oldbaileyonline.org>, version 6.0, accessed 17 December 2014), May 1681, trial of Margaret Luke (t16810520-13)

Margaret Luke, Killing, subcategory Murder, 20th May 1681.

Margaret Luke a Ministers Wife was Tryed upon an Indictment for Murther, committed on the body of Robert Edmunds, who was her Servant, caused by excessive beating, the which she did about the 20 of December last, from which time he languished till the 15 of May and then dyed; so that it being proved his excessive bruises occasioned and his Death, she was found Guilty of Man-Slaughter.

[Margaret Luke was condemned to death, but it is not known whether she was actually executed]

Old Bailey Proceedings Online (<www.oldbaileyonline.org>, version 6.0, accessed 17 December 2014), December 1683, trial of John Thurman Joan Witherington (t16831212-6)

John Thurman, Joan Witherington, Theft, subcategory Theft from a Specified Place, 12th December 1683

John Thurman, a Page to a Noble Man, and Joan Witherington, a Maid-servant in the same Family, were Indicted by John Thomas, another of their fellow-servants, for taking out of his Lodging-room, a Book valued at 15 Shillings, Five Guineys, and Five and twenty Pounds in Silver; But it appearing to be a malicious Prosecution, they were both acquitted.

Andrew Moreton [Daniel Defoe], *Every Body's Business is Nobody's Buisness*, 1725

... the fear of spoiling their clothes makes them afraid of household-work; so that in a little time we shall have none but chambermaids and nurserymaids; and of this let me give one instance; my family is composed of myself and sister, a man and a maid; and, being without the last, a young wench came to hire herself. The man was gone out, and my sister above stairs, so I opened the door myself; and this person presented herself to my view, dressed completely, more like a visitor than a servant-maid; she, not knowing me, asked for my sister; pray, madam, said I, be pleased to walk into the parlour, she shall wait on you presently. Accordingly I handed madam in, who took it very cordially. After some apology, I left her alone for a minute or two; while I, stupid wretch! ran up to my sister, and told her there was a gentlewoman below come to visit her. Dear brother, said she, don't leave her alone, go down and entertain her while I dress myself. Accordingly, down I went, and talked of indifferent affairs; meanwhile my sister dressed herself all over again, not being willing to be seen in an undress. At last she came down dressed as clean as her visitor; but how great was my surprise when I found my fine lady a common servant-wench. My sister understanding what she was, began to inquire what wages she expected? She modestly asked but eight pounds a year. The next question was, what work she could do to deserve such wages? to which she answered, she could clean a house, or dress a common family dinner. But cannot you wash, replied my sister, or get up linen? she answered in the negative, and said, she would undertake neither, nor would she go into a family that did not put out their linen to wash, and hire a charwoman to scour. She desired to see the house, and having carefully surveyed it, said, the work was too hard for her, nor could she undertake it. This put my sister beyond all patience, and me into the greatest admiration. Young woman, said she,

you have made a mistake, I want a housemaid, and you are a chambermaid. No, madam, replied she, I am not needlewoman enough for that. And yet you ask eight pounds a year, replied my sister. Yes, madam, said she, nor shall I bate a farthing. Then get you gone for a lazy impudent baggage, said I, you want to be a boarder not a servant; have you a fortune or estate that you dress at that rate? No, sir, said she, but I hope I may wear what I work for without offence. What you work, interrupted my sister, why you do not seem willing to undertake any work; you will not wash nor scour; you cannot dress a dinner for company; you are no needlewoman; and our little house of two rooms on a floor, is too much for you. For God's sake what can you do? Madam, replied she pertly; I know my business; and do not fear a service; there are more places than parish churches; if you wash at home, you should have a laundrymaid; if you give entertainments, you must have a cookmaid; if you have any needlework, you should have a chambermaid; and such a house as this is enough for a housemaid in all conscience. I was pleased at the wit, and astonished at the impudence of the girl, so dismissed her with thanks for her instructions, assuring her that when I kept four maids she should be housemaid if she pleased. Were a servant to do my business with cheerfulness, I should not grudge at five or six pounds per annum; nor would I be so unchristian to put more upon any one than they can bear; but to pray and pay too is the devil. It is very hard, that I must keep four servants or none. In great families, indeed, where many servants are required, those distinctions of chambermaid, housemaid, cookmaid, laundrymaid, nurserymaid, &c., are requisite, to the end that each may take her particular business, and many hands may make the work light; but for a private gentleman, of a small fortune, to be obliged to keep so many idle jades, when one might do the business, is intolerable, and matter of great grievance.

