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The purpose of this volume is to present a selection of typical Restoration Court satires—personal satires—from 1663 through 1690. The political satires of the period have been well represented by such modern collections as *The Roxburghe Ballads* and *The Bagford Ballads* and by the recent publication of the Yale *Poems on Affairs of State*. Court satires have been only incidentally represented in these collections; yet in some ways they are more interesting and useful than the political poems because they tell us a great deal about the lives and manners of Restoration high society. Partisan political satire is ephemeral; personal satire is more likely to be universal.

Written for the coterie of fashionable folk who frequented the Court, strolled in the galleries of Whitehall and in St. James's Park, drove in Hyde Park, gambled at the Groom Porter's lodgings, and thronged the playhouses, Court satires deal with Court personalities, literary and theatrical figures, and the intrigues and scandals which were the talk of the town. The Court poets seem to have been remarkably well informed, and usually, to judge by contemporary gossip as recorded in private letters, newsletters, diaries, and memoirs, their victims deserved the punishment of publicity.

Ideally, satire might be described as the product of indignation recollected in tranquillity. In literature satire is definable as a device for achieving rejection or repudiation by means of ridicule, which may vary in quality from good-natured raillery to mordant scorn. Its purpose is to render a person (or a group), an institution, an idea, or a practice ludicrous or contemptible. Its common devices are burlesque, parody, irony, exaggeration (or understatement), and invective.

A satirist may be moved by ethical, moral, or social indignation, by personal animus, or by downright malice. His point of view may be ideal, societal, or personal. Usually the best satire is written from an ideal point of view by a satirist inspired by ethical indignation. Laughter is never more than incidental to satire, and some satires approach tragedy in tone. Satire can be embodied in any artistic form.

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In Restoration England personal libels and lampoons—or poems on private affairs—were relatively new. Reaching back to classical writers, the Court poets preferred the whips of Juvenal to the gentle scoldings of Horace. Except for fugitive, usually anonymous, political ballads, they had few recent models. In effect the Court satirists, asserting that they were moved by moral indignation, adapted the forms and methods of political satire to their own purposes, attacking their victims more for vice and folly than for political heresy. The result was social satire, as timely—and usually as vicious—as the prose of gossip columnists in modern periodicals.

Thousands of Court libels and lampoons must have been written in the years 1660 through 1700; hundreds have survived. Harleian MS. 7319 in the British Museum, "A Collection of Choice Poems," contains 755 satires, of which some 680 are personal libels. The fashion seems to have grown slowly; there are comparatively few Court satires to be found from the date of King Charles II's restoration (May 19, 1660) to about 1679. After that they multiplied fantastically during the last years of the reign and fell off during the brief reign of James II, perhaps because, with the breaking up of the Restoration coterie, the poets were losing both subject matter and audience. In the dour and proper reign of William and Mary, many of the Court libelers turned to political satire.

Most of the satires in the following collection appear in two or more manuscript collections, and some were printed singly or in various editions of the *Poems on Affairs of State* (1689–1716). Customarily Court satires were first passed around in manuscript and copied by gentlemen (or their secretaries) for their own collections, or copied by such scribes as "Captain" Robert Julian, styled "Secretary to the Muses," for the country trade. The manuscript collections in such major libraries as the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Bodleian, the Huntington, the Folger, Harvard, and Yale, are usually of two kinds: anthologies of satires, chronologically arranged and copied by professional writers into blank-leaved folios or quartos; and aggregations of satires in a variety of hands, often copies sent by the post to correspondents in the country, and later loosely bundled or bound together in a volume. Frequently in aggregations one comes across sheets still showing the creases resulting from folding the paper down to letter size. Of course there is no way of knowing whether such satires are the originals or early copies, but

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it is reasonable to suppose that they are closer to the originals than versions copied by later scribes into blank books, or printed in late seventeenth-century miscellanies.

