Another change in the technical operations of the playhouses was a vastly increased emphasis upon changeable scenery and devices ("machines") for creating such special effects as flyings of persons and objects. Much of the impetus for this movement came from the imagination and ingenuity of Sir William Davenant, who, some years before the restoration of Charles II, had envisioned public theaters with elaborate embellishments to the action. Although he had experimented in this vein in a few productions during the five years preceding 1660, he lacked a genuine opportunity to develop his theories until he secured a patent and formed a company to act in Lincoln's Inn Fields.[7] John Downes, prompter to Davenant's company, stressed these innovations when he described the opening of that theater (probably on 28 June 1661) with *The Siege of Rhodes*, an operatic work "having new Scenes and Decorations, being the first that e're were Introduc'd in England."[8] Pepys' first glimpse of this play (2 July 1661) much impressed him, for he found the opening "indeed is very fine and magnificent." By the summer of 1662 Davenant's reliance upon these devices was sufficiently on record that a poem characterizing recent dramatic events referred to the progress of this theater, "Where the Knight with his Scenes doth keep much adoe."[9]

Davenant constantly improved his stock of scenery, and although the King's Company, Davenant's rival, somewhat slowly followed his lead, within ten years both companies had invested large sums in this phase of their operations and had set the London theaters upon a venture leading to more and more elaborate and costly creations. Although Davenant did not live to see the new theater in Dorset Garden which his company constructed, he would have been delighted with the attention given to settings and contrivances in this elegant playhouse. As was true of other innovations, there was no turning back from Davenant's pioneering; thereafter, for many decades, the companies vied with each other in colorful scenes, startling machines, realistic properties and embellishments to the dramas and entr'acte entertainments. In fact, they occasionally praised their own initiative, as did the speaker in the Second Prologue to Shadwell's revision of *The Tempest*, 1674:

> Had we not for y^r^ pleasure found new wayes
> You still had rusty Arras had, & thredbare playes;
> Nor Scenes nor Woomen had they had their will,
> But some with grizl'd Beards had acted Woomen still.

Alterations in the daily program accompanied these changes. Possessing increasingly elaborate gear, the management placed greater

7. For a full discussion of the history of scenes in the English theaters, see Richard Southern, *Changeable Scenery: Its Origin and Development in the British Theatre* (London, 1952).
8. *Roscius Anglicanus*, p. 20.
9. Hotson, *Commonwealth and Restoration Stage*, p. 246.

emphasis upon spectacle. Although the play remained the center of the day's offerings, spectacular staging provided a drawing attraction. Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, for example, owed much of its popularity to its transformation into a dramatic opera or musical drama in which flyings, sinkings, and machines augmented the appeal. Each burst of applause for an operatic spectacle, even if sometimes the receipts did not equal the large expenses, caused the rival companies to launch still more expensive productions. In addition, these spectacles stimulated a taste for musical and terpsichorean novelties, and the managements larded many comedies and even some tragedies with songs, dances, and "vocal and instrumental entertainments," some of which, though not all, were thematically related to the action. The fresh faces, engaging talents, and novelty of actresses popularized these augmentations. Pepys, for example, often expressed his delight in the singing and dancing of Nell Gwynn and Mary Knepp, sometimes being so engrossed by them that he failed to mention his response to the play proper; he occasionally found the incidental music so ravishing that he secured a copy of it for his own collection. Further proof of the drawing power of this new trend appears in the Preface to Thomas Shadwell's *The Humorists* (10 December 1670), where he credits the triumph of his play over its enemies to the delightful dancing of Mrs. Johnson, whose talents drew both friends and foes and silenced the loud critics. By the end of the century the newspaper announcements make it evident that song and dance as entr'acte entertainments had begun to assume the dominant position which they were to make secure in the first half of the eighteenth century.

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ELIZABETH HOWE

The Arrival of the Actress†

Why Actresses in 1660?