Jonathan Swift, *Directions to Servants in General; and in Particular to the Butler, Cook, Footman, Coachman, Groom, House-Steward, and Land-Steward, Porter, Dairy-Maid, Chamber-Maid, Nurse, Lanundress, House-Keeper, Tutoress, or Governess*, 1745

When you invite the neighbouring Servants to junket with you at home in an Evening, teach them a peculiar way of tapping or scraping at the Kitchen Window, which you may hear, but not your Master or Lady, whom you must take Care not to disturb or frighten at such unseasonable Hours.

Lay all Faults upon a Lap-Dog or favourite Cat, a Monkey, a Parrot, a Child, or on the Servant who was last turned off: By this Rule you will excuse yourself, do no Hurt to any Body else, and save your Master or Lady from the Trouble and Vexation of chiding.

When you want proper Instruments for any Work you are about, use all Expedients you can invent, rather than leave your Work undone. For Instance, if the Poker be out of the Way or broken, stir up the Fire with the Tongs; if the Tongs be not at Hand, use the Muzzle of the Bellows, the wrong End of the Fire Shovel, the Handle of the Fire Brush, the End of a Mop, or your Master's Cane. If you want Paper to singe a Fowl, tear the first Book you see about the House. Wipe your Shoes, for want of a Clout, with the Bottom of a Curtain, or a Damask Napkin. Strip your Livery Lace for Garters. If the Butler wants a Jordan, he may use the great Silver Cup.

There are several Ways of putting out Candles, and you ought to be instructed in them all: you may run the Candle End against the Wainscot, which puts the Snuff out immediately: You may lay it on the Floor, and tread the Snuff out with your Foot: You may hold it upside down until it is choked with its own Grease; or cram it into the Socket of the Candlestick: You may whirl it round in your Hand till it goes out: When you go to Bed, after you have made Water, you may dip the Candle End into the Chamber Pot: You may spit on your Finger and Thumb, and pinch the Snuff until it goes out: The Cook may run the Candle's Nose into the Meal Tub or the Groom into a Vessel of Oats, or a Lock of Hay, or a Heap of Litter: The House-maid may put out her Candle by running it against a Looking-glass, which nothing cleans so well as Candle Snuff: But the quickest and best of all Methods, is to blow it out with your Breath, which leaves the Candle clear and readier to be lighted.

There is nothing so pernicious in a Family as a Tell-Tale, against whom it must be the principal Business of you all to unite: Whatever Office he serves in, take all Opportunities to spoil the Business he is about, and to cross him in every Thing. For Instance, if the Butler be the Tell-Tale, break his Glasses whenever he leaves the Pantry Door open: or lock the Cat or the Mastiff in it, who will do as well: Mislays a Fork or a Spoon so as he may never find it. If it be the Cook, whenever she turns her Back, throw a Lump of Soot, or a Handful of Salt in the Pot, or smoking Coals into the Dripping-Pan, or daub the roast Meat with the Back of the Chimney, or hide the Key of the Jack. If a Footman be suspected, let the Cook daub the Back of his new Livery; or when he is going up with a Dish of Soup, let her follow him softly with a Ladle-full, and dribble it all the Way up Stairs to the Dining-room, and then let the House-maid make such a Noise, that her Lady may hear it: The Waitingmaid is very likely to be guilty of this Fault, in hopes to ingratiate herself. In this Case, the Laundress must be sure to tear her Smocks in the washing, and yet wash them but half; and, when she complains, tell all the House that she sweats so much, that her Flesh is so nasty, that she fouls a Smock more in one Hour than the Kitchen-maid doth in a Week.

Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, *Das Leben der schwedischen Gräfin von G****,
(*The History of the Swedish Countess of G**) 1748, translator unknown

Whilst we were passing out time in this manner, Sir R--- returned from his journey which he had made in vain; and it was high time for us to quit a place, where we could no longer live in secrecy: but before we were well prepared to set out for Holland, Sir R----'s servant happened do to die suddenly of a malignant fever. This honest man, finding his dissolution drawing nigh, in taking farewell of his master, presented him with 100 ducats. This money, said the faithful dying man, I have saved in your service my ever-honoured master, and by your liberality; and I am glad that I can return it to you again: for it is owing to your generosity, to your instructions, and to your good example, that I can die with pleasure and in tranquillity; and my only wish is, that you may have another servant, in whom you can confide. This shews, that even men of the meanest station may be cultivated to excellent advantage, provided we do not regard them as servants and slaves only, but as fellow-creatures who are committed to our care, and are born to the same general purposes with is.

Rev. Alban Butler, *Lives of the Saints*, 1756-1759

'ST. ZITA, Virgin' (c. 1212 - April 27, 1278); patron saint of servant maids, canonized 1696)

ZITA lived for forty-eight years in the service of Fatinelli, a citizen of Lucca. During this time she rose each morning, while the household were asleep, to hear Mass, and then toiled incessantly till night came, doing the work of others as well as her own. Once Zita, absorbed in prayer, remained in church past the usual hour of her bread-making. She hastened home, reproaching herself with neglect of duty, and found the bread made and ready for the oven. She never doubted that her mistress or one of her servants had kneaded it, and going to them, thanked them; but they were astonished. No human being had made the bread. A delicious perfume rose from it, for angels had made it during her prayer. For years her master and mistress treated her as a mere drudge, while her fellow-servants, resenting her diligence as a reproach to themselves, insulted and struck her. Zita united these sufferings with those of Christ her Lord, never changing the sweet tone of her voice, nor forgetting her gentle and quiet ways. At length Fatinelli, seeing the success which attended her undertakings, gave her charge of his children and of the household. She dreaded this dignity more than the worst humiliation, but scrupulously fulfilled her trust. By her holy economy her master's goods were multiplied, while the poor were fed at his door. Gradually her unflinching patience conquered the jealousy of her fellow-servants, and she became their advocate with their hot-tempered master, who dared not

give way to his anger before Zita. In the end her prayer and toil sanctified the whole house, and drew down upon it the benediction of Heaven. She died in 1272, and in the moment of her death a bright star appearing above her attic showed that she had gained eternal rest.

Reflection – ‘What must I do to be saved?’ said a certain one in fear of damnation. ‘Work and pray, pray and work’, a voice replied, ‘and thou shalt be saved’. The whole life of St. Zita teaches us this truth.

Elizabeth Hands, *A Poem, on the Supposition of an Advertisement Appearing in a Morning Paper, of the Publication of a Volume of Poems, by a Servant-Maid*, 1789

The tea-kettle bubbled, the tea things were set,
 The candles were lighted, the ladies were met;
 The how d’ye’s were over, and entering bustle,
 The company seated, and silks ceased to rustle:
 The great Mrs. Consequence opened her fan,
 And thus the discourse in an instant began
 (All affected reserve and formality scorning):
 ‘I suppose you all saw in the paper this morning
 A volume of Poems advertised – ’tis said
 They’re produced by the pen of a poor servant-maid’.
 ‘A servant write verses!’ says Madam Du Bloom:
 ‘Pray what is the subjectd – a Mop, or a Broom?’
 ‘He, he, he,’ says Miss Flounce: ‘I suppose we shall see
 An ode on a Dishclout – what else can it be?’
 Says Miss Coquettilla, ‘Why, ladies, so tart?
 Perhaps Tom the footman has fired her heart;
 And she’ll tell us how charming he looks in new clothes,
 And how nimble his hand moves in brushing the shoes;
 Or how, the last time that he went to May Fair,
 He bought her some sweethearts of gingerbread ware’.
 ‘For my part I think’, says old Lady Marr-joy,
 ‘A servant might find herself other employ:
 Was she mine I’d employ her as long as ’twas light,
 And send her to bed without candle at night’.
 ‘Why so?’ says Miss Rhymer, displeased: ‘I protest
 ’Tis pity a genius should be so depressed!’
 ‘What ideas can such low-bred creatures conceive?’
 Says Mrs. Noworthy, and laughed in her sleeve.
 Says old Miss Prudella, ‘If servants can tell
 How to write to their mothers, to say they are well,

