

2017 SAA Seminar: Performance and the Paper Stage, 1640-1695 Abstracts
Leaders: Emma Lesley Depledge, Université de Fribourg
and Rachel J. Willie, Liverpool John Moores University 1

Claire Bowditch, Loughborough University

‘I have often heard indeed (and read)’: Aphra Behn’s Adaptive Practices in *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678)’

As early as 1688, Gerard Langbaine occasionally noted the tendency of the most prolific Restoration playwrights to borrow from a plurality of sources for a single play. While Langbaine’s identifications of playwrights’ source materials have been widely expanded upon in recent decades, through archival and editorial work, the precise nature of such borrowings, and their implications, have been explored to a lesser degree. Taking Aphra Behn’s *Sir Patient Fancy* as its case study, this paper will explore the ways that Restoration playwrights shaped the critical legacy of their plays, through paratextual materials, and the extent to which the nature of late seventeenth-century playwrights’ borrowings from Caroline and Interregnum sources can shed new light on the performance history of these earlier plays.

In her preface to *Sir Patient Fancy*, Aphra Behn refers to having been criticised by her first audiences for relying heavily on four French plays for her city comedy of 1678. In defence of her literary borrowings, Behn claimed to have used only one French play, which was given to her ‘translated by a Gentleman infinitely to advantage’. Critics have generally dismissed Behn’s claim, assuming instead that Behn had greater familiarity with the French paper-stage of the late seventeenth century than was the case at this juncture in her career. Rather, as this paper will show, Behn made extensive use of a manuscript translation of Molière’s *Le Malad imaginaire* in her reworking of that play for the English stage. It is also the case, though, that Behn drew on a wider range of earlier English plays for her comedy than Langbaine identified.

In addressing Aphra Behn’s adaptive practices, this paper will contrast the nature of Behn’s borrowings from the manuscript translation of Molière, with those from the plays of James Shirley and Richard Brome that are also sources for *Sir Patient Fancy*. Indeed, the extensive verbal parallels between Behn’s *Sir Patient* and the contemporary manuscript source that she claimed to have used in writing her play are particularly distinct from the (recognisable) echoes between Behn’s play and her Caroline sources. This paper will therefore explore the question of whether Behn consistently relied as heavily on the paper stage for her own writings as critics have tended to assume, or whether these Caroline plays had a stage presence in the Restoration that has yet to be fully realized.

Francis X. Connor, Wichita State University

‘Tom Tyler, Gammer Gurton, and the Early English Stage After the Restoration’

After the Restoration, the critical history of the English theatre quickly codified around the triumvirate of William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and [Francis Beaumont and] John Fletcher (see Flecknoe, 1664; Dryden, 1668). While Francis Kirkman – a publisher, bookseller, author, and collector of playbooks – acknowledged the prominence of this

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triumvirate, his publications and catalogues also point to a deeper history of pre-Restoration drama, one that would arguably remain incomplete and obscure as the dramatic preferences of John Dryden became conventional critical wisdom.

A crucial document in Kirkman's historical recovery of the early English stage was his 1661 catalogue of all the plays 'that were ever yet printed and published' to date. Adam Hooks and Richard Schoch have addressed this catalogue and others by Kirkman and his colleagues as key texts in shaping a history of drama (Schoch) and defining the parameters for distinguishing a 'play' (designed for printing) from 'dramatic poesy' (designed for performance) (Hooks). However, less attention has been paid to the book that included the 1661 catalogue and included notice of it on its title page: *Tom Tyler and his Wife*, a comic interlude depicting a popular tale of a 'shrewish' wife and her henpecked husband. The title-page identifies it as the 'second Impression' of a play 'printed and acted about a hundred years ago'; to date no copy of the first impression appears to have been identified.

Around this time Kirkman published another play of similar vintage, *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, which he advertised in several prefaces of the period alongside two plays he attributed to John Webster and William Rowley, *A Cure For A Cuckold* and *Thracian Wonder*, as long-unavailable plays he wanted to bring back into print. He does not explicitly explain why, among all the other early plays he apparently had access to, he chose to reprint *Tom Tyler* or *Gammer Gurton* as exemplars of pre-triumvirate English drama; he did not include prefaces to either play.