Most of the Court satires were circulated without an author's name. There were sound reasons for satirists to remain anonymous. A poet was subject to suits for libel, for *scandalum magnatum*, or for violating the Licensing Act of 1662, which was stretched to include the circulation of manuscript political satires. (The Act expired in May, 1679, but it was replaced by royal proclamations and renewed from 1685 to 1695.) Moreover, courtiers were quick to defend their "honor," either with their own swords or with the clubs of hired bravos. Thus it was generally believed at the time that John Dryden was beaten in Rose Street on the night of December 18, 1679, at the instigation of someone libeled in an anonymous "Essay upon Satire," written by John, Earl of Mulgrave, but mistakenly attributed to his protégé, Dryden.¹

Attribution in manuscript or print must always be suspect. Even the inclusion of a satire in the posthumous "Works" of a contemporary poet is no guarantee that he wrote it. Unscrupulous printers were always ready to pad out a thin sheaf of verses with any unattributed songs, lampoons, or libels at hand, and some of them were not above cannibalizing lesser poets to fill out the scrawny flesh of a volume. For example, after his careful examination of the 61 poems in Rochester's *Poems on Several Occasions* (1680), David M. Vieth concluded that 15 were certainly and 19 probably by Rochester; 2 and perhaps 1 more by Sir George Etherege; 3 by Aphra Behn; 3 by John Oldham; 2 and perhaps 1 more by Sir Carr Scroope; 3 and perhaps 2 more by Lord Dorset; 2 by Alexander Radcliffe; 1 by Thomas D'Urfey; 1 by Edmund Ashton; probably 1 by Sir Charles Sedley; probably 1 by Lady Rochester; and 4 of uncertain authorship. All were attributed to Rochester by the volume's original printer.²

If we cannot attribute specific satires to their authors, we know at least who some of the satirists were. Hardened sinners themselves, they were an envious, self-conscious lot, who rarely praised and often sneered at their rivals. Sometimes they wrote little critical essays in verse, praising their friends and attacking their poetical enemies. Thus in "Advice to Apollo," 1677, the poet asks the god of poesy to pardon the satiric muses of Charles Sackville (Buckhurst), Earl of Dorset, and John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, and to "strike" such

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upstarts as Sir Carr Scroope, John Dryden, Fleetwood Shepherd,
and John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave,

with th'affected train
Who satire write, yet scarce can spell their name.³

Similarly, the author of "A Ballad [1682]" (verses quoted are in this collection unless footnoted) attacks as mere scribblers of satire John Baber; John ("Jack") Howe; Anthony Carey, Viscount Falkland; Fleetwood Shepherd; Henry Heveningham; Charles, Viscount Mordaunt; Dr. Charles Frazier; and William Fanshaw. In "To Julian" [1684], another poet ridicules the satiric squibs of Henry, Lord Eland; John, Earl of Mulgrave; Jack Howe, and John Cutts. The author of "Julian's Farewell to the Muses," 1685, complains about "Howe's envenomed pen," the "sharp, mercurial wit" of George Etherege, the empty thoughts of Lord Eland, and the "censorious wit" of Charles, Earl of Dorset. This running *poetomachia* seems to have been motivated more by malice than by critical judgment.

Rarely a daring poet admitted his authorship, usually in the last line of his satire. Thus "Advice, or a Heroic Epistle to Mr. Fr. Villiers" [1683], ends with

Now to conclude at parting,
All I have writ is certain,
And so I end,
Your faithful friend
And servant, Roger Martin.

"A Letter to Julian in Prison," 1685, concludes

So rest I till you hear from me again,
Your real friend and servant,
Henry Maine.⁴

Similarly, "Satyr 1692/93" concludes

This stingless satire's author, if you'd know,
The dial speaks not, but it points
Jack Howe.⁵

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Most of the poets were attached to the Court in some capacity or other and could pick up the gossip of the day in the Stone Gallery, the Privy Chambers, the Groom Porter's lodgings, or in nearby coffee houses and taverns. Some went to greater lengths. According to Bishop Burnet, Lord Rochester dressed a footman as a guardsman sentinel "and kept him all the winter long every night at the doors of such ladies as he believed might be in intrigues."⁶ We are told by their rivals that Hugh, Lord Cholmondeley, used his footmen as spies to follow suspected sinners about town, and that Jack Howe sent forth his sisters to watch the actions of their friends and acquaintances. The author of "A Satyr" [1680], accused Ned Russell, third son of William, Earl of Bedford, of spying on the town.