And read of a Sunday The Duty of Man,
 Which is more I believe than one half of them can;
 I think 'tis much properer they should rest there,
 Than be reaching at things so much out of their sphere'.
 Says old Mrs. Candour, 'I've now got a maid
 That's the plague of my life – a young gossiping jade;
 There's no end of the people that after her come,
 And whenever I'm out, she is never at home;
 I'd rather ten times she would sit down and write,
 Than gossip all over the town every night'.
 'Some whimsical trollop most like', says Miss Prim,
 'Has been scribbling of nonsense, just out of a whim,
 And, conscious it neither is witty nor pretty,
 Conceals her true name, and ascribes it to Betty'.
 'I once had a servant myself', says Miss Pines,
 'That wrote on a wedding some very good lines'.
 Says Mrs. Domestic, 'And when they were done,
 I can't see for my part what use they were on;
 Had she wrote a receipt, to've instructed you how
 To warm a cold breast of veal, like a ragout,
 Or to make cowslip wine, that would pass for Champagne,
 It might have been useful, again and again'.
 On the sofa was old Lady Pedigree placed;
 She owned that for poetry she had no taste,
 That the study of heraldry was more in fashion,
 And boasted she knew all the crests in the nation.
 Says Mrs. Routella, 'Tom, take out the urn,
 And stir up the fire, you see it don't burn'.
 The tea-things removed, and the tea-table gone,
 The card-tables brought, and the cards laid thereon,
 The ladies, ambitious for each other's crown,
 Like courtiers contending for honours, sat down.

From A.N. Radishchev, *Puteshestvie iz Petersburga v Moskvu (A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow)*, 1790, translated by Leo Weiner

[The following passage follows Radishchev's report of a conversation with a serf ploughing his master's fields on a Sunday]

Tremble, cruelhearted landlord! On the brow of each of your peasants I see your condemnation written.

While absorbed in these thoughts I happened to notice my servant, who was sitting up on the box in front of me, swaying from side to side. Suddenly

I felt a chill coursing through my veins, sending the blood to my head and mantling, my cheeks with a blush. I felt so ashamed of myself that I could scarcely keep from bursting into tears. 'In your anger', I said to myself, 'you denounce the proud master who wears out his peasant in the fields; but are you not doing the same or even worse yourself? What crime has your poor Petruschka committed that you should deny him sleep, the consolation for our miseries, and nature's greatest gift to the unfortunate? He gets pay, food, and clothing, and you never beat him with a whip or a cudgel. (O moderate man!) And you think that piece of bread and a scrap of cloth give you the right to treat your fellow human being as though he were a top, and you merely boast that you do not often whip it up while it is whirling, Do you know what is written in the fundamental law, in the heart of every man? He whom I strike has the right to strike me. Remember the day when Petruschka was drunk and did not come in time to dress you. Remember how you boxed his ear. If only he had then, although intoxicated, come to his senses and answered you as your question deserved! And who gave you power over him? The law. The law? And you dare to defile that sacred name. Miserable one!'

Tears gushed from my eyes, and while I was in this state the post nags brought me to the next station.

François de Chateaubriand, from *Itinéraire de Paris à Jerusalem (Record of a Journey from Paris to Jerusalem)*, 1811, translated by A. S. Kline

I finally saw a boat coming towards us, in which I made out my Greek servant, accompanied by three monks. They recognized me in my French clothing, and waved their hands, in a kindly manner. They were soon on board. Although these monks were Spanish, and spoke an Italian which was hard to understand, we shook hands like true compatriots. I descended with them into the shallop; we entered the port through a convenient opening in the rocks, dangerous even for a caique. The shore Arabs walked through water up to their waists, in order to carry us on their shoulders. Rather an amusing scene took place: my servant was wearing a white greatcoat; white being the colour of distinction among the Arabs, they decided that my servant was the sheikh. They seized him, and carried him off in triumph despite his protestations while, dressed in my blue coat, I was borne away in obscurity, on the back of a ragged beggar.

