The Proprieties of Appropriation

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the issues of plagiarism and authorial propriety in playwriting in England during the period from 1660 to 1710. During the period shortly before 1710, plays were started to be recognized as the property of those who wrote them. However, the dependence of playwrights on sources went generally unmarked. But after the Restoration, writers were pressured to acknowledge and justify their borrowings because many playwrights were attacked for plagiarism and other for debasing the originals which they purported to improve.

Keywords: plagiarism, authorial propriety, playwriting, England, Restoration

In altering Plays, there's an ungrateful Curse:

Some still will say they're alter'd for the worse.

Peter Motteux, epilogue to his adaptation of Fletcher's *The Island Princess* (1699)
IN aesthetic and ethical terms, plays were seen, well before the law of 1710 so defined them, as the property of those who wrote them. The crucial change occurred in the later seventeenth century. New to that period was the idea that by writing a play the author creates a kind of immaterial property which neither performance nor publication can alienate. The concept of the play as its author's literary property was seldom clearly articulated. Rather, it was implicit in two related arguments which suggest an anxiety about the infringement of such property. First, the claim of a dramatist to a play was questioned if the work was thought to be derivative in any way. Second, excessive reliance on a single dramatic precursor-text was held to violate literary property that belonged to the original author. Behind those arguments there lay a notion of the playwright as owner of plots, characters, humours, wit, and words.

The emergence of that notion is manifest in the changing attitudes toward the use of sources by playwrights. Pre-Civil War theatrical practice, in which collaboration and revision had played a large part, and in which playwrights had often produced scripts on subjects supplied by the company, had offered few examples of source attribution. Prologues and epilogues to Renaissance plays rarely alluded to the provenance of the plot or named the original author, references to Fletcher in revivals or adaptations of 'his' plays after his death in 1625 being the only significant exceptions to this rule. A few plays dating from the first two decades of the seventeenth century, such as Barnes's *The Devil's Charter*, Shakespeare's *Pericles*, and Heywood's *The Golden Age*, *The Silver Age*, and *The Brazen Age*, displayed the figure of the 'authorial presenter' (Guicciardini, Gower, and Homer respectively). The antiquity and stature of such a figure underscored the moral authority of the tale, not the appropriative credentials of the writer who dramatized it. Because in the earlier period dramatists were rarely involved in the publication of their work, most printed plays lacked any authorial front matter. Those plays which had been prepared for the press by the author seldom contained references to the materials out of which they had been fashioned. Ben Jonson's practice of supplying marginal glosses which detailed his sources in *Sejanus* and his masques was highly atypical. The dependence of playwrights on sources went generally unremarked.
After the Restoration, the pressure on writers to acknowledge and justify their borrowings mounted steadily. A number of playwrights were attacked for plagiarism; many others came under fire for debasing the originals which they purported to improve. Writers cited some sources in prologues and epilogues and defended their modes of appropriation in the prefatory epistles to their play-quartos. Despite the occasional and contingent nature of such apologias, certain rhetorical patterns and arguments recur. Amateur writers such as Sir Robert Howard, Sir William Killigrew, and Sir Charles Sedley developed a rhetoric of appropriation substantiating their (p.34) authorial claims. So, in their own ways, did professional playwrights such as Dryden, Shadwell, Behn, Settle, Crowne, and D’Urfey. The origin and development of this impulse to circumscribe the dramatist’s licence to rework earlier texts will be the subject of this chapter.

The Promotion of Translation
In the Restoration, many regular theatre-goers were well travelled and well read. This was especially true of the king and his entourage, who routinely attended performances in public playhouses, amateur theatricals at Court virtually having ceased. The royal party was often large. During his travels of the Interregnum, Charles had watched and acted in plays as, presumably, had some of those who followed him into exile. The years abroad had introduced royalists to foreign courts, to foreign languages, and to foreign literature. Other playgoers of the Restoration had led or belonged to diplomatic missions undertaken since 1660. A much larger number had at some stage made their own way to the Continent. The prologue to Sir William Killigrew’s The Imperial Tragedy (1669) facetiously predicted that his cosmopolitan spectators would recognize, and perhaps object to, the Italianate extraction of the play:

Methinks I hear some travel’d Gallant say,
When he was last at Rome, he saw this Play:
That Zeno there was Acted; we confess,
And hope that here he’l have as good success.

(sig. A2v)6

(p.35) At home, the reading and theatre-going public had access to a wide range of books from which new plays were derived. In the 1640s and 1650s the publication of fine literature had flourished, with the appearance of pre-Civil War English plays,7 of translations of continental and classical drama,8 and of popular foreign romances.9 Moreover, as is borne out by surviving sale catalogues, continental playbooks and romances in the original languages, especially French, were in circulation in late seventeenth-century England.10
A cultivated playgoer, therefore, might well recognize a familiar source under the guise of a new play. Mrs Pepys, for one, noticed a similarity between Dryden's comedy, *An Evening's Love, or The Mock-Astrologer*, and Madeleine de Scudéry's fashionable romance, *Ibrahim, on l'Illustre Bassa* (1641), which had been translated into English as *The Illustrious Bassa* (1652). ‘My wife tells me’, Pepys recorded on 20 June 1668, it ‘is wholly...taken out of the *Illustr. Bassa*’ (ix. 247). She confirmed her suspicions about the source of Dryden's comedy by rereading the romance: ‘And after dinner, she to read in the *Illustr. Bassa* the plot of yesterday's play, which is most exactly the same’ (ix. 247). Mrs Pepys's dislike of *An Evening's Love*, a sentiment she seems to have imparted to her husband, implies that she found extensive borrowing distasteful. She may also have felt that Dryden was debasing the source generically in the way he presented it.

The fact that some theatre-goers recognized, or thought they had recognized, the originals of some plays explains neither why their response to the recognition should have been negative nor why any playwright should have bothered to cite his or her sources, let alone elucidate the manner of their appropriation. In the years immediately following the Restoration, indeed, sources were rarely acknowledged. When they were, it was usually for one of two reasons. Playwrights boasted whenever their source had been proposed to them by the king. Likewise, they strove to gratify the tastes of their sovereign by selecting materials they thought he would relish.

Conscious that legitimation and authority could be conferred on a play if it was written by explicit royal command, Sir Samuel Tuke proudly acknowledged his debt in *The Adventures of Five Hours* (1663) to a Spanish play which Charles himself had recommended:

> Just at that time [the Author] thought to disappear;  
> He chanc'd to hear his Majesty once say  
> He lik'd this Plot: he staid; and writ the Play...  
> (prologue at Court, sig. aI*)

In the printed edition of the play, these lines were accompanied by a marginal gloss: ‘This refers to the Authors purpose of Retirement, at that time when his Majesty recommended this Plot to him.’ Tuke paid a further tribute to the monarch’s discrimination in choosing the plot (and the poet to write it up) in a self-congratulatory preface to the third revised edition of *The Adventures* in 1671. ‘Certainly the Plot needs no Apology’, he declared. ‘It was taken out of Dom Pedro Calderon, a celebrated Spanish Author...and recommended to me by His Sacred Majesty, as an Excellent Design; whose Judgment is no more to be doubted, than his Commands are to be disobey’d’ (sig. A2*).
Charles's fondness for Spanish plots resulted in at least two more such commissions, which were readily cited by their beneficiaries. John Crowne recorded the king's personal recommendation of a source in the dedication to *Sir Courtly Nice* (1685):

> This Comedy was Written by the Sacred Command of our late most Excellent King.... The greatest pleasure he had from the Stage was in Comedy, and he often Commanded me to Write it, and lately gave me a Spanish Play called *No Puedeser: Or, It cannot Be*. [sic] out of which I took part o’ the Name, and design o’ this. (sig. A2r)

(p.37) Thomas D’Urfey made a similar claim for *The Banditti* (1686): ‘The distress of the Story was hinted to me by the *Late Blessed King* of ever-glorious Memory, from a Spanish Translation’ (sig. a3r–v).

Charles was yet more partial to French drama, so writers imitated, translated, and adapted Gallic authors, especially Pierre Corneille. In a letter written early in 1662, the Earl of Orrery professed to ‘have now finished a Play in the French Manner; because I heard the King declare himself more in favour of their Way of Writing than ours’. Orrery was a follower of ‘the French Manner’ or, as he called it elsewhere, of ‘the French Fassion of Playes’, not a translator. Other amateur playwrights sought royal favour by rendering French masterpieces directly into English. Competing versions of Corneille’s *La Mort de Pompée* were supplied by Katherine Philips and by a group of Court Wits—Edmund Waller, Sir Charles Sedley, Lord Buckhufst, Sir Edward Filmer, and Sidney Godolphin—in the early 1660s. Philips’s *Pompey* was first performed in Dublin in February 1663; the Wits’ version opened in London the following January. Two rival translations of *Héraclius* appeared in 1664, though only one of them reached the stage. Sir Thomas Clarges’s version was preferred over that by Lodowick Carlell, and Carlell complained of his uncivil usage by the players in a printed advertisement to his *Heradius, Emperour Of the East* (1664): ‘Another Translation formerly design’d (after this seem’d to be accepted of) was perfected and acted, this, not returned to me until that very day’ (sig. A3r). There were rumours that a third attempt was under way. ‘I understand yᵉ confederate-translators are now upon Heradius’, wrote Katherine Philips to Lady Temple on 24 January 1664, ‘& I am contented yᵉ Sʳ Tho. Clarges (who hath done that last yeare) should adorn their triumph in it, as I have done in Pompey.’ Stimulated by the enthusiastic reception of *Pompey*, *Orinda* went on to English *Horace*. The last act, left unfinished at her death, was provided by Sir John Denham, and the tragedy was performed at Court by a cast of aristocratic amateurs in February 1668.
Like Charles’s Spanish commissions, these translations from the French were explicitly acknowledged as such both in the theatre and in print. In an epistle that was to reappear in the London edition of *Pompey*, the Dublin printer, possibly acting on instructions from Philips herself, introduced the play as ‘a Translation out of the French of Monsieur *Corneille*’, adding that ‘the hand that did it is responsible for nothing but the English, and the Songs between the Acts, which were added only to lengthen the Play, and make it fitter for the Stage’ (sig. A2v). Corneille’s name was also prominent in the commendatory verses written at the time of the première and published in the posthumous volume of Orinda’s *Poems* (1667). ‘You English *Corneil's Pompey* with such flame, / That you both raise our wonder and his fame’, enthused the Earl of Orrery. ‘If he could read it, he like us would call | The copy greater than th' Original.’

So did the pseudonymous Philo-Philippa, whose ‘To the Excellent *Orinda*’ mentions Corneille no fewer than four times, always carefully balancing the affirmation of his stature and the praise of Orinda’s exemplary emulation: ‘*Corneille*, now made English, so doth thrive, | As Trees transplanted do much lustier live’ (sig. d1v). *Pompey the Great*, advertised in print as having been ‘Translated out of French by Certain Persons of Honour’, was presented to the audience at the Duke’s Theatre as

A Fruit which grew upon the Continent;  
Of all that's French, 'tis Rank'd among the best,  
And may prove better in our Language dress'd...  
('Prologue at the House', sig. A2v)

In a similar vein, Corneille was credited with *Héraclius* both in the prologue intended by Carlell for his ill-fated version (‘You see how carefull an excuse we make, | That one so mean, *Corneille* does undertake’, sig. A4v), and on the printed title-page: *Heraclius, Emperour Of the East...Written in French by Monsieur de Corneille*. The Frenchman was cited too in the prologue spoken at the Court première of Orinda’s *Horace* on 4 February 1668:

This Martial story, which through *France* did come,  
And there was wrought in great *Corneliu's Toom* [sic].  
*Orinda's* matchless Muse to *Brittain* brought,  
And Forreign Verse, our *English* Accents taught.19

By no means uniformly adulatory toward the French, these acknowledgements negotiate a subtle relationship between the original and the translated play. English dramatists often declare that they have improved French plays. Aware that the claim of improvement is meaningful only if the value of the original is not in question, translators and their panegyrists invoke the authority of Corneille so as the more effectively to validate the challenge of rendering his plays into English. A *Heraclius* or a *Pompey* which disguised its illustrious lineage would have been far less serviceable in eliciting the attention of a king noted for his liking of French drama.
English writers, then, acknowledged their famous foreign precursors so as to bolster the reputation of their own versions. Even the most extravagant boasts and accolades, however, convey a sense that translating is inferior to writing a play entirely one’s own. Having effusively complimented *Pompey*, Philo-Philippa looks to Orinda’s more autonomous and thus more ambitious compositions: ‘But if your fetter’d Muse thus praised be, | What great things do you write when it is free?’ In their address to the king, the Wits actually portray their *Pompey* as a prelude to an independent work. That promised piece will take Charles’s heroic struggle for the throne, now happily resolved, as its subject:

They that Translated this, but practice now  
To improve their Muse, and make her Worthy you,  
That she hereafter may Adorn the Stage  
With your own Story…

(sig. H4v)

The lack of esteem for translation was poignantly captured by Lodowick Carlell, himself a translator *manqué*, in a couplet summing up his part in Englishing *Héraclius*: ‘Those who translate, hope but a Labourers praise; | Who well invent, contrive; deserve the Bays’ (sig. A3v).