Some time during the last months of 1660, a professional English actress appeared in a play on the English public stage for the first time—a historic moment for English theatre. While Englishwomen may occasionally have performed in public entertainments such as mystery plays as early as the fifteenth century,[1] they were never regularly employed in

† From Elizabeth Howe, *The First English Actresses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 19–26. Reprinted by permission of the publisher and the author's estate.
1. See T. S. Graves, 'Women on the Pre-Restoration Stage,' *Studies in Philology* 22 (1925), pp. 184–7.

the commercial theatre in any capacity until the Restoration. The exact date of the actress's debut is not known, but is usually assumed to be 8 December 1660, when it is known that a woman played Desdemona in a production of *Othello* by Thomas Killigrew's King's Company. A special prologue was written by the poet Thomas Jordan 'to introduce the first Woman that came to act on the stage in the tragedy called the Moor of Venice': 'The Woman playes today, mistake me not, / No Man in Gown, or Page in Petty-Coat.'[2] A week later one Andrew Newport wrote to Sir Richard Leveson that 'upon our stages we have women actors, as beyond seas'. On 3 January 1661 Pepys recorded his visit to *The Beggar's Bush* by the King's Company that day was 'the first time that ever I saw Women come upon the stage'.[3]

The possible reasons for the advent and public acceptance of actresses at this particular time continue to preoccupy scholars. It was certainly not the case, as some have assumed, of women being automatically superior to boys in the performance of female roles. English theatre finally relinquished a ludicrous convention many years after France, Italy and Spain (women were acting in these countries by the latter half of the sixteenth century).[4] For the twentieth-century theatre-goer, accustomed to seeing actresses, it might be easy to agree with Colley Cibber that the removal of boys playing women instantly transformed theatre for the better:

> The other Advantage I was speaking of, is, that before the Restoration, no Actresses had ever been seen upon the English Stage. The Characters of Women, on former Theatres, were perform'd by Boys, or young Men of the most effeminate Aspect. And what Grace, or Master Strokes of Action can we conceive such ungain Hoydens to have been capable of?[5]

One modern commentator quotes Cibber's words approvingly, adding, 'for the first time ever, English playwrights could write women's roles for women, giving them the same weight and complexity in the overall fabric of their plays as the male characters'. Another theatre historian declares that 'the slightest imaginative consideration of the problem [of boys as women] will show that the awakening stage sorely needed a change in this essential factor'.[6] However, the Renaissance transvestite convention was in fact very successful. The parts written for boys by Shakespeare, Middleton, Webster and others suggest that these performers were highly skilled and well able to perform a wide range of leading, challenging female roles. For contemporaries, the boys seem to have been as effective in every way as we now find women. For example, a spectator watching *Othello* performed by the King's Men in 1610 was absolutely convinced and overwhelmed by the acting of the boy playing Desdemona:

> They also had their tragedies, well and effectively acted. In these they drew tears not only by their speech, but also by their action. Indeed Desdemona, killed by her husband, in death moved us especially when, as she lay in her bed, her face alone implored the pity of the audience.[7]

The writer here significantly refers always to Desdemona by a feminine pronoun: '*she* lay in *her* bed', '*her* face implored' and so on. Unquestionably, boy or not, she *was* a woman to him.

With an eighteen-year gap in theatre production after the theatres were closed in 1642, there was of course a shortage of boy-actresses when they reopened in 1660. As the *Actor's Remonstrance*, a pamphlet of 1643 put it, 'our boyes, ere we shall have libertie to act againe, will be grown out of use like crackt organ pipes, and have faces as old as our flags'.[8] Nevertheless, while a lack of suitable boys may have precipitated an abrupt change to actresses, this does not explain why the change was considered desirable in the first place. The theatre of 1660 certainly possessed one outstanding female impersonator in Edward Kynaston (Pepys described him as 'the prettiest woman in the whole house'[9]) and there were several others. Had theatre-goers so desired, more could presumably have been trained. The reasons for the shift from boys to women were social and cultural rather than practical.