Alessandro Manzoni, from *I promessi sposi (The Betrothed)*, 1827, translator unknown

Anxious to find himself in society that he could trust, he called aloud, 'Perpetua, Perpetua', advancing towards the little parlour where she was, doubtless, employed in preparing the table for his supper. Perpetua was, as the

reader must be aware, the housekeeper of Don Abbondio; an affectionate and faithful domestic, who knew how to obey or command as occasion served; to bear the grumbling and whims of her master at times, and at others to make him bear with hers. These were becoming every day more frequent; she had passed the age of forty in a single state; the consequences, *she* said, of having refused all the offers that had been made her; her *female friends* asserted that she had never found any one willing to take her.

‘Coming’, said Perpetua, as she set in its usual place on the little table the flask of Don Abbondio’s favourite wine, and moved slowly toward the parlour door: before she reached it he entered, with steps so disordered, looks so clouded, and a countenance so changed, that an eye less practised than that of Perpetua could have discovered at a glance that something unusual had befallen him.

‘Mercy on me! What is it ails my master?’

‘Nothing, nothing’, said Don Abbondio, as he sank upon his easy chair.

‘How, nothing! Would you have me believe that, looking as you do? Some dreadful accident has happened’.

‘Oh! for the love of Heaven! When I say nothing, it is either nothing, or something I cannot tell’.

‘That you cannot tell, not even to me? Who will take care of your health? Who will give you advice?’

‘Oh! peace, peace! Do not make matters worse. Give me a glass of my wine’.

‘And you will still pretend to me that nothing is the matter?’ said Perpetua, filling the glass, but retaining it in her hand, as if unwilling to present it except as the reward of confidence.

‘Give here, give here’, said Don Abbondio, taking the glass with an unsteady hand, and hastily swallowing its contents.

‘Would you oblige me then to go about, asking here and there what it is has happened to my master?’ said Perpetua, standing upright before him, with her hands on her sides, and looking him steadfastly in the face, as if to extract the secret from his eyes.

‘For the love of Heaven, do not worry me, do not kill me with your pother; this is a matter that concerns—concerns my life’.

‘Your life!’

‘My life’.

‘You know well, that, when you have frankly confided in me, I have never—’

‘Yes, forsooth, as when—’

Perpetua was sensible she had touched a false string; wherefore, changing suddenly her note, ‘My dear master’, said she, in a moving tone of voice, ‘I have always had a dutiful regard for you, and if I now wish to know this affair, it is from zeal, and a desire to assist you, to give you advice, to relieve your mind’.

The truth is, that Don Abbondio’s desire to disburden himself of his painful secret was as great as that of Perpetua to obtain a knowledge of it; so that,

after having repulsed, more and more feebly, her renewed assaults; after having made her swear many times that she would not breathe a syllable of it, he, with frequent pauses and exclamations, related his miserable adventure.

...

'Mercy upon me!' cried Perpetua, 'what a wretch! what a tyrant! Does he not fear God?'

'Will you be silent? or do you want to ruin me completely?'

'Oh! we are here alone, no one can hear us. But what will my poor master do?'

'See there now', said Don Abbondio, in a peevish tone, 'see the fine advice you give me. To ask of me, what I'll do? what I'll do? as if you were the one in difficulty, and it was for me to help you out!'

'Nay, I could give you my own poor opinion; but then—'

'But—but then, let us know it'.

'My opinion would be, that, as every one says our archbishop is a saint, a man of courage, and not to be frightened by an ugly phiz, and who will take pleasure in upholding a curate against one of these tyrants; I should say, and do say, that you had better write him a handsome letter, to inform him as how—'

'Will you be silent! will you be silent! Is this advice to offer a poor man? When I get a pistol bullet in my side—God preserve me!—will the archbishop take it out?'

'Ah! pistol bullets are not given away like sugarplums; and it were woful if those dogs should bite every time they bark. If a man knows how to show his teeth, and make himself feared, they hold him in respect: we should not have been brought to such a pass, if you had stood upon your rights. Now, all come to us (by your good leave) to—'

'Will you be silent?'

...

'Well, well, you'll think of it to-night; but in the meantime do not be the first to harm yourself; to destroy your own health: eat a mouthful'.