. . . Like a cur who's taught to fetch he goes
From place to place to bring back what he knows;
Tells who's i'th' Park, what coaches turned about,
Who were the sparks, and whom they followed out.

Eight years later Sir George Etherege commented that Ned had spent most of his life jolting about the streets in a hackney coach "to find out the harmless lusts of the Town."⁷ Finally, Captain Robert Julian, a busy purveyor of satires, trotted from coffee houses to bawdy houses with his pockets full of verses for sale, picked up the latest scandal, and passed it on to the stable of poets who supplied him with libels.

Lacking information, the Court poets boldly copied from each other or followed the general principle, "Give a bitch a bad name and you might as well hang her." Thus the widowed Frances, Duchess of Richmond, once reputed mistress to King Charles, endured the attacks of malicious libelers for the rest of her blameless life, becoming, in effect, a mythical harlot. Similarly the poets often magnified the affairs of known sinners into monstrosities of lechery; they were always ready to embroider fact with fiction. Lord Rochester defended "the lies in his libels" by saying that they "came often in as ornaments that could not be spared without spoiling the beauty of the poem."⁸ A naive anonymous poet put the matter more simply in "Scandal Satyrd" [1682],

Poets may add, but not base lies invent;
Reforming, not defaming, is their talent.

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Each fault I find, in downright truth I'll show it,
For I mean well, but am a scurvy poet;
But 'tis some merit to be dull and know it.⁹

"Satire," "lampoon" (once a drinking song), and "libel" (originally an attack on a single victim) were interchangeable terms in Restoration England. The favorite devices of the satiric poets were scurrilous invective, obvious irony, and occasionally burlesque—all written in the coarsest possible terms. The simplest form of satire was a ballad or a set of verses in iambic couplets, often (to judge by the title) designed to be sung to a popular broadside tune. Most of the satires were "shotguns," loaded with obscene epithets and scandalous charges against those whom the poet happened to dislike or envy, or about whom there was a deal of gossip at the moment. Letters of so-called advice to "Julian, Secretary to the Muses," or some other distributor of scandal, were numerous. More pretentious were imitations of the form, but not the tone, of Horatian satires, and "session" satires (imitating Suckling's "A Session of the Poets"), in which poets appeared before Apollo, lovers before Venus or Cupid, or suitors for a place at Court before King Charles II. The verses are often rough and the rhymes discordant. No matter; the poets aimed for liveliness, ribaldry, and vigor. As Addison wrote of a later generation of satirists, "Scurrility passes for wit, and he who can call names in the greatest variety of phrases is looked upon to have the shrewdest pen."¹⁰

Court satires were rarely printed, and manuscript copies were not easily obtained. On January 26, 1674, for example, Walter Overbury wrote to Sir Joseph Williamson at Cologne, "Sir Nic[holas Armourer] sent your excellency a song of a certain signior that came in with the Duchess of Modena ["Signior Dildo"], which if it is miscarried I must take care to write it anew, though it reaches and touches most of the ladies from Westminster to Wapping."¹¹ In 1682 Lady Campden wrote to Lady Rutland, "There are sad lampoons made of all the [Court] ladies, but I cannot get a copy of them."¹² Even when copies of such "sad lampoons" were available, some ladies were reluctant to handle them without tongs. Thus Lady Frances Brudenell wrote to Lady Hatton in 1680, "The lampoons that are made of most of the Town ladies are so nasty that no woman will read them, or I would have got them for you."¹³

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Fortunate indeed was the gentlewoman who could say with Wycherley's Alitheia in *The Country Wife*, "Why, pray, who boasts of any intrigue with me? What lampoon has made my name notorious?" Women were easy game for the Court satirists; they could not defend their honor with sword and dagger. Moreover, according to contemporary law and the still viable medieval myth, they were vulnerable; as women they were considered inferior beings, by nature given to frivolity, inconstancy, lechery, and adultery.