(p.40) The Acknowledgement of Sources
In the late 1660s the acknowledgement of sources became more frequent. Its form and motives changed too. The familiar display of amateur pretensions to have bettered Corneille waned, as did the vogue for translations of French heroics. ‘The good well meaning times, when the *Cid*, *Heraclius*, and other French Playes met such applause’ were gone. The audiences’ penchant for love, honour, and rhyme was now amply satisfied by native writers such as Dryden, soon to be joined by Settle, Lee, and Otway. The tone of acknowledgements which appeared towards the end of the decade was defensive. Boastful and defiant they may have purported to be, but the undercurrent of apology and self-justification was unmistakable. These acknowledgements emerged in the context of protracted personal squabbles and professional rivalries which triggered mutual accusations of theft and illicit appropriation. What was at issue in these quarrels was the propriety of using full-length plays as foundations for new scripts; no other type of source generated nearly so much adverse comment at this early date. With their authorial credentials under threat, playwrights resorted to printed refutations which ranged from impassioned denials to resentful justifications of dependency.
Writers for the stage had at their disposal a range of sites where indebtedness to their sources could be registered. Their choice depended largely on who was the intended addressee: an audience in the playhouse or a reader of the published text. A playwright wishing to draw the attention of spectators to a source might supply an explanatory prologue or epilogue. Prologues and epilogues, however, were only delivered during the initial runs, and may not have been given after the third night. Yet since a play's fate would be decided during the first few nights, if not on the opening night, the foregrounding of the original author and/or the source must have been seen as a commercial asset. Corneille, Shakespeare, Fletcher, Sophocles, and Euripides were the original authors mentioned most often. General references to continental sources and to the ancient (p.41) classics likewise abounded. Borrowings from the French, as we shall see, were among those most fervently condemned by writers who sought to underscore the Englishness of their own offerings.

Print gave the playwright a unique opportunity not just to make an acknowledgement on the title-page, in a dedication, or in a preface, but also to explain his or her appropriative strategy. The usefulness of prefaces and dedicatory epistles was seriously undercut, however, by the delay which preceded publication. The hiatus between the stage and the page, which in the 1660s usually amounted to a year, prevented authors from forestalling imputations of plagiarism. By the time a play was printed, its author might already have been condemned for illicit appropriation. If so, the preface or dedication would have to confront the charge on the accuser's terms.

Sir Robert Howard's preface to *The Great Favourite, Or, the Duke of Lerma* (1668) is a case in point. 'I was my selfe willing', he confessed, 'at the first desire of Mr. Herringman to print it.' Uncommon in a gentleman amateur, Sir Robert's impatience to get the play published was aroused by rumours, which were promptly reported to him by well-wishers, that it was not his own work: 'some were pleas'd to believe, little of it mine' (sig. A2r). In an effort to clear his name, he recounted the circumstances of the play's composition:

> For the Subject, I came accidentally to write upon it; for a Gentleman brought a Play to the Kings Company, call'd, *The Duke of Lerma*; and by them I was desir'd to peruse it, and return my opinion, whether I thought it fit for the Stage; after I had read it, I acquainted them, that in my judgement it would not be of much use for such a design... (sig. A2r-v)
We learn that the actors were in possession of an old script (the ‘Gentleman’ who delivered it to the playhouse was evidently not the author), and that they asked Sir Robert to decide whether the old *Duke of Lerma* was worth mounting. As a sharer in the company and as author of such stock plays as *The Surprisal, The Committee*, and *The Indian Queen* (on the last of which he had collaborated with Dryden), he was a plausible arbiter. Since his verdict was decidedly (p.42) negative, we might expect the script to have been abandoned. Yet, as the preface goes on to explain, this is not what happened:

about that time, being to go into the Countrey, I was persuawed by Mr. Hart to make it my diversion there that so great a hint might not be lost, as the Duke of Lerma saving himself in his last extremity, by his unexpected disguise, which is as well in the true story as the old Play; and besides that and the Names, my altering the most part of the Characters, and the whole design, made me uncapable to use much more...(sig. A2v)

The existence of the manuscript was no secret. The patentee, the senior actors, and perhaps a few theatre insiders would have known about it. Unable to deny having seen the script himself, Sir Robert strives to validate his claim to *The Great Favourite* by disavowing the profit motive and minimizing his reliance on the old play. He points to Charles Hart’s solicitations on behalf of the company as his immediate incentive for taking up the story and pictures himself as the quintessential genteel amateur who writes for pleasure in his country retreat. Sir Robert maintains that the main asset of the old *Duke of Lerma* is its subject-matter, not its dramatic properties. And since the startling climax which first attracted him to the story was itself based on a historical episode, he feels licensed to disown his dependence on the old play. After all, it provided him with no more than history would.

Sir Robert Howard professes, then, to have taken little, and to have transformed what he did take beyond recognition. One contemporary pamphleteer who ‘ha[d] read the old Play’ maintained that ‘the Honourable Person used but the first two words of it, though he has preserved the method in the beginning’. With no access to the original manuscript, the reader of the playbook would have had to rely on hearsay and on the printed epistle in forming his opinion of Sir Robert’s debt. By contrast, Thomas Shadwell, in publishing his first comedy, *The Sullen Lovers* (1668), had to reckon with the possibility that the more erudite members of the reading and theatre-going public would have come across its inspiration, *Molière’s Les Fâcheux*. Shadwell describes his use of Molière in the preface. His strategy, which resembles Howard’s, is to downplay the scope of the borrowing by limiting it to a few suggestions, or, in his and Howard’s nomenclature, ‘hints’. Shadwell claims to have done most of the writing prior to reading the French play, and admits to a more specific debt in two scenes only. Even those he insists on having altered and recast rather than simply translated:
The first hint I receiv’d was from the report of a Play of Molieres of three Acts, called Les Fascheux, upon which I wrote a great part of this before I read that; And after it came to my hands, I found so little for my use (having before upon that hint design’d the fittest Characters I could for my purpose), that I have made use of but two short Scenes (Viz.) the first Scene in the Second Act between Stanford and Roger, and Moliers story of Piquette, which I have translated into Back-gammon, both of them so vary’d you would not know them. (sigs. A3v–a1r)

Notwithstanding the debt he has incurred, Shadwell condemns dramatic borrowing as theft. Sadly, he says, his peers thrive on it:

But I freely confess my Theft, and am asham’d on’t, though I have the example of some that never yet wrote Play without stealing most of it; And (like Men that lye so long, till they believe themselves) at length, by continual Thieving, reckon their stolne goods their own too: which is so ignoble a thing, that I cannot but believe that he that makes a common practice of stealing other mens Witt, would, if he could, with the same safety, steale any thing else. (sig. a1r)

If someone who has borrowed no more than a hint and a couple of scenes is a thief, who is not? Shadwell asserts that ‘all Dramatick Poets ought to imitate [Ben Jonson], though none are like to come near’ (sig. a2r). Are imitators thieves too? Certainly not for Shadwell, whose tenacious advocacy of the Jonsonian comic model stands in sharp contrast to his equally tenacious censure of borrowing from less acclaimed authors.

The première of his next play, The Royal Shepherdess, on 25 February 1669, drew crowds to the Duke's Theatre. ‘The house infinite full’, Pepys reports, ‘where by and by the King and Court comes, it being a new play, or an old one new-vamp[ed], by Shadwell’ (ix. 458). Shadwell's pastoral tragicomedy was an adaptation of John Fountain's closet drama, The Rewards of Virtue. Since the original had been published only a few years earlier, in 1661, the reviser seems to have felt that acknowledgement, albeit a humorous one, (p.44) was in order. In the prologue to The Royal Shepherdess, Shadwell portrays himself as ‘the bold Purloiner of the Play’ and in an elaborate conceit likens poetic appropriation to theft:

One of the Poets (as they safely may
When th’Author's dead) has stollen a whole Play:
Not like some petty Thieves that can endure
To steal small things to keep their Hands in ure.
He swears he’ll die for something: In our times
Small Faults are scorn’d, the Great are worthy Crimes,
Onely for Noble Sparks, who think it fit
That the base Vulgar should mean Crimes commit.
The distinction between minor borrowing and wholesale seizure is predicated upon the social standing of the culprit. In appropriating ‘a whole Play’, Shadwell is doing no more than his betters, the ‘Noble Sparks’, have done before him. The most likely candidates for this appellation are the troop of genteel translators, though Shadwell may also be glancing at Howard’s The Great Favourite and Davenant’s recent revampings of Shakespeare.

The prologue to The Royal Shepherdess was not unique in its concerns. Shadwell’s witty indictment of theft recalls Dryden’s prologue for the revival of Thomas Tomkis’s Albumazar in February 1668, and closely corresponds to Sir William Killigrew’s near-contemporaneous prologue for The Imperial Tragedy. In the prologue to Albumazar, which has been seen as a thinly veiled slur on Sir Robert Howard, Dryden castigates those who ‘make whole Plays, and yet scarce write one word’. Such brazen appropriators, he contends, have no title to the plundered goods for they never try to perfect what they take. Killigrew attacks those ‘Who rob the French and Spanish of their Bayes; | And make a fashion of Translating Playes.’ Unlike Dryden, who was under no compulsion to expatiate upon his own dramatic practice in a prologue to another’s play, Sir William seeks to justify his use of the foreign model:

To own his pattern, th’Author’s not asham’d,
That Model, which in Italy was fram’d
He has new Moulded, for our English Stage;
(p.45) Hopping ‘twill fit the temper of this Age:
And the learn’d Latin Author not offend,
For alt’ring, what he dares not think to mend.
Though boldly it be here transformed so,
That Author cannot his own Issue know:
Like crafty Beggers, when they Children steal,
Disguise them; lest they should their Thefts reveal.
(sig. A2v)

Though he stops short of asserting that there has been improvement, Killigrew implies as much when he says that the original has been massively reworked. The difficulty of mediating between the competing claims of the ‘Latin’ dramatist and the English appropriator surfaces in the designation of each as ‘Author’. For how can both be authors of the same play? Or, if translation backed by substantial rewriting warrants a new claim to authorship, what is the relevance of the image of theft?
Aside from supplying an allusive prologue, Thomas Shadwell elucidated the genealogy of *The Royal Shepherdess* in the printed preface. His tactic is to juxtapose and contrast his and the original author's backgrounds, aims, and techniques. John Fountain was a gentleman amateur; Shadwell is an aspiring professional. For Fountain writing was ‘a slight diversion from his more serious Studies’, and his play was ‘never by him intended for Action’; Shadwell has undertaken, ‘with some pains’, to turn it into ‘a pleasant entertainment for the Audience’ (sig. A2v). This feat, he says, has required him to shorten individual speeches, develop the characters, add songs and dances, and ensure the connection of scenes. ‘What I have besides added’, Shadwell concludes, ‘I need not tell you, being I fear so much worse than his, that you will easily distinguish it’ (sig. A2v). Such blatant disingenuousness, or false modesty, may have been dictated by the generic conventions of the prefatory epistle, but the edition of *The Rewards of Virtue* was indeed available to anyone wishing to play the part of a comparative critic. Over twenty years later, Gerard Langbaine referred ‘the Reader to the view of Mr. Shadwell’s Epistle to the Reader, and the Comparison of both Plays, which are in print, for his satisfaction’ (*Account*, 450).

The preliminary disquisitions by Sir Robert Howard, Thomas (p.46) Shadwell, and Sir William Killigrew exhibit no clear consensus as to what constitutes poetic theft: the reuse of an earlier play's theme, plot, humour, incident, wit, or language. Each pronouncement is contingent upon the writer's immediate goal: Howard is denying extensive reliance on an anonymous manuscript; Shadwell aims to dismiss a debt to Molière and to rationalize his remodelling of an unperformed play by a deceased amateur; Killigrew champions his transmutation of an Italianate model. Sir Robert and Sir William are chiefly solicitous about their reputations; Shadwell, who writes for money, also has the profits from appropriated plays to account for. Yet in spite of those apparent differences of tone and argument, there are similarities too. Shared by all is the belief that, irrespective of its genre and provenance, the original play ought to be thoroughly rewritten. The change is tacitly understood to constitute improvement and to underpin the authorial claim of the appropriator.