This is a very new project and my explicit argument here will be refined as I work on this, but in general this paper will use Kirkman's publications of *Tom Tyler* and *Gammer Gurton* to recover how publications of these plays, and Kirkman's historical work, contributed to understanding of the pre-triumvirate theatre after the Restoration. To do this I will discuss these plays in the contexts of his other publications, catalogues, and paratexts (including the potential significance of the 1661 catalogue being published with *Tom Tyler*), as well as accounts of the early English theatre in other works of the late seventeenth century.

Heidi Craig, University of Toronto

'Players in Printed Professional Drama, 1616-1695'

This paper examines cast and actor lists, and other allusions to particular actors in prologues and epilogues, in early modern professional plays (i.e., those written before 1642) printed and reprinted between 1616 and 1695. I address how and why attempts to record actors' involvement in print evolved over the course of the seventeenth century, focusing on three distinct moments in early modern playbook publishing – before 1642, during the English theatre ban of 1642-1660, and after 1660. I pay particular attention to the texts' varying emphases on the recent or distant theatrical past: original performance versus revivals, the pre-1642 performance tradition versus the Restoration performance tradition. In playbooks printed before 1642, some texts appear to fetishize the original performance, sometimes hinting that revivals represent decline in quality. For example, a

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prologue composed for a Caroline revival of Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois* and printed in the play's second quarto (1641) invokes three generations of leading men who performed the title role, but names only Nathan Field, the actor who created the role. The two actors who succeeded Field in the role remain nameless, called instead "one who came nearest him" and "a third man," their contributions related in terms of their distance from the first performer. By contrast, other pre-1642 playbooks emphasize a revival: Q1 of Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1623) features two generations of King's Servant actors, relating the revival cast (c. 1619-1623) at length, but singling out only three actors from the original performance (c. 1614). In such cases, playbooks seem to attempt to capitalize on a recent, popular performance, not a venerated theatrical tradition. In playbooks printed during the theatre ban, many allusions to actors – original performers and revivalists alike – take on an elegiac tone, as they reflect on the performances of pre-1642 actors who were either long dead or unemployed (and, in many cases, also either dead or ailing), and therefore both silent. After 1660, with the revival of pre-1642 plays on Restoration stages, printed playbooks could choose to commemorate the historical, pre-1642 tradition (and either the pre-1642 first and/or revived performance tradition) or the contemporary Restoration performance; sometimes texts did both. My preliminary research suggests a divide based on print format, in which Restoration folio collections record the older tradition while Restoration single-text quartos represent a contemporary one. For example, Shakespeare's Restoration folios of 1663/4 and 1685 retained "the Names of the Principall Actors in all these Playes," the actor list originally printed in F1 1623, while the majority of single-text Shakespeare's quartos printed in the 1670s and 1680s include cast lists with Restoration actors. Focusing on cast and actor lists in collections and in single-text playbooks by Shakespeare, Webster, and Beaumont and Fletcher printed to 1695, I argue that such lists function both as marketing devices and as documents of theatre history, which reveal how revivals, theatrical silence, the age of plays, and print format influenced contemporary interest in the theatrical past.

Chris Highley, Ohio State University

'Early Responses to the Closing of the Playhouses in 1642'

Whereas critics have studied the reasons behind the closing of the London playhouses by order of Parliament in September 1642, they have shown little interest in public reactions to this decision. As students of drama and advocates of freedom of expression, we moderns tend to assume that many in London would have shared our outrage at the inhibition. After all, the purpose-built playhouses had been entertaining customers for the best part of sixty years; in their final summer of operation, venues like the Red Bull and the Globe would have attracted several thousand paying customers each week. In 1642, playgoing was as popular as ever.

In order to measure public response to the closing of the playhouses, I will survey printed works in the Early English Books database for the five-year period, 1642-1647. I will identify relevant works by searching with keywords like 'player,' 'playhouse,' 'theatre,' 'actor,' 'drama,' 'stage,' etc. What sorts of texts directly engage with or allude

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to the ban on playing? Are these works for or against the ban and what sorts of arguments do they make? Did printed drama during these years attempt to intervene via paratextual materials in debates over the legitimacy of theater? Was opposition to the ban constrained in any way by parliamentary censorship of the press? And what of the key constituencies most hurt by the closure: the players, playhouse personnel, and watermen whose living depended in large part on ferrying playgoers to and from the bankside amphitheaters? Only one printed appeal by the players themselves has come to light: *The Actors Remonstrance* of 1643. This is a hard work to pin down: in asking for playhouses to reopen, it begins by asserting that the stage has recently cleaned up its act, but then goes on to admit that the task of self-reformation is far from complete. In appealing to Parliament as ‘the Great God Phoebus-Apollo, and the nine Heliconian sisters, on the top of Parnassus,’ the work adopts a mock serious tone that was unlikely to impress the godly men who had voted playhouses down. The author of the *Remonstrance* seeks to appease critics of theater like the Godly MP Simmons D’Ewes by arguing that drama helped uphold rather than subvert social order by inculcating virtue in spectators. Moreover, the actor-narrator vows to exclude ‘any Comedian that shall speak his part in a tone, as if he did it in derision of some of the pious.’