The acceptance of women players after 1660 has been related to a profound change in contemporary attitudes to women, female sexuality and theatre among the upper and upper-middle classes in the late seventeenth century. Whereas during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries female sexuality and theatrical representation were both subject to vigorous attack, after 1660 they were positively relished: 'the infinite variety of the theater, and the infinite variety of the seductress . . . grew to be celebrated rather than condemned'.[1] This shift in attitude

2. Thomas Jordan, 'A Prologue to introduce the first Woman that came to Act on the Stage in the Tragedy, call'd the Moor of Venice', in *A Royal Arbor of Loyal Poesie* (1664), p. 21.
3. Andrew Newport to Sir Richard Leveson, 15 December 1660, cited in Wilson, *All the King's Ladies*, p. 3. Pepys, *Diary*, vol. II, p. 5.
4. See Rosamund Gilder, *Enter the Actress: The First Women in the Theatre* (Boston, 1931), pp. 50–99.
5. Cibber, *Apology*, p. 55.
6. *Restoration and Georgian England 1660–1788*, compiled and introduced by David Thomas and Arnold Hare (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 138. Henry Wynsham Lanier, *The First English Actresses from 1660–1700* (New York, 1930), p. 31. Other critics who have assumed that actresses must automatically be better than boys are Gilder, *Enter the Actress*, pp. 134–5, and Wilson, *All the King's Ladies*, p. 90. A lively discussion of the topic is Stephen Orgel's article 'Nobody's Perfect: Or Why did the English Stage Take Boys for Women?' *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 88 (Winter 1989), no. I, pp. 7–29.
7. Letter translated from the Latin, quoted by Geoffrey Tillotson, '*Othello* and *The Alchemist* at Oxford in 1610', *The Times Literary Supplement* (20 July 1933), p. 494.
8. Quoted by Gilder, *Enter the Actress*, p. 137.
9. Pepys, *Diary*, vol. II, p. 7.
1. Katharine Eisaman Maus, ' "Playhouse Flesh and Blood": Sexual Ideology and the Restoration Actress', *English Literary History*, 46 (1979), p. 609.

can be linked to a wider change in how relationships between the sexes were defined. As the seventeenth century wore on, a new model of sexual relations became increasingly accepted, in which the woman as well as the man was entitled to full and adequate individuality. Rather than being considered merely inferior to man, woman began to be defined as the opposite, yet indispensable sex, excluded from the male spheres of public and professional life but vital in the field of domestic management—her own private sphere of home and children. Although the working actress was an exception to the typical domestic female, she was subject to the same ideological constraints and her gender difference was emphasised (and enjoyed) by constant reference to her sexuality, both on stage and off.

However, while this theory explains the public support for actresses after 1660, it fails to take into account the fact that female actors had actually gained considerable currency and even a token acceptance in court culture during the first half of the seventeenth century. Queen Anne and her ladies took prominent roles in the great Jacobean masques of Jonson and Inigo Jones and such female activity increased after Henrietta Maria married Charles I and took to the stage in 1626. It has recently been discovered that the first time that the word 'actress' was used with the meaning 'female player on the stage' was not, as the *OED* states, in 1700, but directly after Queen Henrietta Maria's first court performance in a French pastoral on Shrove Tuesday, 1626: in a contemporary account of the performance Sir Benjamin Rudyerd referred to the queen as a 'principal actress'.[2] Women continued to act at court and in some private houses, and with William Prynne's attack on women actors as 'notorious whores' in the Puritan tract *Histriomastix* (1633), the issue became a subject of debate in a wide range of texts.[3] Prynne's condemnation was taken by the court as a direct criticism of Henrietta Maria when *Histriomastix* was published, just weeks before the queen acted in William Montague's drama *The Shepherd's Paradise*. A number of plays of the 1630s refer to the topic, usually making some kind of satiric attack on the would-be female actor, or ridiculing the affected French taste of those who would support her. For example, in James Shirley's *The Ball* (1632), a satiric comedy of London town life, the buffoon Jack Freshwater complacently shows off his knowledge of Paris and its customs by declaring that there 'women are the best actors, they play their own parts, a thing much desired in England by some ladies, inns o'court gentlemen, and others'. Shirley is clearly mocking those who favour the idea of actresses and inviting his audience to join him. 'Some ladies' presumably refers to the queen and her followers.[4]

2. See Sophie Tomlinson, 'Theatrical Women: the Emergence of Women as Actors in English Theatre and Drama before the Restoration', Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge University, in progress.
3. See Alfred Harbage, *Cavalier Drama* (1936), p. 15.