**Appropriation Under Fire**
That the dependence of playwrights on earlier plays, and indeed on any form of external assistance, was becoming a matter of critical concern is further attested by a host of prefatory epistles dating from the early 1670s. The earnestness with which playwrights uphold their artistic self-sufficiency highlights the odium that illicit appropriation brought down on its perpetrators. In the preface to *The Humorists* (1671), Thomas Shadwell reiterates his conviction, first expressed in the preface to *The Sullen Lovers*, that imitation of suitable models is the surest means of achieving professional excellence. In the realm of comic drama the standard has been set by Ben Jonson: ‘If Mr. Johnson be the most faultless Poet, I am so far from thinking it impudence to endeavour to imitate him that it would rather (in my opinion) seem impudence in me not to do it’ (sigs. a2v–a3r). Even as he professes to follow Jonson, Shadwell congratulates himself on the ground that the comedy is entirely of his own making: ‘this Trifle...is wholly my own, without borrowing a tittle from any man; which I confess is too bold an attempt for so young a Writer; for...a Comedy of humor (that is not borrowed) is the hardest thing to write well’ (sig. a4v).

Freedom from borrowing, though a necessary condition of an author's self-reliance, was not thought to be a sufficient one. In (p.47) the prologue to the king and queen spoken at the Court performance of his next comedy, *Epsom-Wells* (1673), Shadwell answers a charge which is different from, but not unrelated to, the charge of borrowing: ‘If this for him had been by others done, | After this honour sure they'd claim their own’ (sig. A1v). The import of this rather cryptic couplet was explicated in a footnote which Shadwell inserted into the printed edition of the play: ‘These two Lines were writ in answer to the calumny of some impotent and envious Scriblers, and some industrious Enemies of mine, who would have made the Town and Court believe, though I am sure they themselves did not, that I did not write the Play...’ (sig. A1v). This time it was not unacknowledged borrowing that got Shadwell into trouble: he stood accused of having received help from another writer in drafting the script. Contemporaries identified the unnamed contributor to *Epsom-Wells* as Sir Charles Sedley, who was Shadwell's patron and who had written the prologue delivered at the public première of the play in December 1672. As Shadwell's piqued rejoinder testifies, these allegations precipitated a fair amount of adverse publicity during the first run of *Epsom- Wells*. More annoying still for someone so touchy about his public image must have been the later satirical vignettes of the two partners in Dryden's *MacFlecknoe* and Rochester's *Timon*.

Elkanah Settle too was implicated in a surreptitious collaboration. Under fire for withholding proper credit from a fellow Oxonian who was said to have participated in the composition of *Cambyses* (1671), Settle appended a tortured postscript to this, his first play:
I Would not be so ungrateful to the memory of the Dead, as not to acknowledge, that my fellow Student had some hand with me in the beginning of this Tragedy; but, dying six Moneths before the finishing of the Play, he did not live to see two Acts compleat: nor are there sixty lines of his remaining; which little concern has in the thoughts of some given him a Title to the whole.

Settle’s predicament was compounded by parallel imputations of theft: some spectators evidently supposed Cambyses to be no more than a rehash of an old script bearing the same title: ‘And ‘tis the pleasure of others, to accuse me of stealing out of an Old obsolete Tragi-Comedy, called, Cambyses, King of Persia; a Play which I had never heard of till this had been Acted: but however, those that have seen that may find that I might have borrow’d better language from Sternhold and Hopkins’ (sig. M4v).31 Whether his late friend was responsible for more of Cambyses than Settle allowed, and whether Settle drew upon the ‘Old obsolete Tragi-Comedy’, are not questions now at issue. More important are the circumstances in which the postscript was written and the formulations it contains. Few people are likely to have been aware of the old Cambyses. Fewer still would have known that Settle had not set out to write his play alone. And yet the outcry raised by those few intimidated the playwright into replying.

In its polemical slant, the postscript is analogous to the earlier epistles by Howard, Shadwell, and others. Like them, Settle counters damaging insinuations with his own account of the genesis of his play Superficially, his tactic too resembles theirs. In order to buttress his authorial sovereignty, Settle depicts the contribution of his associate as insignificant, and denies any acquaintance with the old Cambyses prior to the completion of his own tragedy. What distinguishes his retort, however, is the preoccupation with appropriated language rather than thoughts. Settle mentions no conferences with his colleague regarding the plot and general conduct of their projected play; neither does he envisage gleaning clues and ideas from the old script. Conversely, he estimates at roughly ‘sixty lines’ the portion of his companion’s writing that is retained in the final version, and scoffs at the notion of utilizing language and style so poor as those which the antiquated Cambyses might have afforded him. The debt being so minimal, he insists, Cambyses is justly his.
For Settle, then, the soundness of an authorial claim hinges upon the scope of verbal debt. His eagerness to differentiate old sections of his texts from the new ones is illustrated in the postscript to *Love and Revenge* (1675). As Settle admits, the play derives from William Heminges's *Fatal Contract*, which was last reprinted in 1664: ‘This play is founded on a Tragedy call’d the *Fatal Contract*. And in the two First Acts, there is much of the Original Copy remaining. But from (p.49) Page 25th. ‘tis entirely New to the End, excepting the Last Scene in the 4th. Act, and a little Scene between *Dumane, Lamot*, and *Burbon*’ (sig. M2v). Settle’s is in the fullest sense a postscript, a statement made after the play itself has been written, staged, and printed. The author’s dominion over the script is defined in terms not only of acts and scenes but of printed pages.

The postscript was another in a series of missives in which Settle and Shadwell had for some time been venting their personal animosity and critical disagreements. Both of them professionals attached to the Duke’s Company, the two men first clashed during the melee over the staggeringly successful *The Empress of Morocco* (1673). Settle’s heroics had been jointly assaulted by Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne in *Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco* (1674); and the aggrieved author had retaliated in *Notes and Observations On the Empress of Morocco Revised* (1674). When, in the postscript to *Love and Revenge*, Settle mockingly refers to ‘some of our Impertinent Tribe’ who claim to write plays ‘in three Weeks, or a Months time’, he levels irony at Shadwell’s much-vaunted speed of composition.

The latest brag had come in the preface to *Psyche* (1675), a dramatic opera which left the press shortly before *Love and Revenge*. The preface foregrounded Shadwell’s haste in putting together this operatic mélange, of which ‘the great Design was to entertain the Town with variety of Musick, curious Dancing, splendid Scenes and Machines’ (sig. b1v). A year later, in the preface to *The Libertine* (1676), Shadwell again exulted in his facility with words, ‘notwithstanding the foul, course, and ill-manner’d censure passed...by a rough hobling Rhimer, in his *Postscript* to another Man’s Play, which he spoil’d, and call’d, *Love and Revenge* (sig. A4v).
The dedication of *Psyche* to the Duke of Monmouth responded to renewed slurs on Shadwell’s artistic integrity. ‘Some Enemies’, he complained, ‘endeavour to perswade him [the king], that I do not write the Plays I own, or at least, that the best part of them are written for me’ (sig. A3v). Such ill-gotten plays might easily upset his standing with the monarch. And they could not, in good faith, be presented as gifts to his patrons. In the preface Shadwell expounds his treatment of the French namesake and prototype of *Psyche*. He anticipates objections of two kinds: the spectators ‘who are too great admirers of the French Wit…(if they do not like this Play) will say, the French *Psyche* is much better; if they do, they will say, I have borrow’d it all from the French’ (sig. A4v). Though he affects to yield the contest between the two plays to the discretion of ‘the Men of Wit (who understand both Languages)’, Shadwell unequivocally asserts the superiority and distinctive achievement of the English *Psyche*:

> That I have borrow’d it all from the French, can only be the objection of those, who do not know that it is a Fable, written by Apuleus in his *Golden Ass*; where you will find most things in this Play, and the French too. For several things concerning the Decoration of the Play, I am oblig’d to the French, and for the Design of two of the only moving Scenes in the French, which I may say, without vanity, are very much improv’d, being wrought up with more Art in this, than in the French Play, without borrowing any of the thoughts from them. (sig. A4v)

Having repudiated clandestine collaboration and discounted his debt to the French play, he turns, in the postscript, to the question of self-borrowing: ‘I Had borrowed something from two Songs of my own, which, till this Play was Printed, I did not know were publick; but I have since found ’em Printed in Collections of Poems…This I say to clear my self from Thiev’ry, ‘tis none to rob my self (sig. b1v). Shadwell’s admission that he has cannibalized his own earlier work is symptomatic of his generation’s concern with literary property. The postscript too offers an insight into the divergent perceptions of playwriting and of the making of occasional verse.
Late seventeenth-century songs, satires, lampoons, love poems, epigrams, and extempore compositions circulated widely in manuscript. Only a fraction ever got into print. Poems were copied, recopied, augmented, shortened, and recast as a matter of course. Indeed, once a copy of verses such as Shadwell’s entered the domain of scribal transmission, the poet lost any further control over their dissemination. When a publisher resolved to bring out a printed collection, the consent of the poet was seldom sought, if only because his or her identity was often unknown or uncertain. (Shadwell (p.51) is explicit on this point: no one sought his permission to issue the songs and he was mildly surprised, though by no means troubled, to see them in print.) Much of contemporary poetry, then, was anonymous, often deliberately so. Of the surviving manuscript attributions, some are accurate, others manifestly mischievous or simply wrong. In the case of printed compilations, commercial factors dictated the pattern of attribution. Even if spurious, the naming of a professional of note such as Dryden or of a celebrated amateur such as Rochester among a volume’s contributors was a strong selling-point.

Although many would have encountered his songs in manuscript as well as in performance, Shadwell did not consider them ‘publick’ until printed. As a writer of incidental verse, he is altogether unruffled by the random transition of the songs from manuscript to print, and mourns the loss of neither authority nor profit. As a practising playwright, however, Shadwell is wary lest he be blamed for filching stray songs which are, in fact, his own. Having seen Psyche to the stage and sold a copy to the publisher, he is resolved to exercise control over the printed artefact. Title-page, dedication, preface, and postscript work to construct the public persona of Thomas Shadwell the dramatist. The last to arrive, Psyche takes its place in the line of Shadwells plays in print, each complete with an introductory statement by the author. No discrete corpus of verse could be associated with Shadwell the poet, but the œuvre of the dramatist has been purposely enlarged.

To protect the stature of that œuvre Shadwell uses evasive arguments. He seeks to convey the impression that his debt to his immediate sources is unimportant. After all, he points out, the French Psyche itself derives from Apuleius’ Golden Ass. He and the authors of Psychè (Molière, Corneille, and Quinault), Shadwell intimates, are drawing on a common cultural inheritance, and thus on common cultural property. Likewise, in the preface to The Libertine, a loose reworking of Le Nouveau Festin de Pierre by Rosimond and Molière’s Don Juan, he paints a transhistorical vista against which the tale of the flamboyant profligate has evolved:
The story from which I took the hint of this Play, is famous all over Spain, Italy, and France: It was first put into a Spanish Play (as I have been told) the Spaniards having a Tradition (which they believe) of such a vicious Spaniard, as is represented in this Play. From them the Italian Comedians took it, and (p.52) from them the French took it, and four several French Plays were made upon the Story.

The Character of the Libertine, and consequently those of his Friends, are borrow’d; but all the Plot, till the latter end of the Fourth Act, is new: And all the rest is very much varied from any thing which has been done upon the Subject. (sig. A4r)

Shadwell implies that Don John, alias Don Juan, alias Don Giovanni is a cultural icon. His licentious life, demonic charm, audacious defiance of laws human and divine, and heroically unrepentant end are the stuff of legend. By insisting that the story belongs to the community, Shadwell subtly disguises his specific debt to individual foreign plays. Neither Rosimond nor Molière is named; far from excusing his reliance on previous dramatic renditions of the Don’s exploits, Shadwell apologizes for departing from and experimenting with the plot as it has come down to him: ‘I hope the Readers will excuse the Irregularities of the Play, when they consider, that the Extravagance of the Subject forced me to it: And I had rather try new ways to please, than to write on in the same Road, as too many do’ (sig. A4v). As in his earlier prefaces, Shadwell shuns the admission of verbal borrowing and harps on hints, subjects, themes, and plots.