Two of London’s ‘pious’ citizens are shown speaking in just such Godly ‘tones’ in another work of 1643 that engaged like the *Remonstrance* with the status of public playhouses. In Thomas Randolph’s play *The Muses Looking Glass*, two of the ‘sanctified elders of the Blackfriars,’ visit their neighborhood playhouse where they sell feathers and pins to the spectators. At the opening, the Puritans Mr Bird and Mrs Flowerdew can hardly contain their contempt for the setting in which they find themselves; but by the end of the play, after witnessing a series of allegorical tableau, they are converted into advocates of playing. The reprinting of *Looking Glass* a year after the playhouses closed was hardly a coincidence. Indeed, it was one of the very first playbooks to be reprinted following the closure. My argument is that *Looking Glass* and *Remonstrance* incorporate two responses by the friends of theater to the closure: both works try to win over doubters by arguing that plays have ethical force. *Looking Glass* also suggests, however, that the people most in need of the medicine of theater are the ones responsible for its inhibition: the Godly.

Elaine Hobby, Loughborough University

‘Restoring The Wanderer: Aphra Behn’s *The Rover* and the Paper Stage’

This paper offers a case study of Aphra Behn’s engagement with the paper stage in her best-known play, *The Rover* (1677). It should be noted that no general claims will be made about Behn’s overall practices in this regard: as Claire Bowditch’s contribution to this seminar demonstrates, by the time of her next play, *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678), Behn’s negotiation of the paper and live stages is so different from that of *The Rover* that, had the plays been anonymous, they might have been thought to be the work of separate playwrights. Others of Behn’s 17-20 plays vary the pattern even further, and this should act as a caution as explorations of other Restoration practices are made: these playwrights

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were highly creative and inventive authors, who needed to entertain a voracious audience that demanded new pleasures. It would be foolish to begin from an assumption that the story modern research will tell can be a simple one.

This study is part of the work being undertaken for the forthcoming *Cambridge Works of Aphra Behn*. That edition is needed because so much has been learned in the last 30 years about Behn, whose range not only includes new plays almost annually, first for the Duke's Company and then for the United Company from 1670 to 1690, but also extraordinarily innovative prose fiction, translations from French, fine poetry, and, of course, her famous letters written whilst she worked as a spy in the Low Countries in the mid-1660s. That wider context will be drawn on when relevant to the discussion that follows.

The Rover is an especially provocative example of a Restoration playwright's relation to the paper stage, both because it draws so extensively on Thomas Killigrew's *Thomaso* (written 1654; first published 1664; never known to have been performed), and because it was markedly successful on the Restoration stage, with 1680s revivals on the public stage and command performances at court. My overall case is, then, that Behn succeeds in making Killigrew's wholly paper play of the 1650s into a very stageable 1670s romp, fully exploiting the performance possibilities of the Duke's Company's purpose-built theatre. The play is of course more than a romp: to recognise its own complexities, I shall argue, we need both to recognise what it shows of the meanings of 1654 in 1677; and to understand how Killigrew's deeply misogynistic exilic musing becomes Behn's astonishing, funny exposure of Restoration dominant culture.

The paper's discussion will focus on some specific examples of Behn's practices of transformation:

- the creation of the witty, naïve heroine Hellena from Killigrew's whores and male intellectuals; and of the 'Essex calf' Blunt from *Thomaso*'s stupid, vicious Edwardo
- the 1677 innovations of *The Rover*, which Behn positions with James, Duke of York, and with the French
- the choice of John Amery, normally associated with law-books, to publish *The Rover*, and the implications of this selection for the play's success beyond the stage