Charles Baudelaire, 'La servante au grand coeur dont vous étiez jalouse' ('The Kind-Hearted Servant of Whom You Were Jealous'), in *Les fleurs du mal*, 1857, translated by William Aggeler

The kind-hearted servant of whom you were jealous,
 Who sleeps her sleep beneath a humble plot of grass,
 We must by all means take her some flowers.
 The dead, ah! the poor dead suffer great pains,
 And when October, the pruner of old trees, blows
 His melancholy breath about their marble tombs,
 Surely they must think the living most ungrateful,
 To sleep, as they do, between warm, white sheets,
 While, devoured by gloomy reveries,

Without bedfellows, without pleasant causeries,
 Old, frozen skeletons, belabored by the worm,
 They feel the drip of winter's snow,
 The passing of the years; nor friends, nor family
 Replace the dead flowers that hang on their tombs.
 If, some evening, when the fire-log whistles and sings
 I saw her sit down calmly in the great armchair,
 If, on a cold, blue night in December,
 I found her ensconced in a corner of my room,
 Grave, having come from her eternal bed
 Maternally to watch over her grown-up child,
 What could I reply to that pious soul,
 Seeing tears fall from her hollow eyelids?

John Ruskin, 'Domestic Servants – Mastership' (letter to the Editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, 5 September 1865; repr. in E.T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, eds, *Works*, 1905, XVII, 518-519)

[This letter was written in response to an article lamenting the 'good old times', claiming that it is now 'a social fact, that the hardest thing in the world to find a good servant' and that this 'evil' could only be cured, 'by some general distress which will drive more people into seeking service, and so give employers a greater choice. At present the demand appears to exceed the supply. And servants are careless about losing their places through bad behaviour'.]

SIR, – You so seldom write nonsense, that you will, I am sure, pardon your friends for telling you when you do. Your article on servants to-day is nonsense. It is just as easy and as difficult now to get good servants as it ever was. You may have them, or you may have pines [pineapples] and peaches for the growing, or you may even buy them good, if you can persuade the good growers to spare you them off their walls; but you cannot get them by political economy and the law of supply and demand.

There are broadly two ways of making good servants; the first, a sound, wholesome, thorough-going slavery – which was the heathen way. And no bad one neither, provided you understand that to make real 'slaves' you must make yourself a real 'master' (which is not easy). The second is the Christian's way: 'who so delicately bringeth up his servant from a child, shall have him become his son at the last' [*Proverbs* xxix, 21]. And as few people want their servants to become their sons, this is not way to their liking. So that, neither having courage or self-discipline enough on the one hand to make themselves nobly dominant after the heathen fashion, nor tenderness or justice to make themselves nobly protective after the Christian, the present public thinks to

manufacture servants bodily out of powder and hay-stuffing – mentally by early instillation of Catechism and other mechanic-religious appliances – and economically, as you helplessly suggest, by the law of supply and demand, with such results as we all see, and most of us more or less feel, and shall feel daily more and more to our cost and selfish sorrow.

Sir, there is only one way to have good servants; that is to be worthy of being well-served. All nature and all humanity will serve a hood master, and treble against an ignoble one. And there is no surer test of the quality of a nation than the quality of its servants, for they are their masters' shadows and distort their faults in a flattened mimicry. A wise nation will have philosophers in its servants' hall; a knavish nation will have knaves there; and a kindly nation will have friends there. Only let it be remembered that 'kindness' means as with your child, so with your servants, not indulgence, but care. – I am, Sir, seeing that you usually write good sense, and 'serve' good causes, your servants to command,
J. Ruskin

Denmark Hill, Sept. 2

[On 6 September the *Telegraph* replied objecting that Ruskin had shown 'how to cook the cook when we catch her' but not how to catch her, and calling on him to forego 'eloquent maxims' and 'come down out of the clouds of theory'. More 'domestic correspondence' followed.]

Obituary of Helena Demuth, by Friedrich Engels, in *The People's Press*, 22 November 1890

By the death during the past week of Helena Demuth the Socialist party has lost a remarkable member. Born on New Year's Day, 1823 [In fact New Year's Eve 1820], of peasant parents, at St. Wendel, she came, at the age of 14, into the family of the von Westphalens of Trier. Jenny von Westphalen in 1843 became the wife of Karl Marx. From 1837 to the death of Mrs. Marx in 1881, with the exception of the first few months of the married life, the two women were constant companions. After the death of Mrs. Marx in December 1881, and of Marx on March 14th, 1883, Helena Demuth went to keep house for Frederick Engels. The leaders of the Socialist movement bore testimony to 'her strong common-sense, her absolute rectitude of character, her ceaseless thoughtfulness for others, her reliability, and the essential truthfulness of her nature'.