A rejoinder from Settle was not long in coming. The hastily penned (and hastily withdrawn) preface to Ibrahim The Illustrious Bassa (1677) derides Shadwell as ‘the ingenious Translater of three French Plays that calls himself the Author of the Libertine’ and, further, as ‘a wretched Dabler in Verse, [who] put Heroicks quite out of countenance, when he spoil’d an old Womans Tale, and call’d it Psyche’ (sig. a1r). The three French plays Settle alludes to are Tartuffe, L’Avare, and Psychè. The Hypocrite, apparently based on Molière’s Tartuffe, opened in June 1669, but was never printed; The Miser, an adaptation of his L’Avare, was premièred in January 1672 and published later in the same year. Shadwell’s claim to The Hypocrite, The Miser, and Psyche is, according to Settle, at best that of a translator. Equally dubious, Settle implies, is his responsibility for The Libertine.
Settle's criticisms of Shadwell are many. Aside from his sarcastic dismissal of Shadwell's boast that he composed plays swiftly and effortlessly, he launches a fierce attack on his rival's practice of appropriating the works of others. Two objections stand out. First, Settle condemns the verbatim copying of language. Of *Psyche*, he (p. 53) says: 'And if by chance you meet with that Rarity in it call'd a Thought, or any thing that looks but like one, the Reader may be assured 'tis stollen'. Settle cites the eponymous heroines account of hell, and then compares the passage with its alleged source in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which he also quotes. Two other scenes are censured thus:

> And all his discourse of Miracles in the second Act, where his Fool of a Priest, is baffled by his two *Atheistical Friends Polynides* and *Nicander*, is stoll’n out of *Tractatus Theologie Polit*. His last Scene that he brags of in his fifth Act, has nothing good in it, but what is in the *French Psyche*, the speeches only shortned to the English Mode. (sig. a1v)

*Psyche*, then, is merely a collage, a tissue of quotations, and Shadwell's role in writing it has been limited to putting together scraps of text culled from others. Settle's second objection is that Shadwell spoils what he takes: 'If he had understood *Apuleius*, or any of the other Plays written upon that Subject, he would have had some mercy sure to the original Design of *Psyche*, not to have murdered it at that rate as he hath done' (sigs. a1v—a2r). That is, borrowed material has not been worked into a coherent artistic structure, but, rather, assembled haphazardly without any regard to sense, decorum, or probability.

Settle was not alone in thinking poorly of *Psyche* and its author. By the time his vituperative preface was printed, Dry den's *MacFlecknoe*, with its many allegations of plagiarism, had been circulating in manuscript for several months, and Thomas Duffett had communicated similar charges via burlesque and personal satire. Duffett's travesty, *Psyche Debauch'd*, opened some time in August 1675, about six months after the première of *Psyche*. The prologue to this outrageously smutty romp jeered at 'Psyches borrow'd plumes', while the play itself featured Shadwell, the pathetic begetter of *Psyche*, in the character of 'Redstreak, Costard's Wife', acted by Mr Cory in drag (sigs. A2r, A1v). Redstreak undertakes to devise an operatic entertainment for Princess None-so-fair, the mock-Psyche. In an inspired spoof of Shadwell's inflated prefatory rhetoric, Duffett has the satirical *alter ego* of the poet exclaim: 'I know I have many Foes, that say I make not what I own, but mum for that: This Rare *Opera* is all mine I'le swear' (Act 1; p. 8).
As Settle more or less admits in the preface to *Ibrahim* and elsewhere, the original cause of his quarrel with Shadwell was commonplace professional jealousy. In the early exchanges, the abuse of *sources* was neither the only nor the most important charge. Shadwell, for his part, regularly ridiculed Settle's heroics. By adding material to the Duke of Newcastle's *The Triumphant Widow*, which he brought to the stage in 1674, he made Crambo (Settle), 'a silly Heroick Poet', the satirical butt of the play. Yet, as Shadwell's interpolations highlighting Crambo's artistic sterility and manifold thefts indicate, the importance of the issue of appropriation grew as the controversy unfolded and as the charges of theft were reversed and recycled. That this was so may seem odd since neither writer was wholly blameless. Why should Shadwell decry Settle for adapting Heminges's *The Fatal Contract* as *Love and Revenge*, having himself reworked Fountain's *The Rewards of Virtue* in *The Royal Shepherdess*? What was the logic of Settle's attack on *Psyche* in the preface to *Ibrahim*, a play whose very title proclaimed its origin in Madame de Scudery's romance? Notwithstanding Settle's and Shadwell's apparent lack of consistency from one aggressive—defensive preface or postscript to the next, their critical positions are fairly distinct. Throughout, Settle emphasizes the impropriety of reproducing the source or sources verbatim. Shadwell, by contrast, is more concerned to clear himself from (and to upbraid Settle and others for) stealing ideas, thoughts, and storylines. The immediate pressure upon each playwright to document and rationalize his use of sources in print was contingent upon the opponent's combative tactic. The fact that appropriation proved an issue at all, however, is a sign of a conceptual change. By the mid-1670s to appropriate the work of another was perceived as suspect on moral as well as aesthetic grounds.

**The Laureate as Plagiarist**

The emergent preoccupation with literary theft extended into the dramatic career and critical writings of the Stuart Laureate, John Dryden. Dryden's liberal use of native and foreign plays, romances, histories, and the classics attracted a large amount of hostile commentary. He responded in two ways. He became careful to acknowledge his sources; and he provided extensive arguments to justify his appropriation of them.
Early in his career Dryden seldom specified his sources. The expansion of his acknowledgements of textual debts coincided with his bitter controversy with Sir Robert Howard of 1668. At the outset Dryden was on the offensive. His harsh denunciation of literary theft in the prologue for the revival of Thomas Tomkis's *Albumazar* was, as we have seen, aimed directly at Howard. Dryden was yet more scathing about Sir Robert's claim to The Great Favourite in 'A Defence of an Essay of Dramatique Poesie', where he parodied Howard's mortified admission of his debt to an old manuscript: 'having so much alter'd and beautifi'd it, as he has done, it can justly belong to none but him' (*Works*, ix. 4). Even though his adversary had been humiliated and pressured into making that admission, in the long run Dryden was the more affected by the dispute, which by then had developed a momentum of its own. Howard stopped writing plays and devoted himself to furthering his political career, while Dryden had to sustain ever more heated attacks against his practice of remodelling earlier texts. These attacks in turn were to induce him to become more fastidious about documenting his sources and inspirations, and, in time, to develop a conceptual defence of appropriation.

How did so earnest a writer as Dryden defend and justify appropriative practices when they came under fire? In the dedication to *The Indian Emperour* (1667), he acknowledged his reliance on history in the formation of the plot even as he affirmed the poet's freedom to transform historical materials in order to achieve greater verisimilitude (ix. 25). The preface to *Secret Love* explained that 'the play is founded on a story in the *Cyrus*’ (ix. 117). ‘The Plot’, Dryden admitted in the preface to *The Wild Gallant*, ‘was not Originally my own’ (viii. 3). Yet he insisted that the foundation upon which the play was built had been thoroughly transformed in the process of adaptation: '[the original was] so alter'd, by me...that, whoever the Author was, he could not have challenged a Scene of it’ (viii. 3).

In spite of his increasingly careful and conscientious acknowledgements, Dryden did not escape severe and recurrent charges of plagiarism. R.F., who, as we have seen, took up Sir Robert Howard's cause in *A Letter from a Gentleman To the Honourable Ed. Howard* (1668), emphasizes the social gap which separates the low-born ‘Squire’ from the ‘Honourable Person’ and berates Dryden for exactly the same kind of literary theft of which he has just cleared Sir Robert:
the Squire perhaps is justly angry to see any one use the least thing of
another Writer, and enter into his Jurisdiction, claiming the right of Theft
perhaps by continual Custome; witness his Maiden Queen stoln out of the
Queen of Corinth: a great part of his Indian Emperour, and most of his
Mock Astrologer...out of French Playes and Romances; from whence I
cannot but observe that he is in danger to be thought an ill-natur’d Squire;
since the Character [sic] of an Ingrossing Plagiary may possibly be more
justly due to him, than the Title of Esquire, which he has been pleased to
assume, (pp. 2–3)

Thomas Shadwell’s The Humorists, which opened in December 1670, featured a
comic alter ego of the Laureate under the character of Drybob. In mocking
Drybob’s vanity (Act II; p. 16), his infatuation with novelty (Act II; p. 27), and his
bid for critical authority (Act V; p. 65), Shadwell anticipates many of the satirical
thrusts to be made by The Rehearsal exactly a year later. Drybob’s attitude
towards literary borrowing too is held up to ridicule. He condemns another
character’s unfair use of a theatrical script—’Pox on’t that’s stoln out of a Play’—
only to be told, ‘What then, that’s lawful; ’tis a shifting age for wit, and every
body lies upon the Catch’ (Act III; p. 38).

While preparing his tragicomedy The Womens Conquest (1671) for the press,
Edward Howard, the erstwhile addressee of R.F’s Letter, penned what he called
’more a discourse, or Essay on Dramatick Poesie, then a Preface to a Play’ (sigs.
c1v–c2r). Howard’s main concern is the author’s self-sufficiency in the
construction of the plot. Citing the example of his own play, Howard commends
those writers who can be credited with inventing their own fables: T have not
been help’d by any History or known Tale in forming of my Plot...nor do I find
but the greatest Plays formerly were the Poets own Tales, as well as Plots’ (sig.
a2v). Though he does not name Dryden, Howard’s censure of ‘Translating...and
taking from Romances and (p.57) Foreign Plays’ (sig. a2v) leaves the
knowledgeable reader in no doubt as to the identity of the offender.

These harangues incensed Dryden and probably left him feeling threatened. In
the lengthy preface to An Evening’s Love (1671) he felt compelled to address the
issue of dramatic borrowing directly, and to offer a generalized justification of
his methods of composition:
I am tax’d with stealing all my Playes, and that by some who should be the last men from whom I would steal any part of ‘em...’Tis true, that wherever I have lik’d any story in a Romance, Novel, or forreign Play, I have made no difficulty, nor ever shall, to take the foundation of it, to build it up, and to make it proper for the *English* Stage. And I will be so vain to say it has lost nothing in my hands: But it alwayes cost me so much trouble to heighten it for our Theatre (which is incomparably more curious in all the ornaments of Dramatick Poesie, than the *French* or *Spanish*) that when I had finish’d my Play, it was like the Hulk of *Sir Francis Drake*, so strangely alter’d, that there scarce remain’d any Plank of the Timber which first built it. (*Works*, x. 210–11)

Dryden categorically asserts the right of the dramatic writer to utilize earlier materials as foundations for his own productions, though he does not specify English plays as permissible sources. The omission was dictated by Dryden’s belief in the ‘curious’ (that is, the exacting) nature of the English theatre, to which foreign materials can be suitable only if adjusted and amplified. The necessary alterations, he intimates, distance the new version from the original.

Dryden makes a distinction between the plot of the original and its language. His customary policy is, he insists, to carry out extensive stylistic revision: ‘I seldome use the wit and language of any Romance or Play which I undertake to alter: because my own invention (as bad as it is) can furnish me with nothing so dull as what is there’ (x. 211). At the same time, he plays down the significance of plot-borrowing: ‘The Story is the least part of [the work of a Poet...and the Graces of a Poem]’ (x. 212). He conceives of plots as the common property of all writers, and points to the examples of Shakespeare and Fletcher whose plots were not originally of their own making (x. 211–12). This conscious claim to lineage shows how far the world had changed: Dryden’s critics were making an innovative demand, but one that must already have begun to seem normal.
His awareness that pre-Restoration dramatists availed themselves (p.58) of extant plays in their search for subject-matter largely determined Dryden's justification of his own reliance on Shakespeare. In the preface to his earliest Shakespearian adaptation, *The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island*, carried out in concert with Sir William Davenant, Dryden delineates the fortunes of the original at the hands of Fletcher and Suckling who, he intimates, have been its previous revisers (x. 3–4). Neither Fletcher's *The Sea Voyage* nor Suckling's *The Goblins* is in fact a revision of *The Tempest*; both are works loosely inspired by it. In devising the spurious history of textual transmission and alteration, Dryden seeks to create the impression that dramatic appropriation is a legitimate and time-honoured practice. He also suggests that a reworking by such illustrious authors as Fletcher and Suckling confirms the intrinsic merit of the Shakespearian original (‘our excellent Fletcher had so great a value for it, that he thought fit to make use of the same Design’, x. 3). Yet Dryden holds *The Enchanted Island* to be superior both to Shakespeare's *Tempest* and to its early seventeenth-century appropriations. The credit for the improvement is due principally to his collaborator in the adaptation, Sir William Davenant, who ‘as he was a man of quick and piercing imagination, soon found that somewhat might be added to the Design of Shakespear, of which neither Fletcher nor Suckling had ever thought: and therefore to put the last hand to it, he design’d the Counterpart to Shakespear’s Plot’ (x. 4). By paying his open tribute to Davenant, the foremost adapter of Shakespeare to date, Dryden rebuts those who, like Richard Flecknoe, held Sir William culpable for ‘spoiling and mangling of [Shakespeare's] Plays',38 and prepares the ground for his own future adaptations.