Newton Key, Eastern Illinois University

Parading and Dramatizing Group Identity at Feasts in Late-Stuart London

On 29 June 1678, Huntingdonshire natives residing in or visiting London witnessed a glittering entertainment, *The Huntington Divertisement, or, an Enterlude For the Generall Entertainment at the County- Feast, Held at Merchant-Taylors Hall*. On 27 March 1690, Yorkshire natives, also feasting in Merchant Tailors Hall, were treated to a triumphant song by Thomas D'Urfey and Henry Purcell. These were elaborate pieces. Less stellar fare—speeches, processions, and huzzas—graced other feasts held in the

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metropolis during the Restoration (and Revolution) period. Feasters usually assembled at a London church before marching, in unison to a nearby livery hall. These processions were attended with the symbols and regalia of that particular county association, whether “the Sword of Sir Bevis of Southampton...to be carry'd in the Procession from the Church to the Hall,” Kent Society’s “Green Boughs carried before you,” men “in Buff Coats with Bows and Arrows,” or even a Kentish strong-man carrying “a tree weighing 400 weight..., with three or four children upon the boughs. Heading all processions were feast stewards, “the Prime Masters of that dayes ceremony,” with wands or other symbols of office. This paper examines the panoply and drama of London’s feasting season, when processions criss-crossed the metropolis, especially focusing on what is revealed about metropolitan feasts and corporate or group identity by two private entertainments, the anonymous *Huntington Divertisement* and the manuscript comedy, “The Feast,” written by the Englishman Cosimo Manuche *circa* 1664.

Justin Kuhn, Ohio State University

‘Engendering Order: Thomas Middleton and the Paper Stage in Cromwellian England’

This paper comes out of a dissertation on printed drama and political settlement during the Interregnum, and it aims to shed some light on the connections between two consecutive processes in the period. The first of these concerns efforts by the various Parliamentary regimes to regulate sexuality and the family, starting with legislation in 1650 that imposed severe penalties for incest, adultery, and fornication, with the harshest punishments typically reserved for women, and continuing in 1653 with an act establishing a marriage registry, the only means by which marriages were to be deemed official. Not only did these measures seek to legislate morality, they attempted to provide stability to domestic institutions—and, reciprocally, stability by means of them—following a decade of traumatic conflict. The second process involves the publication, by Humphrey Moseley, of a series of plays written by Thomas Middleton and his collaborators in Jacobean England, every single one of which either foregrounds gender and womanhood on its titlepage, or makes questions of gender and sexuality central to its dramatic narrative: *The Widow* (1652), *The Changeling* (1653), *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's* (1657), *More Dissemblers Besides Women* (1657), and *Women Beware Women* (1657), the latter two collected in a single edition entitled *Two New Plays* (1657). The publication of these plays in the English Republic, so long after they were originally conceived and performed, raises questions about the extent to which they were seen to resonate with the social and political climate of the Interregnum, shaped as it was by legislation regulating sexual conduct and the household. More generally, printing these particular Middleton plays in this context raises questions about the wider cultural implications of these statutes, the specific effects they had on the production of literature and drama in the period, and the role of printed drama in contributing to discourses about gender and sexuality in the English Republic. In this paper, I will examine some of the

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contours of these topics within the print culture of the day, and consider how they frame the publication of Middleton's *Two New Plays* in 1657.

Christopher Matusiak, Ithaca College

‘Holland House in the 1650s: Evidence and Possibilities of Theatrical Performance’

According to Wright's *Historia Histrionica* (1699), stage-players prohibited from acting in London "in Oliver's time" tended to gravitate toward aristocratic residences just beyond the city, "in particular *Holland-house at Kensington*, where the Nobility and Gentry who met (but in no great Numbers) used to make a Sum for them, each giving a broad Piece or the like." Wright adds that "Alexander Goffe, the Woman Actor at Blackfriars (who had made himself known to Persons of Quality) used to be the Jackal and give notice of Time and Place" (sig. Cr). While these assertions have long been familiar to scholars they remain largely unexamined, and the aim of my essay will therefore be to better comprehend the conditions and motives for performance at Holland House in the 1650s. Critical to this understanding, I will argue, is the experience of Isabella Rich, first Countess of Holland (d. 1655). As a young woman in 1614, she inherited the mansion (originally known as Cope Castle) from her father Sir Walter Cope, a prominent Jacobean courtier with intriguing ties to Shakespeare and the King's Men. The Countess's husband Henry Rich, first Earl of Holland, then spent lavishly during the Caroline era to renovate the fabric of the house, notably transforming its great hall into an ornate space known as the "Gilt Room" to entertain Charles I and Henrietta Maria—it is here we may imagine subsequent illegal performances to have taken place. In 1940, German incendiaries destroyed the hall (and much of the rest of the house) yet surviving evidence permits a detailed reconstruction of its dimensions and interior features.

