

Service and Servants in Early Modern English Culture to 1660

Elizabeth Rivlin
Clemson University (<RIVLIN@clemson.edu>)

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.

Works Cited

- Amussen Susan (1988), *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England*, New York-Oxford, Basil Blackwell.
- Amussen Susan (2007), *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640-1700*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press.
- Anderson Linda (2005), *A Place in the Story: Servants and Service in Shakespeare's Plays*, Newark, University of Delaware Press.
- Bailey Amanda (2004), ‘Livery and its Discontents: “Braving It” in *The Taming of the Shrew*’, *Renaissance Drama* 33, 87-135.
- Bailey Amanda (2013), *Of Bondage: Debt, Property, and Personhood in Early Modern England*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Barish Jonas and Marshall Waingrow (1958), “Service” in *King Lear*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 9, 347-355.
- Beckles Hilary McD. (2011), ‘Servants and Slaves during the 17th-Century Sugar Revolution’, in S. Palmié and F.A. Scarano, eds, *The Caribbean: A History of the Region and Its Peoples*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 205-216.
- Burnett M.T. (1997), *Masters and Servants in English Renaissance Drama and Culture: Authority and Obedience*, Basingstoke, Macmillan; New York, St. Martin's Press.
- Burnett M.T. (2005), ‘*King Lear*, Service and the Deconstruction of Protestant Idealism’, *The Shakespearean International Yearbook* 5, 2005, 66-85.
- Carroll W.C. (1996), *Fat King, Lean Beggar: Representations of Poverty in the Age of Shakespeare*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press.
- Chakravarty Urvashi (2012), ‘Livery, Liberty, and Legal Fictions’, *English Literary Renaissance* 42, 3, 365-390.
- Correll Barbara (2007), ‘Malvolio at Malfi: Managing Desire in Shakespeare and Webster’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 58, 1, 65-92.
- Davis Matthew (2007), ‘Europe's Lagging Service Sector’, digest of the National Bureau of Economic Research, September-October 2007, <<http://www.nber.org/digest/septoct07/w12889.html>>, accessed 23 January 2015.

- Di Gangi Mario (1997), *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Dolan F.E. (1994), *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550-1700*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press.
- Dowd M.M. (2005), 'Labours of Love: Women, Marriage, and Service in *Twelfth Night* and *The Compleat Servant-Maid*', *The Shakespearean International Yearbook* 5, 103-126.
- Dowd M.M. (2009), *Women's Work in Early Modern English Literature and Culture*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Downton Abbey*. Created by Julian Fellowes. Produced by Carnival Films and Masterpiece. PBS. 2011-present.
- Ellinghausen Laurie (2008), *Labor and Writing in Early Modern England, 1567-1667*, Aldershot, Ashgate.
- Erickson Peter (2009), 'Invisibility Speaks: Servants and Portraits in Early Modern Visual Culture', *Journal For Early Modern Cultural Studies* 9, 1, 23-61.
- Evetts David (2005), *Discourses of Service in Shakespeare's England*, Basingstoke-New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Forman Valerie (2011), 'Early Modern "Neoliberalisms": England and the English Caribbean', *Modern Language Quarterly* 72, 3, 341-367.
- Fumerton Patricia (2006), *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- Habib Imtiaz (2008), *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500-1677*, Aldershot, Ashgate.
- Huntington John (2013), 'Chapman's Ambitious Comedy', *English Literary Renaissance* 43, 1, 128-152.
- Jonson Ben (1979 [1616]), *Epicoene Or The Silent Woman*, ed. by R. Holdsworth, London, New Mermaids.
- Korda Natasha (2011), *Labors Lost: Women's Work and the Early Modern English Stage*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.
- LaGrandeur Kevin (2013), *Androids and Intelligent Networks in Early Modern Literature and Culture: Artificial Slaves*, New York, Routledge.
- Lethbridge Lucy (2013), *Servants: A Downstairs History of Britain from the Nineteenth Century to Modern Times*, New York, W.W. Norton.
- Maitra Ellorashree (2013), 'Toward an Ethical Polity: Service and the Tragic Community in *Timon of Athens*', *Renaissance Drama* 41, 173-198.
- McKee Laurie (2013), 'Giving and Serving in *Timon of Athens*', *Early Modern Literary Studies* 16, 3, <<https://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/journal/index.php/emls/article/view/71/75>>, accessed 23 January 2015.
- McNeill Fiona (2007), *Poor Women in Shakespeare*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Nashe Thomas (1958 [1594]), *The Unfortunate Traveller*, in R.B. McKerrow and F.P. Wilson, eds, *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, vol. II, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 187-328.
- Neill Michael (2000), 'Servant Obedience and Master Sins: Shakespeare and the Bonds of Service', in Id., *Putting History to the Question: Power, Politics, and Society in English Renaissance Drama*, New York, Columbia University Press, 13-48.
- Neill Michael (2004), "'Servile Ministers": *Othello*, *King Lear*, and the Sacralization of Service', in B. Boyd, ed., *Words That Count: Essays on Early Modern Authorship in Honor of MacDonald P. Jackson*, Newark, University of Delaware Press, 161-180.

- Neill Michael, ed. (2005), *Special Section: Shakespeare and the Bonds of Service*, *The Shakespearean International Yearbook* 5, 3-144.
- Phillippy Patricia (1998), 'The Maid's Lawful Service: Service, the Household and "Mother B" in Isabella Whitney's *A Sweet Nosegay*', *Modern Philology* 95, 439-462.
- Richardson R.C. (2010), *Household Servants in Early Modern England*, Manchester, Manchester University Press.
- Rivlin Elizabeth (2012), *The Aesthetics of Service in Early Modern England*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press.
- Rutter Tom (2008), *Work and Play on the Shakespearean Stage*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Sanchez M.E. (2008), 'Seduction and Service in *The Tempest*', *Studies in Philology* 105, 1, 50-82.
- Sanchez M.E. (2011), *Erotic Subjects: The Sexuality of Politics in Early Modern English Literature*, New York, Oxford University Press.
- Sarti Raffaella (2007), 'Criados, Servi, Domestiques, Gesinde, Servants: For a Comparative History of Domestic Service in Europe (16th-19th Centuries)', *Obradoiro De Historia Moderna* 16, 9-39.
- Sarti Raffaella (2014), 'Historians, Social Scientists, Servants, and Domestic Workers: Fifty Years of Research on Domestic and Care Work', *International Review of Social History* 59, 279-314.
- Schalkwyk David (2005), 'Love and Service in *Taming of the Shrew* and *All's Well that Ends Well*', *The Shakespearean International Yearbook* 5, 3-43.
- Schalkwyk David (2008), *Shakespeare, Love, and Service*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Schalkwyk David (2011), "'Love's Transgression': Service, Romeo, Juliet, and the Finality of the You', *The Shakespearean International Yearbook* 11, 111-147.
- Shakespeare William (2008 [1997]), *The Norton Shakespeare. Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt *et al.*, New York-London, W.W. Norton.
- Shannon Laurie (2002), *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- Smith B.R. (1991), *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- Strier Richard (1995), *Resistant Structures: Particularity, Radicalism, and Renaissance Texts*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Wall Wendy (2002), *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Weil Judith (2005a), "'No, let me be obsequious in thy heart": Service and Friendship in Shakespeare's Sonnets', *The Shakespearean International Yearbook* 5, 86-102.
- Weil Judith (2005b), *Service and Dependency in Shakespeare's Plays*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Woodbridge Linda (2001), *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press.