What needs to be explained is why, although women acted during the 1630s in court privacy, they were not generally accepted and, indeed, why there were no actresses on the public stage, whereas in 1660 actresses were both introduced and welcomed in the public theatre. The answer lies in the fact that although both before and after the Civil War support for the actresses came from the court, the relationship between court and public theatre in the two periods is strikingly different.

In the Caroline period theatre at court and other theatres in London, both private and public, were emphatically separate. Although the private Caroline theatres outside the court—Blackfriars, the Phoenix and Salisbury Court—have traditionally been seen as extensions of the court theatre, that is, as a narrow, exclusively royalist milieu, in actual fact this was very far from the case. 'The theatre audiences, while not lacking strong links with the court, were themselves drawn from those same parliamentary classes from which the political challenge to Charles in 1640 would come.'[5] Although spectators at the private theatre were principally gentry, they comprised a much broader social and geographical group than did the Restoration theatre audience: they even included a number of Puritans. The difference between this audience's opinion of female players and that of the Caroline court is vividly illustrated by their very different reactions to the visit of a troupe of French actresses to London in November 1629. When these performers appeared at Blackfriars, they were apparently 'hissed, hooted, and pippin-pelted from the stage'.[6] While the dislike was probably partly due to xenophobia and professional jealousy, the violence of the reaction suggests that for many theatre-goers the sight of women acting and speaking on the public stage represented an outrageous rupture of social as well as theatrical convention. However, in stark contrast immediately after this incident, Henrietta Maria entertained the French troupe at court and then recommended to her husband that they visit Whitehall.

During the Interregnum, when the theatres were closed, Royalist support for actresses must have been strengthened, since the court spent much time in exile on the Continent where actresses had long been an accepted feature of theatre. Charles II and his court (including at various times William Davenant and Thomas Killigrew to whom the

4. James Shirley, *The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*, now first collected; with notes by the late William Gifford Esq. (New York, 1966), vol. III, p. 79. See also Shirley's *Bird in a Cage* (1633), Richard Brome's *The Court-Beggar* (1640) and William Cartwright's *The Lady-Errant* (1628–43?).
5. Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis 1632–42* (Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 100.
6. See Harbage, *Cavalier Drama*, p. 20.

patents to open theatres were granted in 1660) spent some considerable time in Paris taking part in court masques as well as attending plays. The theatre manager George Jolly, who also went into exile, even had the distinction of introducing female players to Frankfurt, where Charles II apparently saw them when he visited the town in September 1655.[7] When Sir William Davenant eventually returned to London he used a female singer, Mrs Coleman, in a private production of his opera *The Siege of Rhodes*, some time in the late 1650s.

Thus it is not surprising to find women players being introduced as soon as the king returned to power in 1660 and granted permission for two theatres to open. Now, because the Restoration theatre was more exclusively a court milieu than it had been in the Caroline period, actresses were readily accepted by theatre audiences. Although, as we have seen, Restoration spectators were by no means exclusively aristocratic, the vast majority of them, even if they were professional men like Pepys, favoured the court and shared its attitudes and interests. Charles II was more closely involved with the public theatre, as opposed to the court theatre, than any other English monarch, and where he went his supporters followed. The Restoration theatre was a coterie theatre, not as small a coterie as was once believed, but a coterie none the less, in contrast to the more mixed theatre before 1642. It was within the select atmosphere of a particular social group that the first English actresses were introduced and flourished.