T.S. Eliot, 'Morning at the Window', in *Prufrock and Other Observations*, 1917

They are rattling breakfast plates in basement kitchens,
And along the trampled edges of the street.

I am aware of the damp souls of housemaids
Sprouting despondently at area gates.

The brown waves of fog toss up to me
Twisted faces from the bottom of the street,
And tear from a passer-by with muddy skirts
An aimless smile that hovers in the air
And vanishes along the level of the roofs.

T.S. Eliot, 'Aunt Helen', in *Prufrock and Other Observations*, 1917

Miss Helen Slingsby was my maiden aunt,
And lived in a small house near a fashionable square
Cared for by servants to the number of four.
Now when she died there was silence in heaven
And silence at her end of the street.
The shutters were drawn and the undertaker wiped his feet –
He was aware that this sort of thing had occurred before.
The dogs were handsomely provided for,
But shortly afterwards the parrot died too.
The Dresden clock continued ticking on the mantelpiece,
And the footman sat upon the dining-table
Holding the second housemaid on his knees –
Who had always been so careful while her mistress lived.

Bertolt Brecht, from *Kriegsfiibel (A War Primer)*, 1955, translated by Lee Baxandall

General, your tank is a powerful vehicle
It smashes down forests and crushes a hundred men.
But it has one defect:
It needs a driver.

General, your bomber is powerful.
It flies faster than a storm and carries more than an elephant.
But it has one defect:
It needs a mechanic.

General, man is very useful.
He can fly and he can kill.
But he has one defect:
He can think.

Contributors

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Sonya L. Brockman received her PhD in English literature from the University at Buffalo (SUNY) and currently teaches at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Her research focuses on the intersection of gender and violence in early English literature. She is currently working on a monograph, *Ravished Voices: Gender, Trauma, and Genre Transformation in Early English Poetry*, which reads medieval and early modern revisions of classical rape narratives through contemporary trauma theory.

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William C. Carroll is professor of English at Boston University, where he regularly teaches courses in Shakespeare and other topics in early modern drama. Among his publications are *The Great Feast of Language in Love's Labour's Lost* (1976) and *The Metamorphoses of Shakespearean Comedy* (1985), and *Fat King, Lean Beggar: Representations of Poverty in the Age of Shakespeare* (1996). He has also published the following scholarly editions: Thomas Middleton, *Women Beware Women* (1994); Shakespeare, *Macbeth: Texts and Contexts* (1999); Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (2004); Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost* (2009); and *Thomas Middleton: Four Plays* (2012). He has co-chaired the Shakespearean Studies Seminar at Harvard's Center for the Humanities since 1992. In 2005-2006 he served as President of the Shakespeare Association of America.

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Liam J. Meyer received his PhD in English literature from Boston University in 2014, where he has been teaching classes on drama, film, and early modern literature. His dissertation, *To Rise and Not to Fall: Representing Social Mobility in Early Modern Comedy and Star Chamber Litigation*, examines narratives concerning ambitious individuals. It traces competing ideological pressures, and competing forms of status, in texts about merit, advancement, and socially disruptive aspirations in the early seventeenth century.

Michelle Miller completed a Ph.D. in Romance Languages at the University of Michigan in 2008, with a thesis focused on service friendship in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French literature. She was a lecturer in French and Great Books from 2009-2012, and has published articles on Clément Marot, Mme de La Fayette, Marguerite de Navarre, and Rabelais. She lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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Paola Pugliatti, Professor of English Literature now retired, has taught at the Universities of Messina, Bologna, Pisa and Florence. She has written extensively on Shakespeare and on early modern European culture and has also devoted attention to the study of literary genres (drama and the novel) and to modernist literature (Joyce's *Ulysses* in particular). Her present interests are focussed on early modern European popular culture, the *Commedia dell'Arte* and the theme of authorship, with particular attention to issues of collaboration in early modern English theatre. Her latest book-length studies are *Beggary and Theatre in Early Modern England* (2003) and *Shakespeare and the Just War Tradition* (2010). She is editor, with Donatella Pallotti, of *Journal of Early Modern Studies*.

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