In the preface to *All for Love: or, The World Well Lost* (1678), Dryden affirms his ambition to build and improve on Shakespeare. Advertised on the title-page as ‘Written in Imitation of Shakespeare's Stile’, his is one of many dramatizations of the story: ‘The death of Antony and Cleopatra, is a Subject which has been treated by the greatest Wits of our Nation, after Shakespeare; and by all so variously, that their example has given me the confidence to try my self in this Bowe of Ulysses’ (xiii. 10). By underlining both the artistic merit of his precursors—Shakespeare, May, Daniel, Sedley—and the diversity of their renditions of the theme, Dryden highlights the boldness (p.59) of his own enterprise. He emphasizes the historical research—the reading of Plutarch, Appian, Dion Cassius—he has carried out before undertaking composition. Since ‘the Unities of Time, Place and Action, [are] more exactly observ’d, than, perhaps, the English Theater requires’ (xiii. 10), his version is regular and well proportioned.
Despite professing ‘to follow the practise of the Ancients’ (xiii. 18), Dryden judges their example inadequate to meet the demands of the English stage. This insufficiency of classical models mandates, in his view, a closer adherence to the native dramatic tradition. He attempts to capitalize on both his alleged conformity to neo-Aristotelian precepts and his stylistic imitation of ‘the Divine Shakespeare’: ‘I have not Copy’d my Author servilely: Words and Phrases must of necessity receive a change in succeeding Ages: but ‘tis almost a Miracle that much of his Language remains so pure’ (xiii. 18). Holding an exaggerated assumption about linguistic change, Dryden stresses the ‘purity’ of Shakespearian diction and validates retrospectively the claim that Shakespeare is not of an age. He thus contributes to the early stages of the formation of the Shakespeare myth. ‘By imitating him’, Dryden writes, ‘I have excell’d myself throughout the Play’ (xiii. 18–19).

Dryden came to modify his self-justifying rhetoric under the influence of Thomas Rymer’s Tragedies of the Last Age Consider’d of 1678. One change, already foreshadowed in the subtitle of and in the preface to All for Love, is the recurrence of the word ‘imitation’ in his preface to Troilus and Cressida, or Truth Found Too Late (1679). The shift is subtle but significant. It allows Dryden to use neoclassical theory to validate his revision of Troilus. Where before he would refer to having been ‘tax’d with stealing all my Playes’ (as he had in the preface to An Evening’s Love), now he restates an analogous accusation in terms that automatically legitimize his practice: ‘They who think to do me an injury, by saying that it [one of the scenes] is an imitation of the Scene betwixt Brutus and Cassius, do me an honour, by supposing I could imitate the incomparable Shakespear’ (xiii. 227).

Dryden emphasizes the labour expended in removing ‘that heap of Rubbish, under which many excellent thoughts lay wholly bury’d’ (xiii. 226). The novelty of his adaptation, as it is defined in the preface, amounts primarily to the correction of the imperfections of the Shakespearian source by supplying it with the liaison des scenes and by refining the language. As a final stroke, Dryden claims to have (p.60) modelled one of the scenes upon Euripides, and quotes a passage from Longinus, where imitation is raised to the status of poetic creed (xiii. 228).

To recapitulate, Dryden produced extensive arguments to justify his several adaptations and borrowings. His main objective was to show his own plays to be improvements upon largely obsolete or, in the case of foreign drama, structurally flawed originals, and to claim authorship by virtue of the amount of labour involved in the rewriting. Dryden altered his rhetoric of appropriation in the late 1670s to accommodate the standard neoclassical ideas of imitation and emulation of the ancients. These ideas, in turn, offered him a convenient conceptual framework within which to discuss his practice as adapter. He used them to forestall charges of plagiarism.
Dryden's appropriative practice as well as his theoretical justifications of it were repeatedly targeted by his detractors. Premiered in December 1671, the Duke of Buckingham's *The Rehearsal* debunked the Laureate's derivative playwriting by reducing it to three rules of (unoriginal) composition. The first, the ‘Rule of Transversion’, is defined by Bayes—Dryden as ‘changing Verse into Prose, or Prose into verse’, so as to ‘Make it my own. ‘Tis so alter’d that no man can know it’ (I. i; p. 4). The second, the ‘Rule of Record...by way of Table-Book’, parodies Dryden's efforts to imitate the conversation of gentlemen. The portrait of the plagiarist at work is completed by the ‘Rule of Invention’ which consists in appropriating other authors’ lines via a 'book of *Drama Common places*’ (I. i; pp. 4–5, 3).

The Earl of Rochester took up elements of Buckingham's dramatic satire on the Laureate in verse form. He opened his 'An Allusion to Horace' (c. 1675–6) by charging Dryden with theft: ‘Well, sir, 'tis granted I said Dryden's rhymes | Were stol'n, unequal, nay dull many times.’ What the earl resents even more than the act of appropriation is the Laureate's mixed views of the established dramatists:

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But does not Dryden find ev'n Jonson dull;  
Fletcher and Beaumont uncorrect and full  
Of lewd lines, as he calls 'em; Shakespeare's style
(p.61) Stiff and affected; to his own the while  
Allowing all the justness that his pride  
So arrogantly had to these denied?
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(p. 100, 11. 81–6)

Rochester explains that, because Dryden's plays of doubtful merit and questionable provenance win theatrical acclaim and promptly appear in print (p. 98, 11. 5–9), their author feels encouraged to scribble more, and dares detract from his predecessors’ fame. For this state of affairs Rochester blames the undiscriminating audiences ('the rabble and the court', p. 98,1. 17), and hints at the worthlessness of the laurel, which in the context of the poem is ironically emblematic of Dryden's lack of wit and poetic talent: ‘Nor dare I from his sacred temples tear | That laurel which he best deserves to wear’ (p. 100, 11. 79–80).

The Wits' attacks in the 1670s, we shall see, were very different from those which were made by Gerard Langbaine and others in the late 1680s and early 1690s. The change in tone and substance marks the waning of the aristocratic culture of letters, with its insistence on writing little but well for the audience of the select few, and signals the growing recognition, though not necessarily the approval, of literary professionalism, with its financial and commercial ramifications.
The common feature of the remaining critical assaults on Dryden in the early 1670s was a profound resentment of his professional success, which was epitomized by the triumph of *The Conquest of Granada* in the winter of 1670–1. In 1672 Martin Clifford, Buckingham’s secretary, began circulating four manuscript letters addressed to Dryden. The goal of this epistolary venture was ‘First to expose your Faults, (I do not mean all)...And next I will detect your Thefts, letting the World know how great a Plagiary you are.’ Clifford alleges that Almanzor, the super-hero of *The Conquest of Granada*, is merely a copy of Montezuma and Maximin, the protagonists of Dryden's previous heroic dramas, *The Indian Emperor* and *Tyrannick Love*: ‘You are therefore a strange unconscionable Thief, that art not content to steal from others, but do'ist rob thy poor wretched Self too’ (p. 7).

Having been satirized by a professional playwright and rival, *burlesqued* by an aristocratic antagonist, and ridiculed by that aristocrat's secretary, Dryden found, in 1673, his credentials as author and critic under attack from another quarter. It was then that the two universities spawned the so-called Rota pamphlets. The Oxford-born *The Censure of the Rota* (1673) attributed Dryden's borrowings to his ‘barren Invention’, whereas *The Friendly Vindication* (1673), which originated in Cambridge, mocked his claim, made in the prologue to *Secret Love*, to have combined Jonsonian humour with the techniques of Corneillian drama, and repudiated his ‘transver-sing’ of Virgil in *Annus Mirabilis*. These two tracts were in turn countered by two pamphlets in Dryden’s defence. In the first, *A Description of the Academy of Athenian Virtuosi* (1673), the vindication of Dryden is based on the assumption that his models are not French but classical, and therefore legitimate. Forced to admit Dryden’s dependence on sources of some kind, his anonymous champion weakly points out that the same old charges have been recycled by all hostile pamphleteers: the ‘needy Author plaid the plagiary, having transcrib’d all those objections from *Cassus* [the supposed author of *The Censure of the Rota*], which *Cassus* had borrow’d from the Rehearsal, whence ‘tis easy to gather, that it is difficult to find fault with Mr. Dryden, when his enemies are forc’d to tautologize’ (p. 34). No more convincing was Charles Blount's apology for Dryden's use of Jonson and Corneille in *Mr. Dreyden Vindicated* (1673): ‘he does but confess his Little Theft honestly; and therefore justly merits a Pardon’. To justify literary borrowing was not easy: both of Dryden's advocates basically conceded the points raised by his detractors.
As the controversy raged in print, Dryden was confronted with a new satiric version of himself in *The Reformation*, a comedy by another university wit, Joseph Arrowsmith, which was mounted by the Duke's Company in 1672 or 1673. The play betrays its author's thorough reading of both Dryden's dramatic and critical works, which it treats with merciless derision. Arrowsmith caricatures Dryden as an English Tutor who 'pretends to Plays too, and then he (p.63) damns French, Spanish, and Italian in a wind, yet steals out of the very worst of them' (II. i; pp. 17–18). In the final scene the Tutor, alongside other major characters, undergoes the reformation to which the title refers. Like Horace-Jonson in Dekker's *Satiromastix*, he is made to subscribe to a number of provisos. One of them obliges him to 'engage in three months, to produce a Play which shall have nothing in’t borrow’d, nor improbable, nor profane, nor bawdy' (V. ii; p. 79).

The fate of *The Reformation* was similar to that of *The Humorists* a few years earlier: it 'quickly made its Exit' and was never revived. Today the only anti-Dryden pieces still read are Buckingham's *The Rehearsal* and Rochester's 'Allusion to Horace'. But, as we have seen, contemporary attacks on Dryden were much more numerous, witty, and pointed than we nowadays like to imagine. Some modern scholars dismiss them summarily, ignoring important factual evidence, whereas others undertake to exonerate Dryden from the old charges by replying to them in anachronistic terms. Without ascribing undue prominence to the critical ephemera of the Restoration, we have to allow that they too were instrumental in shaping the reception of Dryden's work both by audiences and by readers, and that they influenced his own critical and artistic response. Only by accepting them as authentic witnesses to changes of value and taste shall we be able to grasp the meaning of plagiarism in the context of late seventeenth-century literary culture.

(p.64) Charges and Counter-charges
During Dryden’s career the demand for the acknowledgement and justification of sources became widespread and came to transcend—though rarely to be independent of—personal animosities. Dramatists were often arraigned for theft soon after a première, irrespective of whether the play prospered or sank. Although theatre-goers were indeed knowledgeable about foreign literature (as we have seen in the case of Mrs Pepys), they could still be dazzled by displays of erudition (or pseudo-erudition) on the part of a playwright’s enemies; in some of the contemporary allegations of theft there may have been an element of bluff, since few readers were likely to look up the alleged sources, particularly if those were recondite, to see whether the charges were warrantable. The responses of authors to these indictments, of which, presumably, they mostly heard by word of mouth, varied widely. Some were brief, nonchalant, and witty; others prolix, earnest, and laboured. The sheer number (and length) of these printed rejoinders testifies to a shift in cultural sensibility: the playwright’s entitlement was increasingly appraised in relation to his or her invention which, contrary to the rhetorical tradition that had fostered the concept, took on the meaning of self-sufficiency (of the author) and novelty (of the product).