Some time around 21 August 1660, when the king granted them a London theatre monopoly, Killigrew and Davenant both seem to have recruited and begun to train a handful of actresses. A petition addressed to the king by a group of players on 13 October 1660 mentions that they had been obliged by Killigrew to act under his management 'with women'. Davenant's agreement with the chief players of his company, dated 5 November 1660, included a clause that seven shares were to go to Davenant 'for maintaining the actresses of the company'.[8]

In 1660 Davenant certainly recruited six actresses: Hester Davenport, Mary Saunderson, Jane Long, Anne Gibbs, Mrs Jennings and Mrs Norris. Four of these were boarded at his own premises adjacent to his new theatre. Killigrew probably acquired at least four actresses at the start: Katherine Corey, Anne Marshall, Mrs Eastland and Mrs Weaver.[9] It is presumably one of these four who played Desdemona in the King's Company's historic production of *Othello* on 8 December 1660. Anne Marshall seems to be the most likely candidate. Although Mrs Eastland's

7. See Leslie Hotson, *The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage* (Cambridge, Mass., 1928), pp. 136–7, 171–2.
8. Petition of 13 October 1660, quoted in Thomas (ed.), *Restoration and Georgian England*, p. 13. Davenant's agreement given in Hotson, *Commonwealth and Restoration Stage*, p. 207.
9. See Wilson, *All the King's Ladies*, p. 8. Wilson suggests (pp. 6–7) that Anne Marshall or Mary Saunderson are the most likely candidates for the role of Desdemona—apparently forgetting that Saunderson was always a member of Davenant's company.

name appears on the prompter John Downes' list of Killigrew's original actresses and there is no reason to dispute this, her name appears on no dramatis personae until 1669 and she only ever played minor parts. Mrs Weaver, also known as Elizabeth Farley, played bigger roles than Mrs Eastland later on, but never lead roles, and she usually performed in comedy. Although in 1689 Katherine Corey described herself as 'the first and is last of all the actresses that were constituted by King Charles the Second at His Restoration' in a petition to the Lord Chamberlain,[1] this simply means that she was the first woman sworn in as a servant of the king, or that she was the first actress recruited by Killigrew. Her casting as Desdemona is extremely unlikely: she was large and plain and later specialised in ugly, comic parts. Anne Marshall, on the other hand, was both talented and attractive; from 1661 she played lead roles such as the Lady in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Scornful Lady* and she soon came to specialise in tragedy.

In his haste to get his actresses on the stage before those of his rival Davenant, Killigrew may have had them perform in public before they were ready. Only four weeks after *Othello*, Pepys complained that a production of Middleton's *The Widow* by the King's Company on 8 January 1661 was 'wronged' by the women not knowing their lines. Four weeks of more rehearsal and the women seem to have improved; when Pepys saw Killigrew's production of *The Scornful Lady* on 12 February 'now done by a woman', this 'makes the play appear much better than ever it did to me'.[2] Progress was rapid so that by the middle of 1661 actresses were an established feature of the English stage.

During the early months of the theatre's reopening, male actors continued to play women as well. On 18 August 1660 Edward Kynaston (who seems at the time to have been the most proficient and experienced performer of female roles in England) played the Duke's sister in *The Loyal Subject*, prompting Pepys to record delightedly that he made the most beautiful woman in the theatre, although his 'voice not very good'. However, Kynaston was already playing male as well as female parts. For instance, on 6 December he played Otto in *The Bloody Brother*, having played the heroine Arthiope in the same play only a few weeks before. On 7 January 1661, three days after he had seen a woman on the stage for the first time, Pepys saw Kynaston play Epicene in Jonson's comedy.

> Kynaston had the good turn to appear in three shapes: I, as a poor woman in ordinary clothes to please Morose; then in fine clothes as a gallant, and in them was clearly the prettiest woman in the whole house—and lastly, as a man; and then likewise did appear the handsomest man in the house.[3]

1. Ibid., p. 7.
2. Pepys, *Diary*, vol. II, p. 35.
3. Ibid., vol. I, p. 224 and vol. II, p. 7.

The casting of Kynaston in this way implies a final effort to extract as much entertainment value as possible from his ability to impersonate women, now that actresses were beginning to supersede him and his kind. The transvestite convention, instead of being the accepted theatrical norm that it had been in the Renaissance, had become a curiosity. In his *Apology* Cibber relates how 'Kynaston, at that time was so beautiful a Youth, that the Ladies of Quality prided themselves in taking him with them in their Coaches, to Hyde-Park, in his Theatrical Habit, after the Play'[4]—Kynaston had become a theatrical freak. On 28 December 1661 he was still playing the eponymous heroine of John Suckling's *Aglaura*, but the 1661–2 season appears to have been the last in which he played female parts, although he remained a successful tragic actor for many years.