In 1685 Robert Wolseley described the ladies' plight. "Women's reputations . . . have been reckoned as lawful game as watchmen's heads, and 'tis thought as glorious a piece of gallantry by some of our modern sparks to libel a woman of honor as to kill a constable who is doing his duty. . . . How infamous, insipid, or ignorant soever the authors themselves are, their satires want not sting; for upon no better evidence than those poetical fables and palpable forgeries, the poor ladies, whose little plots they pretend to discover, are either made prisoners in their own houses or banished into the country during life; though so ill-colored generally is the spite and so utterly devoid of all common probability are the brutal censures that stuff up their licentious lampoons that 'tis not easy to determine which of the two deserve most to be laughed at, the fantastical foplings that write 'em or the cautious coxcombs that believe 'em."¹⁴

Mr. Wolseley overstated his case. No doubt some ladies suffered for an innocent flirtation magnified by a satirist into adultery, but certainly underlying most of the "poetical fables" is a great deal of prosaic, biographical fact. Sin flourished at the Restoration Court; many a gay blade boasted openly of his conquests, and many a titled trollop flaunted her wickedness brazenly, to the disgust of the respectable, the envious, and the unsuccessful. The "fantastical foplings" simply substituted "women" for "men" in Dryden's dictum that "'Tis an action of virtue to make examples of vicious men."¹⁵ The poets belabored vicious men, too, but they honestly believed that women were naturally sinful and more to blame than the men they tempted. In "Woman's Wisdom. 1683", an anonymous fopling wrote,

Nature does strangely female gifts dispense,
Lavish in lust and niggardly in sense.
Those who have reason, women still detest,
But court to their embrace a driv'ling beast.¹⁶

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The misogynous author of "A Satire on the Court Ladies," 1680, picturing the typical wife as always lustful, concluded,

While next her lust, the chiefest joy she takes
Is slyly to deride the fool she makes.
Nor will she to one lover be confined,
But is as surely false as she is kind.
Husband and lovers all she makes her prey,
And for her ends by turns will all betray.

Significantly a gentleman could sue his adulterous wife in the spiritual courts for a divorce *a mensa et thoro* (a legal separation), or before the House of Lords for a divorce *a vinculo*. But in the spiritual courts a wife could rarely win unless she could prove her husband guilty of extreme cruelty, and until the nineteenth century no wife could sue her errant husband for a divorce *a vinculo*.¹⁷ In Restoration England male promiscuity was not even a venial sin. Smugly secure in their masculine ethos, then, Court satirists felt justified in firing their blunderbusses at Court bawds, harlots, and adulteresses, occasionally hitting an innocent woman. They fired at men too—fops, fools, rakes, and rascals—and rarely hit an innocent man.

In effect, Restoration Court satires constitute a body of subliterate, interesting in itself, and often useful to the biographer and the social historian. From this well-fertilized soil came some masterpieces, for instance, the personal satires of Rochester, Dorset, Dryden, Swift, and Pope.

Because Court satires were written for and about the members of a close-knit coterie, who would immediately identify the *personae* of a satire even under nicknames, modern editorial identification is difficult. Peers changed their titles from time to time—when a son inherited his father's title, or a baron was promoted to viscount or earl. Wives of peers had an inconvenient habit of dying in childbed; many a peer had two or more wives in the course of his lifetime, each referred to only by his title. Lesser courtiers—Ladies of the Bedchamber, Maids of Honor, Gentlemen and Grooms of the Bedchamber, minor members of the royal household, and officers of the Guards—shifted their employments, changed their names by marriage or promotion, or resigned, perhaps to be replaced by a kinsman with the same surname.