Perhaps the most poignant, because private, expression of the playwright’s chagrin at being denounced as a thief occurs in a letter from Aphra Behn to Emily Price. Behn is worried about the reception of *Abdelazer, or The Moor’s Revenge*, which the Duke’s Company mounted in the summer of 1676. ‘My Dear, she writes, ‘In your last, you inform’d me, that the World treated me as a Plagiery, and’, she adds ironically, ‘I must confess, not with Injustice.’ To this report of the widespread strictures upon her adaptation, in *Abdelazer*, of the Dekker-Day-Haughton *Lust’s Dominion*, Behn responds with mocking self-criticism:

For being impeach’d of murdering my Moor, I am thankful, since, when I shall let the World know, whenever I take Pains next to appear in Print, of the mighty Theft I have been guilty of: But however for your own Satisfaction, (p.65) I have sent you the Garden from whence I gather’d, and I hope you will not think me vain, if I say, I have weeded and improv’d it. (p. 32)

In so intimate a form of communication as personal correspondence surely was for her, Behn insists upon her right to avail herself of the Elizabethan tragedy, a copy of which she dispatches to her confidante for perusal alongside the copy of *Abdelazar*. 
Behn's ambition goes beyond securing the favourable opinion of a friend; what she really craves is a public vindication. The justness of her cause, Behn believes, will be plain to anyone willing to compare the original with the adaptation. ‘I hope to prevail on the Printer’, she says, ‘to reprint The Lust’s Dominion, &c. that my Theft may be the more publick.’ In the event, no new impression of the source play materialized, and Behn chose not to comment on the imbroglio in the printed edition of Abdelazar in 1677.

She was less restrained when, several months later, she prepared two other pieces, The Rover and Sir Patient Fancy, for the press. Provoked by rumours that in The Rover she had plagiarized Thomas Killigrew’s unperformed Thomaso, or The Wanderer, Behn addressed the issue in a printed postscript. ‘That I have stoln some hints from it’, she says, ‘may be a proof, that I valu’d it more than to pretend to alter it.’ In order to deflect attention from her substantial debt to Thomaso, Behn enjoins the reader to contemplate another potential source, Richard Brome’s The Novella, to which, she implies, she is as little beholden as to Killigrew’s play. ‘I will only say the Plot and Bus’ness (not to boast on’t) is my own’, she writes, ‘as for the Words and Characters, I leave the Reader to judge and compare ’em with Thomaso, to whom I recommend the great Entertainment of reading it’ (sig. M2r).

The epistle prefaced to Sir Patient Fancy (1678) announces Behn’s decision to print ‘this Play with all the impatient haste one ought to do, who would be vindicated from the most unjust and silly aspersion, Woman could invent to cast on Woman; and which only my being a Woman has procured me; That it was Baudy’ (sig. A1f). The second reason for hastening the edition was Behn’s desire to deal with fresh allegations of theft:

Others to show their breeding (as Bays saves,) cryed it was made out of at least four French Plays, when I had but a very bare hint from one, the Malad Imagenere, which was given me translated by a Gentleman infinitely to advantage: but how much of the French is in this, I leave to those who do indeed understand it and have seen it at the Court, (sig. A1f-v)
In a vein reminiscent of the letter to Emily Price and the recent postscript to *The Rover*, Behn invites a comparison between the original and the copy. She protests, moreover, that her sex, and the fact that she writes for money, make her an obvious target for all kinds of unpleasant accusations (sig. A1v). This complaint, also voiced elsewhere, has misled some modern interpreters. Rather than taking it as a valid reflection on her position in the marketplace, we should recognize it as a ploy, on Behn’s part, to manipulate her gender and professional status to her own advantage. Her being a woman trying to live by the pen could, and often did, work in her favour. If some contemporary commentators equated women writers with prostitutes or condemned them for plagiarism, others rose to their defence. More than one male critic did so for Behn. Charles Gildon affirmed that ‘she excell’d not only all that went before her of her own Sex, but great part of her Contemporary Poets of the other’ (*Lives*, 9). ‘Her Theatrical Performances’, declared the preface to the first collected edition of her plays in 1702, ‘have entitled her to such a distinguishing Character in that way, as exceeds That of any of the Poets of this Age, Sir William Davenant and Mr. Dryden excepted.’ The anonymous editor, almost certainly a man, confronted the issue of theft directly:

Some of the Envious have charg’d her with Plagianism in her Plays; but it must be acknowledg’d on her behalf, That she never borrows without improving for the better, which the greatest Poets of the Age lie under the same Imputation. Not to mention that she was necessitated to write for Bread, and through Haste was often times obliged to borrow, where her own Wit and Fancy could have supply’d her plentifully, if she had leisure to pursue it. (sig. A2v)

The unmistakable echo of Behn’s own words attests to the effectiveness of her rhetorical strategies.
Behn’s male colleagues were not exempt from censure. John Crowne’s two-part heroic drama, *The Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus Vespasian*, although resoundingly successful when it opened at Drury Lane in January 1677, was heavily criticized. Crowne’s portrayal of the ill-fated passion of the Roman emperor Titus for the Jewish queen Berenice was seen by some as unduly indebted to Jean Racine whose *Bérénice* had premièred at Paris in November 1670. ‘Some Persons accused me of stealing the parts of *Titus* and *Berenice* from the French Play written by Mr. Racine on the same subject’, Crowne complained in the preface to the published text of *The Destruction of Jerusalem*, ‘but a Gentleman having lately translated that Play, and exposed it to publick view on the Stage, has saved me that labour, and vindicated me better that I can my self’ (Part I, sig. a2v). Thomas Otway had indeed supplied the Duke’s Company with a compressed, three-act version of Racine the previous autumn. Paired with another translation from the French, the farcical *The Cheats of Scapin*, Otway’s *Titus and Berenice* enjoyed a prosperous run at Dorset Garden around November 1676. Because Otway has translated Racine’s play, and audiences have had a chance to see it, the difference between his play and Racine’s is now, Crowne suggests, common knowledge. Otway’s translation has ‘vindicated’ him.

Crowne distinguishes between the alternative modes in which he and Otway appropriate foreign matter. ‘I wou’d not be asham’d to borrow’, he asserts, ‘if my occasions compell’d me, from any rich Author: But all Foreign Coin must be melted down, and receive a new Stamp, if not an addition of Metal, before it will pass current in *England*, and be judged Sterling’ (sigs. a2v–a3r). As the metaphors of melting and recoining suggest, there is nothing inherently wrong in resorting to imported material provided that it be modified, enriched, and adjusted to meet local tastes and conventions. Racine’s (p.68) compatriots had berated his lack of invention in *Bérénice*; by English standards, the Frenchman’s dramatic economy was an even more serious drawback. Otway’s abridged rendition of *Bérénice* proved too slender to stand alone in the bill and required a farcical afterpiece to fill out the evening’s entertainment. By contrast, *The Destruction of Jerusalem* weaves the royal romance into a multi-textured tapestry replete with love affairs, military campaigns, clashes between alien cultures, and furnished with song, spectacular scenery, and a ghost. In this tragic extravaganza, Crowne maintains, Titus and Berenice are effectively eclipsed by the hero of his own devising, the Parthian king Phraartes: ‘as great Gallants as they have been in *France*, and as good a shew as they have made in *England*, [Titus and Berenice] have not such a substantial Fortune to maintain them for future Ages, but I am afraid will be reduced to depend on *Phraartes* for a livelihood’ (sig. a2v). In the aftermath of Crowne’s intervention, the French lovers must submit to English rule.
In the season of 1676–7, the number and intensity of public denunciations of theft soared. Alongside Shadwell, Behn, and Crowne, Thomas D’Urfey was another casualty. ‘For the Play I can say nothing’, D’Urfey wrote in the dedication of his *A Fond Husband* (1677) to the Duke of Ormonde, ‘only that it was my own, though some are pleas’d to doubt the contrary’ (sig. A3r). Fourteen years later, a hostile pamphleteer tossed this assertion back at D’Urfey as a preliminary to demolishing his claim to *Love for Money; or, The Boarding School* (1691): ‘I remember that in your Dedication to the *Fond Husband*, you assure your Patron it is your Own, tho’ some are pleas’d to doubt the contrary; and it grieves me to tell you...they cannot think this last yours neither.’

The title of the satirical tract in which the attack appeared, *Wit for Money: or, Poet Stutter*, is doubly suggestive. For one thing, it parodies the title of D’Urfey’s new comedy, *Love for Money* For another, it cleverly foreshadows the portrayal of the dramatist as a bungling purloiner of plots and humours. Vexed by the failure of *The Banditti* in 1686, D’Urfey dedicated the play to ‘To the Extreme Witty, and Judicious Gentleman, Sir Critick-Cat-call’ (sig. a3v), a choice gleefully exploited by his present adversary. *Wit for Money* is dedicated to (p.69) D’Urfey by ‘Sir Critick Catcall’ who recommends that he ‘have it made into a Play’ (sig. A1v). Under the pretence of fulsome eulogy, the dedication exposes the poet’s barrenness of invention for which he compensates by recycling familiar storylines: ‘The Plot he leaves to you, who have such a Collection of yours and other mens in your head, your Invention seldom coming so short of Imagination, but that the supply of a good memory makes you amends’ (sig. A2v). Wit and language, too, fall prey to D’Urfey’s mercenary peri. ‘Here I should enlarge upon your Merits’, continues the bogus encomiast, ‘But above all, the fluidity of your Style, and your Laborious Industry in tacking together pieces and remnants of Plots and Humours, and making them your own for the diversion of those who had never seen them, in the state of their first Creation’ (sig. A2v). D’Urfey's custom, the pseudonymous dedicator suggests, is to range widely in search of usable materials. In order to disguise his gleanings, he says, the playwright makes a few perfunctory changes and claims the final product as his own.
D’Urfey's trespasses are enumerated in the main body of the pamphlet. *Wit for Money* is a dialogue between two men of sense, Smith and Johnson, joined by the asinine scribbler Stutter, his very name a gibe at D’Urfey's well-known speech defect. Seasoned veterans of *The Rehearsal* and its plentiful issue, Smith and Johnson tease, taunt, and abuse Stutter to his face; he parries and denies the insults as best he can, but in exasperated asides confesses the veracity of their accusations. Stutter is sweepingly chastised for mangling whatever he appropriates. ’The best fancy or plot Midwif’d by him into the World’, exclaims Smith, ‘will either be crippled, or at the best look like a Child half starv’d at Nurse’ (p. 10). This blanket condemnation does not prevent his detractors from reflecting on Stutter's deliberately varied methods of appropriation. They observe that he concocts plays by stringing together bits and pieces from a number of obscure scripts. Confident that discovery is unlikely, Stutter insists on his proprietorial stake in, for instance, *Love for Money*: ’I challenge any of the Criticks, tho’ my constant and inveterate Enemies, to tell me of one single thing in the Plot, or Conversation of it, but what is Genuine, my own, and no Mans else’ (p. 13). Not until confronted with the original of his plot—Behn's *The City Heiress*—does he let the mask slip: ’Zoones, ’tis much like it, I must confess... (aside.) Pray Heaven some other malicious prying Book-monger may’n’t find it out—Besides, ’twill never be acted again, ’twas one of the Tory Plays, which won’t do now the tide’s turn’d’ (p. 14). Stutter's aside epitomizes the outlook of a covert appropriator: he takes for granted the scarcity of printed copies of the source play or plays whose stage-life had been cut short by the ‘Glorious’ Revolution and counts on their permanent exclusion from the repertory.

D’Urfey's revampings of Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Chapman called for a readjustment of the rules of appropriation. Shrewdly, he acknowledged his debt to these more illustrious predecessors even as he emphasized the greater compatibility of his versions with the dramatic fads of the day. The sense that an old play has been updated and, as it were, resuscitated by the modern author is conjured by the quasi-apologetic epilogue to *Trick for Trick* (1678), a comedy made over from Fletcher's *Monsieur Thomas*:

[The Poet] bids me say, the less to show his Guilt,  
On the Foundation *Fletcher* laid, he built;  
New drest his Modish Spark fit to be shown,  
And made him more Debauch’d, t’oblige the Town.  
(sig. 14v)

Likewise, the prologue to *A Common-Wealth of Women* (1686), ’Spoken by Mr. Hains with a Western Scyth in his Hand’, playfully coerces the audience into accepting this adaptation of Fletcher's *The Sea Voyage*:

From the West, as Champion in defence of Wit,  
I come, to mow you Critticks of the Pit,
Who think we’ve not improv’d what Fletcher Writ.
(sig.A4v)

The prologue to another of his Fletcherian derivations, *A Fools Preferment* (1688), based on *The Noble Gentleman*, announces: ‘From Famous Fletchers Hint, this piece was made’ (sig. A4r). D’Urfey subsequently repeats the acknowledgement, albeit with a shift of emphasis, in the epistle dedicatory: ‘As to the Play, I will only say this of it, the first hint was taken from an old Comedy of Fletchers; and as it was improv’d, and several new Humours added, it was generally lik’d before the Acting’ (sig. A2v). When addressing the spectators in the theatre, D’Urfey seeks to capitalize on the popularity of Fletcher’s other pieces currently in the repertory; in the published epistle, he underlines the obsolescence of the source which has now been supplanted by his version.