At the beginning of 1662 the casting of women in women's roles became not merely the popular choice but law. In a patent dated 25 April 1662 to Thomas Killigrew it was decreed that henceforth women should play women's parts:

> And for as much as many plays formerly acted do contain several profane, obscene and scurrilous passages, and the women's parts therein have been acted by men in the habit of women, at which some have taken offence, for the preventing of these abuses for the future, we do hereby strictly command and enjoin that from henceforth . . . we do . . . permit and give leave that all the women's parts to be acted in either of the said two companies for the time to come may be performed by women, so long as their recreations, which by reason of the abuses aforesaid were scandalous and offensive, may by such reformation be esteemed not only harmless delight, but useful and instructive representations of human life.[5]

The mention of 'some' having 'taken offence' at the wearing of women's clothing by men refers to attacks on the stage by Puritans, like Prynne. Leo Hughes suggests that the Stuarts 'had had enough experience with puritans to insure their taking no chances',[6] and so the weighty language of the patent makes the introduction of women appear as some kind of social reform. In actual fact, of course, the use of female players had the opposite effect to the one specified in the patent—a good deal of the subsequent licentiousness of Restoration drama may be blamed on the sexual exploitation of the actresses. But in any case, whatever its consequences, the change was effected: woman had replaced boys forever in the English public theatre.

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4. Cibber, *Apology*, p. 71.
5. Cited in Thomas (ed.), *Restoration and Georgian England*, pp. 17–18.
6. Leo Hughes, *The Drama's Patrons* (Austin, 1971), p. 140.

EMMET L. AVERY AND ARTHUR H. SCOUTEN

The Audience†

The common assumption is that the Restoration audience was essentially of upper-class composition by contrast with the greater diversity of classes, education, and taste of the Elizabethan era. Nevertheless, the Restoration audience was not of the single complexion which some subsequent theatrical historians have emphasized. The range of social classes, professions, and cultural attainments was fairly great, and the taste of the spectators as well as their motives in attending the playhouses varied considerably. Some, like Pepys, were fascinated by the stage, by the sense of illusion, and by the social structure of the spectators. Others, like James Brydges, in the closing decade, apparently regarded the theater as a port of call on the social round, where Brydges might look in and quickly withdraw if the atmosphere did not attract him. Many men of letters attended frequently, sometimes as arbiters of taste, sometimes because the theater was, except for the Court, the coffeehouses, and private homes, a center where intellectuals met and kept abreast of literary tendencies, the old and new drama, and the climate of acting. To it also came many wits, gentlemen, Persons of Quality, citizens, Templars, and others of varying social and financial status.

In fact, the audience seems to have been of almost unceasing interest to itself, to playwrights, to authors of prologues and epilogues, and to pamphleteers. They tended to categorize the spectators and to define their habitats. Pepys, an observant man, often responded to the composition of the audience, partly because he was delighted when interesting wits and lovely ladies attended, and disappointed when lower social groups dominated. He also enjoyed a play more when there was a full house, for a meager one had a desolate air. In fact, the social atmosphere of the theater was rarely better captured than by Pepys, attending *Heraclius* on 4 February 1666/7; he had

> [an] extraordinary content; and the more from the house being very full, and great company; among others, Mrs Steward, very fine, with her locks done up with puffs . . . and several other great ladies, had their hair so. . . . Here I saw my Lord Rochester and his lady, Mrs Mallet, who hath after all this ado married him; and, as I hear some say in the pit, it is a great act of charity; for he hath no estate. But it was pleasant to see how everybody rose up when my Lord

† From *The London Stage: 1660–1800*, Part I, edited by William Van Lennep (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), clxii–clxxi. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.