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The Court poets rarely used both given names and surnames. Unfortunately in their casts of characters there are often two or more people with the same surname; there were many Gerards and dozens of Villierses. Frequently, too, the poets called their victims by such nicknames as "King John," "Grandio," "wry-mouthed Tyzard," "Goliath," "Perkin," "Old Maggot," "the Lily Lass," and "Princely Nan," or they used only a given name with an epithet: "whistling John" (Berkeley), "villain Frank" (Villiers), "bold Frank" (Newport), "beardless Phil" (Kirke), "scabby Ned" (Villiers), or "well-bred Mall" (Howard). Often the context of a passage or the repeated use of an epithet helps to identify a character. Thus "Grandio" and "King John" are clearly cant names for John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, who earned the titles by his arrogance and by his ill-advised addresses to Princess Anne. Occasionally a marginal gloss identifies the *personae* of a satire, but such glosses must be used with caution; often they are only the guesses of later transcribers.

Even more difficult is the identification of scandalous liaisons and episodes. Topical references are often so brief or cryptic as to defy explanation. Fortunately the period abounds in personal letters, diaries, and memoirs supplying items which, put together like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle, serve to illuminate many references. Occasionally the literary detective must frankly admit that he cannot identify or explain a reference.

Most of the satires in this collection are drawn from the Harleian and Additional Manuscripts in the British Museum. Some are from collections in the Bodleian Library, Oxford University, notably MS. Don b. 8, Douce MS. 357, MS. Eng. Poet. d. 152, MS. Firth c. 15, and MS. Rawl. Poet. 81, 159, and 173. A very useful collection is Dyce MS. 43 in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Some satires are drawn from Harvard MSS. 633 and 636 F, from Folger MS. m. b. 12, and from the Ohio State Wentworth MS, "A Choyste Collection."¹⁸

From the many satires available I have chosen to reproduce those which seemed to me most interesting and most representative of their kind and date. I have modernized punctuation and spelling, and I have included in the notes only substantial textual variants. All dates are Old Style, but I have given them as if the year began on January 1 instead of on March 25 (e.g., January 1, 1682, not January 1,

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1681/2). Dates in brackets after the titles of satires are conjectural. To reduce repetition, I have added in an appendix brief biographies of persons frequently mentioned.

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1. See C. E. Ward, *The Life of John Dryden*, 1961, pp. 143–44.
2. David M. Vieth, *Attribution in Restoration Poetry*, 1963, pp. 365–477..
3. *Poems on Affairs of State*, Yale, 1963, I, 392.
4. Victoria and Albert Dyce MS., II, 637.
5. MS. Holkham (Earls of Leicester), p. 129.
6. Gilbert Burnet, *History of His Own Time*, 1823, I, 486.
7. Additional MS. 34, 362, p. 132; *Letters of Sir George Etherege*, ed. Frederick Bracher, 1974, p. 185.
8. Gilbert Burnet, *Some Passages of the Life and Death of . . . John, Earl of Rochester*, 1680, p. 26.
9. Harleian MS. 6913, p. 209.
10. *The Spectator*, no. 451, August 7, 1712.
11. *Letters to Sir Joseph Williamson*, 1874, II, 132.
12. *Rutland MS*, II, 69.
13. Joan Wake, *The Brudenells of Deene*, 1953, p. 184.
14. Preface To Rochester's alteration of *Valentinian*, 1685.
15. *Of Dramatic Poesy*, ed. George Watson, 1962, II, 126.
16. Rawlinson MS. Poet. 159, f. 79.
17. See Frederick Clifford, *A History of Private Bill Legislation*, 2 vols., 1885.
18. For an excellent bibliographical analysis of these and other MSS, see W. J. Cameron, "A Late Seventeenth-Century Scriptorium," *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, VI, 1963, 24–52.