The original prologue and epilogue to *The Injured Princess* (1682), D’Urfey’s revision of *Cymbeline*, have been lost, but, judging from the addresses to the audience in other Shakespearian adaptations produced during the Exclusion Crisis, Shakespeare is likely to have been named in one or both of them. *Cymbeline* had been assigned to the King’s Company in the Lord Chamberlain’s order of January 1669 (LC 5/12, pp. 212–13), but there is no record that the play was ever revived. By contrast, George Chapman’s *Bussy d’Ambois*, which is listed in the same order, and which D’Urfey reworked in 1691, had been one of the first pieces mounted after the Restoration; it continued in active repertory well into the 1670s. No wonder, then, that in adapting this piece, D’Urfey was more circumspect about advancing his authorial claim. Instead of using the formula ‘Written by’, the title-page advertised his *Bussy* as ‘Newly Revised by Mr. D’Urfey’.

In the printed dedication, D’Urfey elaborates on his motives for rewriting Chapman’s tragedy. He traces his fascination with the play to Charles Hart’s distinguished performance of the title role; the virtuosity of the actor, D’Urfey affirms, cast into shadow the deficiencies of the antiquated script. For Chapman’s original abounds in ‘obsolete Phrases and intolerable Fustian’ which D’Urfey professes to ‘have altered in these new Sheets’. ‘I presumed to revise it’, he tells the dedicatee (and so the readers of the published text), ‘and writ the Plot new’ (sig. A2v). Thus rejuvenated, *Bussy d’Ambois* has furnished a star vehicle for a performer of the new generation, William Mountfort, who ‘though he was modestly very diffident of his own Action, coming after so great a Man as Mr. Hart, yet had that Applause from the Audience, which declared their Satisfaction, and with which I am sure he ought to be very well contented’ (sig. A2v).
In spite of this policy of acknowledgement and justification, D’Urfey’s pillage of native masterpieces was deemed reprehensible by some contemporaries. ‘Witness his laying violent hands on Shakespear and Fletcher, whose Plays he hath altered so much for the worse’ (p. 10), cries out Smith, one of the poet’s tormentors in Wit for Money. Stutter is then coaxed into reiterating the puffed-up avowals of improvement familiar from D’Urfey’s prologues, epilogues, and printed epistles. (p.72) ‘Ay, what a wretched thing it was before I mended it’, he observes about Chapman’s Bussy, ‘tis pity Tragedy doth not take in this Age, or else ‘twould overtop your All for Love, Oedipus, &c.’ (pp. 23–4). In response to some more prodding, this time from Johnson—‘All that’s good in the Play must be yours, and what’s bad Chapmans’—Stutter bursts into extravagant self-commendation:

Being in haste, I overlookt some of the old stuff, and could not well avoid it, for had I taken it all out, there had remained nothing old in the Play but the Name, and I had done like the fellow who bought him a new outside to his Lining, and a new Lining to his outside; tho I as much hate to wear an Authors old Socks, as to sing anothers words, a fault you’ll seldom find me guilty of. There is a great deal of Art in altering a Play for the better, and you may almost as soon make an old face look young again; but I think no old Author ever suffer’d much under my hands. (pp. 24–5)

Mockery and irony aside, this ejaculation illustrates genuine problems and dilemmas involved in adapting old plays. If the original is seriously flawed, why should anyone bother rewriting it? Equally, if the new script is a wholesale revision, and both the words and the plot are new, then its affinity with the source is too tenuous to sustain. Again, what is the likelihood that the vaunted ‘alterations and amendments’ will enhance the appeal of a play that is, by the standards of the age, quite passé? The pamphlet’s appraisal of D’Urfey’s exploits in this last realm is scathing: ‘when [the old Authors] have been as it were Bedridden, and confin’d in Closets to the Dead Letter half an Age’, Johnson notes with distaste, ‘you bring them on the Stage Singing and Dancing like mad.’ ‘You have found out the Transfusion of Wit and Style’, he adds, ‘better than the Physicians have done that of the Blood’ (p. 25).
Published in 1691, the same year as *Wit for Money*, Gerard Langbaine's *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets* savages D'Urfey's aspirations to authorial glory, but without resort to satire. Armed with names, titles, and a list of examples, Langbaine is a formidable adversary. He relentlessly debunks D'Urfey's 'presumptuous' epistle to *A Fool's Preferment* 'where he arrogates to himself a Play, which was writ by another, and owns only a hint from an old Comedy of Fletcher's, when the whole Play is in a manner transcrib'd from the *Noble Gentleman*, abating the Scene that relates to Basseti which is borrow'd from a late translated Novel, call'd *The Humours of Basset*’ (p. 181). He methodically exposes *A Common-Wealth of Women* as (p.73) 'Fletcher's Sea-Voyage reviv'd, with the Alteration of some few Scenes; tho' what is either alter'd or added may be as easily discern'd from the Original, as Patches on a Coat from the main Piece’ (p. 180). 'The Design and the Language' of *The Injured Princess* are 'borrow'd from a Play call'd the *Tragedy of Cymbeline*’ (p. 182); and *Trick for Trick* is 'only Fletchers Monsieur Thomas reviv'd: tho' scarce at all acknowledg'd by our Author' (p. 184).

Although D'Urfey repeatedly asserted his claim to the plays published under his name and boasted of their generic and thematic variety, damaging indictments of his appropriative playwriting were to persist after his death. Eventually, the writer came to enjoy, in Michael Dobson's apt words, 'a shadowy existence in the discourse of eighteenth-century criticism as the very personification of derivative smut'. The tenor of the animadversions advanced by Langbaine, by the anonymous author of *Wit for Money*, and by other critics and pamphleteers, illustrates the negative attitudes to appropriation at the end of the seventeenth century. Stutter alias D'Urfey speaks for his fellow playwrights when he admits that 'to have the honour of inventing my Characters and Humours taken from me, is such a thing, as I am sure no author can bear; the name of Plagiary is more odious to me than that of Whore to a virtuous Woman, or the imputation of Cowardise to a Man of Honour' (p. 17). Contemporary dramatists dreaded the contumely and loss of reputation that followed on allegations of theft. Their fears, anxieties, and worries found expression in increasingly self-conscious, even neurotic, apologias.

Peter Motteux's preface to *Love's a Jest* (1696) is an example. Motteux's predicament recalls that of Sir Robert Howard in *The Great Favourite*: he was rumoured to have utilized (and profited from) an anonymous manuscript in the possession of one of the companies. John Verbruggen, an actor in Betterton's rebel troupe at Lincoln's Inn Fields, gave Motteux 'two Acts suppos'd to be written by a person now dead', and asked him to expand them into a stageable script (sig. A3v). The result was *Love's a Jest*, a highly entertaining and successful comedy with elements of farce. To Motteux's dismay, shortly after the première 'some People either maliciously or through a mistake have reported that the two first Acts are not mine’ (sig. A4r).
In his prompt self-defence, Motteux deploys conventional prefatory ruses but badly fails to make them cohere. He deprecates the two ready-made acts, yet, in a glaring non sequitur, discloses his willingness to use them as a foundation for his play: ‘Though there is no manner of Business in ‘em, nor the least prospect of any, I lik’d them so well as to continue ‘em and fit a Plot to ‘em.’ The scenario Motteux retrospectively constructs is wildly implausible. His continuation of the manuscript supplied by Verbruggen, he claims, proved of sufficient length and cohesion to qualify for production in its own right, which enabled him to dispense with the anonymous draft altogether:

I was oblig’d to make my three Acts so very long, that (when I brought ‘em to be acted) without the other two, they were found to exceed by above an Act the due length of a Play. This oblig’d me not only to strike out intirely Mr. Verbruggens two Acts, but to shorten mine, and with some alterations make ‘em five. (sig. A3v)

This repudiation is followed by a fresh volte-face: now Motteux maintains that he has deliberately forborne incorporating the received portion of the script into Love’s a Jest so as to ‘use those two Acts another time: (For, I think ‘em too pretty to be lost).’

That is not all. Motteux proceeds to style himself as a forthright appropriator: what he borrows he owns. To drive the point home, he acknowledges his indebtedness to an Italian play ‘for the hint of the two Scenes where Love is made in Jest, and also for some Speeches and Thoughts here and there’. He recognizes an obligation to give credit to the first begetter of the borrowed materials: ‘were their Author known’, he proclaims, ‘I wou’d name him.’ (The appraisal of the play in A Comparison Between the Two Stages is pithy: ‘This is a French Author’s, but his Thefts are from the Italian, p. 27.) Up to this point Motteux has been able to control his temper, if not the logic of his argument. The remainder of the preface, however, is a bizarre, unmitigated rant; a few lines will suffice to convey its flavour:

Nor will I value the base and notoriously false Insinuations of envious impotent Poetasters, and, least of all, those of a pitiful conceited noisie scribling wou’d-be-quack, below naming...Had I but room, I wou’d stigmatize that Brace of Libellers; for how despicable soever such Scoundrels may be, they are to be fear’d as well as hated; for, what is more to be hated than a profess’d Lyar, or more to be fear’d than a publick Slanderer. (sig. A4v)

The sense of personal injury and the consequent sapping of his public image as a writer compelled a printed outpouring which Motteux probably came to regret.
In the 1690s and 1700s, then, charges of theft and authors’ retorts to them abound. ‘Some wou’d have the World believe, that what I now Offer you is Spurious, and not the Product of my own Labour’, writes Colley Cibber while proferring his first comedy, *Love's Last Shift* (1696), to Richard Norton (sig. A2v).

‘This Dedication were little better than an Affront’, he continues, ‘unless I cou’d with all Sincerity assure you, Sir, that the Fable is intirely my own; nor is there a Line or Thought, throughout the Whole, for which I am Wittingly oblig’d either to the Dead, or Living’ (sig. A3r). The attacks on his later *The Careless Husband* (1705), Cibber says in the dedicatory epistle to that comedy, likewise involved ‘the Old Good Nature that was offer’d to my First Play, viz. That it was none of my own’ (sig. A1r). 62 ‘Some have already done me the Honour to say, that it was not all Mine’, complained William Burnaby in the preface to *The Reform’d Wife* (1700) (sig. A3r). One member of the public whose query was cited in the *London Mercury* for 29 February 1692 wondered ‘Whether it be more scandalous for a Poet to borrow his Wit and Characters from another person, or to be reduced to the necessity of stealing from himself?’ Another, who addressed himself to the *Athenian Mercury* on 7 May of the same year, enquired: ‘How has a late Author got clear of your last accusation of Plagiarism?’ By the close of the seventeenth century, the ethics of appropriation, which in the past had exercised only practitioners of the stage and perhaps a few theatre buffs, had become a matter of popular interest.

The scrutiny to which plays were increasingly subjected did not prevent writers from reusing extant materials. Conscious that by doing so they might incur allegations of plagiarism, playwrights sought to validate their manner of taking from sources. The rhetoric of authorship which developed in the period entailed speaking of one's work and its constituent parts (characters, scenes, plots, humours, language, and so on) in explicitly proprietorial terms. In order to underwrite one's claim to a play, it was essential to (p.76) emphasize the investment of labour involved in the transformation of a source or sources into a new and superior artistic entity, that is, in the turning of raw materials into property.

Sources and their Legitimacy
Not all texts were seen as equally ‘raw’, malleable, pliable, and susceptible to appropriation. Not all were deemed worthy of being dramatized. Even as the pressure on playwrights to rationalize their borrowings mounted, attitudes to particular types of sources changed. At the outset of the eighteenth century to dramatize an episode derived from history, from a romance, or from a novel was an enterprise radically different from what it had been half a century earlier. The same was true of adaptation of an English or a foreign play. Some materials previously regarded as suitable or desirable, such as romances, seemed less appealing. Others, such as native classics or continental scripts, were being reworked and justified in new ways. Each class of sources generated its distinct model of appropriation, a model which was itself ridden with tensions. My task in the remaining part of this chapter will be to chart and elucidate these shifting criteria of the acceptability of sources.