A more challenging question concerns the nature of the Countess's investment in household theatre. The Hollands are known to have attended court masques in the 1630s, and the Earl took an interest in the affairs of the King's players (intervening on their behalf, for instance, during the controversy over *The Tamer Tamed* in 1633). It is virtually certain, then, that cultural nostalgia informed the coordination of private performances with "the Jackal" Goffe. However, Parliament's decision to execute the Earl for leading a royalist insurrection in 1648 hints at the possibility of more pointed ideological motives as well. Given the Countess's royalist ties, should the staging of theatricals at Holland House be considered a form of political action? Are the topical concerns of her aristocratic coterie reflected in plays printed for the first time during the interregnum? An additional intrigue arises from the fact that, after her husband's death, the dowager Countess inherited the property in St. Bartholomew's Priory that gave annual host to Bartholomew Fair. Space permitting, I would like to explore suggestions that her patronage extended to fairground performers such as Robert Cox, and that her resistance to the fair's suppression provoked rioting by a group thereafter known as "Lady Holland's Mob."

Ann Pleiss Morris, Ripon College

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In my current research project, I am examining letters from playwrights and publishers in printed versions of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century plays. I am interested in how these documents both comment on and shape the early English dramatic publishing industry. The collaborative nature of the playhouse brought together text, players, and audience, but the drama of a printed play existed only between the reader and the text. I was initially interested in studying the theater industry's attempts to negotiate this relationship as they explored the limitations and possibilities of the printed medium. While this line of inquiry continues to be the driving force of my research, I have recently been considering the increase of printed drama in times when public accessibility to performances decreased. I believe this new lens will allow me to expand the scope of the project and create a more nuanced argument about the purpose of printed drama in the early modern period and consider how that purpose evolved over time.

For our seminar, I will be investigating letters to readers in plays published between 1640- 1695. I am interested in how the authors and publishers use these letters to speak about and address the absence of stage performances. In my previous work, I have found a shift in attitudes toward printed drama in the early seventeenth century. After initial anxiety about the printing of plays, playwrights, theater companies, and publishers embraced the practice as a supplement to theatrical performance. I hypothesize, however, that the interregnum will shift attitudes toward printing once more and signal a change in the perceived purpose of printed drama. As my research develops, I plan to narrow down my work for this seminar to one or two types of plays printed during this period.

Stephen Watkins, University of Southampton

'Enchanting Encounters: Drama Beyond the Playhouse'

Using William Davenant and John Dryden's *The Tempest, or the Enchanted Island* (1667) as a test-case, this paper explores the myriad places and spaces in which drama is encountered by spectators and readers in Carolean London outside of the theatre itself. It resists the traditional critical imperative to reconstruct performance histories by focusing solely on the literary texts of the plays, or on the conditions of the productions and playhouses, but looks instead to situate the play within a wider theatrical culture (e.g. musical and amateur) and its related industries (e.g. print publication). Scholars now recognise the ubiquity of performance and theatricality in early modern culture, but the nature of that theatricality has not been adequately accounted for; ironically, though especially, when it comes to discussing the professionally produced drama of the Restoration. This paper offers a potential means of tackling this issue. It tracks *The Tempest*, as it were, 'on the move': as it migrates between different, often competing, institutional auspices; as it travels across different media, from performance to print and back again; or even as it finds its way into other cultural artefacts not expressly concerned at all with the play or its afterlife *per se*, but which have the potential to reveal a great deal about how early moderns encountered these dramatic narratives outside of their immediate performance contexts. Its scope is wide: it takes evidence from more

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traditional sources, such as play-texts and theatre records, but looks too at para- or extra-theatrical material, like music scores, libretti, personal testimonies, diaries and poems. In the final analysis, the paper thus suggests that the various incarnations of the ‘play’—as production, as text, as memory, or as imaginative ideal—are best understood when appreciated together as something that occurs in the ‘theatre of the mind’ of those who watch, read, or otherwise ‘consume’ it. By charting how audiences engaged with the non-theatrical elements of the play’s transmission, I argue that we will be better placed to appreciate the role that professional drama played in the cultural and imaginative lives of the people it was written and produced to entertain.

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