The principal narrative sources of Restoration drama were romances, novels, and historical accounts. Early in the period, romances were valued highly. In 1652, when theatres remained firmly closed, a young translator of a French romance recommended that it be ‘insoul[ed]…for the Stage’. Though his call seems to have gone unheeded, numerous foreign romances and a few English ones were ransacked by Restoration playwrights in search of subject-matter. Indeed, the first piece premièred on the Restoration stage, Sir William Killigrew’s Selindra which opened in 1662, was specifically proffered to the female spectators as ‘A longe Romance, contracted to a Playe’. Fifteen years later John Banks still courted a favourable reception of his The Rival Kings: or The Loves of Oroondates and Statira (1677), based on an episode in Gauthier de Costes de la Calprenéde’s Cassandra, by reminding the ladies

How with Cassandra's fam'd Romance ye were pleas'd;
How many nights 't has kept you long awake,
Nay and have wept for Oroondates sake.
(prologue, sig. a2v)

As late as 1706, in his dedication of Perolla and Izadora to Charles Boyle, Colley Cibber professes to have found the ‘Fam’d Romance of Parthenissa by his dedicatee's grandfather, the first Earl of Orrery, ‘so irresistably Inviting, that I cou’d not help Aspiring...in this Attempt of Forming it into a Tragedy’ (sig. A2r).
Though they continued to be extensively exploited, from the 1670s onwards romances were increasingly judged too far-fetched in their themes and characterization to produce satisfactory plays. Writers of romances were dismissed as ‘Adulterators of true History with Romantic entreagues of Love’; those who dramatized such stories were decried for portraying ‘a World nothing akin to humane kind’. 65 ‘’Tis in this particular a Play differs from a Romance’, wrote another commentator, ‘One is the representation of humane Nature, the other represents Nature on the Rack; One shews us what we are, the other shews us what we never can be.’ 66 Early eighteenth-century writers recalled with distaste their forefathers’ fondness for romantic drama. ‘After the Restoration of King Charles, Rhyme and Romance bore universal Sway; Sense was made subservient to Gingle, and Truth fell a Sacrifice to Knights in Armour’, wrote the editor of Orrery’s Dramatic Works in 1739. ‘Our juster Age’, he continued, ‘has flung off the Chains of Rhyme, and has despised the Follies of Romance’ (vol. i, p. iv).

Even as their artistic merit was being questioned, borrowings from romances came to be seen as theft. Contrasting his Epsom-Wells and The Virtuoso with Dryden’s serious plays, Shadwell pointedly emphasized that his comedies were not taken ‘from a Novel, or stollen from a Romance’. 67 In the epilogue to The Squire of Alsatia (1688), he mocked those who relish ‘fond, unnatural extravagancies, | Stolen from the (p.78) silly Authors of Romances’ (p. 88). 68 No longer fit for the ladies, such fare is, Shadwell implied, at best ‘the Chambermaids diversion’.

Allegations of theft from romances were occasionally made by women. For women were the principal consumers of romance literature—much of it in translation—and well placed to perceive the debt. Some female spectators, entering the male domain of dramatic criticism, publicly expressed their reservations about plays derived from romances. They did not have the requisite knowledge and expertise to comment on adaptations from the classics; with romances they felt on safer ground. Edward Filmer, whose The Unnatural Brother (1697) was a flop, complained that ‘On the third day, there was a certain Lady in one of the Boxes, who thought she could not more effectually decry it, than by declaring aloud that it was nothing but an old Story taken out of Cassandra’ (sig. A2v). ‘And I readily grant it’, he wrote, ‘yet can by no means allow that to be a fault. Mr. Dryden has said too much in the defence of such an innocent piece of theft, and extremely well justified the thing, both by his Arguments, and Practice’ (sig. A2v). Dryden had indeed defended the author’s right to dramatize romance sources, most overtly in the preface to An Evening’s Love published in 1671, but by the 1690s the ‘theft’ no longer seemed ‘innocent’.
The Proprieties of Appropriation

Because of their ostensibly firmer grounding in fact and their greater circumstantial accuracy, the plots of novels were considered more acceptable than those of romances. (The distinction between the two forms was not always consistently made in the period, but for my purposes, it is sufficient that novels were widely seen as less fanciful in their plots and characterization than romances.) The connection between the play and its novelistic source was not always uncomplicated. Some writers set out to surprise their audience in dramatic versions of popular continental novels. By preserving the original title, the general outline of the plot, and the names of some of the characters, they would ensure an instant recognition of the source. Yet the pleasure of recognition would be dispelled by the adapter's divergence in focus and characterization. Nathaniel Lee's *The Princess of Cleve* remodeled Mme de Lafayette's novel *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678), which had been rendered into English as *The Princess of Cleve* in 1679. Commenting in his dedication on the ill success of ‘this Farce, Comedy, Tragedy, or mere Play’, Lee admitted that ‘when they expected the most polish’d Hero in Nemours, I gave ’em a Ruffian reeking from Whetstone’s-Park’. Lee's spectators had been compelled to re-examine their assumptions about the original in light of what was made of it on the stage, and did not like the result.

Prior to the 1690s, dramatists did not signal their dependence on novels with any regularity; from that time onwards printed acknowledgements of such debts are common. ‘I stand engag’d to Mrs. Behn for the Occasion of a most Passionate Distress in my last Play [The Fatal Marriage’], writes Thomas Southerne in the dedication to *Oroonoko* (1696), ‘and in a Conscience that I had not made her a sufficient Acknowledgment, I have run further into her Debt for *Oroonoko*’ (sig. A2v). Similarly, in the preface to her *She Ventures, and He Wins* (1696), ‘Ariadne’ explains that ‘The Plot was taken from a small Novel; which, I must needs own, had Design and Scope enough to have made an excellent Play, had it met with the good Fortune to have fall’d into better Hands’ (sig. A2v). Typically, the source is credited with furnishing no more than a hint or a storyline. These efforts to disavow the appropriation of words as distinct from plot may be seen as a response to recent critical tirades against the seizure of another’s language as morally reprehensible. Seeking to capitalize on the renown of Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, Thomas D’Urfey publicized the pedigree of his three-part adaptation (I–II, 1694; III, 1696) both in the theatre and in print. He took particular pride in ‘the Character of Mary the Buxom, which was intirely my own, and which I was not obliged to the History at all for’ (preface to Part II, sig. A2v), and advertised the third (and least fortunate) instalment as *The Comical History of Don Quixote...With the Marriage of Mary the Buxome* (1696). Even so, a hostile critic ascribed the success of D’Urfey's first two parts to ‘honest Miguel Cervantes, who gave him not only the Story, but the very Words’; another derided his Don Quixote as a ‘Stolen Heroe’.
Romances, as we have seen, were decried for perverting history. Historical chronicles, by contrast, were held to provide legitimate groundwork on which to raise a play. There was, however, one important caveat: the dramatist must seek poetic rather than factual truth and, in accordance with Aristotle’s teachings, opt for the probable rather than the real. ‘Truth is the foundation, Fiction makes the accomplishment’, was how the precept was formulated in Rene Rapin’s *Reflections on Aristotle's Treatise of Poesie*, which had been rendered into English by Thomas Rymer.73 ‘Truth represents things onely as they are’, the translation ran, ‘but probability renders them as they ought to be’ (p. 34). ‘What ever is pertinently said by way of Allegorie is Morally though not Historically true’, wrote Edward Phillips in the preface to *Theatrum Poetarum* (sig. **6r**). Three years later Rymer restated the dogma in *The Tragedies of the Last Age* (1678)—‘Poetry requires the *ben trovato*, something *handsomely invented* and leaves the *truth to History*’—and castigated Beaumont and Fletcher for having represented ‘foul, unpleasant, and unwhol-some *truth*’.74 In 1702, the critical commonplace reappeared in a more sprightly vein in *A Comparison Between the Two Stages*, a pamphlet conceived as a ‘A Dialogue between Ramble and Sullen, two Gentlemen, and Chagrin a Critick’. ‘If you are for having every thing in a Play as we have it in reality, that is, according to strict Truth or Probability’, argued Ramble, ‘a Poet has no more to do than an Historian: Alass, you must allow for Invention, Accidents, Surprizes, Disappointments, Passions and Adventures unexpected, and what (p.81) not? Without these a Play will troll on as sleepily as a Sermon or a School Declamation’ (p. 146).

Although they advocated the adaptation of historical incidents, contemporary commentators were averse to major departures from fact. Phillips inveighed against ‘shamefull ignorance in Chronologic’ and ‘irregular and boundless licence in Poetical fiction’; Rymer protested that ‘mangl’d, abus’d, undigested, interlarded History on our Stage impiously assumes the sacred name of Tragedy.’75 There was truth in these charges. Under pressure to conform to decorum and poetic justice, and eager to make their plots exciting to the audience, playwrights took prodigious liberties with the past. The ‘strange history’ featured on the Restoration stage has been well summed up by Curt A. Zimansky. ‘Solyman the Magnificent’, he says, ‘conquers Hungary, an Inca general becomes emperor of Mexico, and there are palace revolutions among the Sungs and the Moguls.’76 Zimansky notes that improving upon the native past was more open to objection than embroidering the chronicles of distant lands and climes. Edward Ravenscroft, for one, sought to anticipate criticism of his fanciful redaction of events from English history in a precautionary epilogue to *King Edgar and Alfreda* (1677). ‘But do not now impute it for a Crime’, he pleads, ‘That we do mention Guns in *Edgars* time’,

Nor let the Critick that is deeply read 
In *Baker, Stow, and Hollinshead*,
Cry Dam me, the Poet is mistaken here,
For *Ethelwold* was kill’d hunting the Deer.
To these Objections this he bid me say,
They writ a Chronicle, but he a Play.
Poets may as they please with Truth make bold,
And Stories to the best advantage mould.
How easily might the Remedy have been,
By alt’ring Names, or changing of the Scene?

In the printed edition of the play, ‘Instead of a *Preface*,’ Ravenscroft treats the reader ‘with the *Life of Edgar*, as I find it in our *English Chronicles*’ (sig. A2r). ‘I have introduced new Persons to raise a Plott’, he says, ‘and vary’d from the *Chronicle*, to better the Character of the (p.82) King’ (sig. a1r). Ravenscroft has absolved Edgar from complicity in the murder of Ethelwold, his disloyal servant and now husband to Alfreda, who ‘receives his death from another hand, whence it appears just, yet accidental’ (sig. a1v).

77 Mrs Manley too advertised the unhistorical downfall of Homais, the sinister heroine of *The Royal Mischief* (1696). ‘Sir John Chardin's Travels into Persia, whence I took the story’, Manley pointed out in the preface, ‘can inform the Reader, that I have done her no Injustice, unless it were in punishing her at the last; which the Historian is silent in’ (sig. A3r).
Poetic justice was not always easy to mete out. ‘I cou’d not, without a plain Contradiction to the History, punish the Instruments that made my Lovers unhappy’, Mary Pix told the dedicatee of her Queen Catharine (1698), ‘but I know your Ladyship will trace Richard the Third into Bosworth Field, and find him there, as wretched as he made Queen Catherine’ (sig. A2v). Other writers were less preoccupied with the moral economy of their plays and cited adherence to or departure from fact as the cause of their theatrical success or failure. Bewailing the ill fortune of Darius King of Persia (1688), John Crowne blamed himself for trusting to his own invention. ‘I committed a fault’, he admits, ‘in not taking the whole Story; but leaving out Queen Statira, and her two Daughters, Highborn Princesses, well known to the World, whose misfortunes wou’d have probably mov’d more compassion, than those of a strange Lady, obscurely descended from my Fancy, which I have introduc’d in their stead’ (dedication, sig. a2v). Ten years later Crowne ascribed the cold reception of Caligula (1698) to his faithfulness to Roman history, which the Town had failed to appreciate. ‘All the Characters and most of the Events in the Play’, he claims, ‘I have taken out of History.’ Ignorant of its grounding in fact, he says, the audience ‘condemn’d the Character of Vitellius; his flattery to the Emperor and courtship to the Empress’ (sig. A4r). William Philips attempted a similar vindication of The Revengeful Queen (1698). ‘The best defence I can make’, he said in the preface, ‘is, that I have follow’d the truth of the Story, as any one will find, who will take the Pains to read it in the Fourth or Fifth Page of Machiavel’s History of Florence’ (sig. A2r). Elkanah Settle suggested that the factual basis of the main plot made his Distress’d Innocence: or, The Princess of Persia (1691) more literary, and therefore better reading: ‘for some Recommendation to the Reader, whatever Fiction I have elsewhere interwoven, the Distresses of Hormidas and Cleomira are true History’ (dedication, sig. A3r).

To draw a play from history became a risky proposition in times of heightened political unrest such as the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis or the Revolution of 1688–9. The dramatization of any historical figure, incident, or situation could turn explosive if their representation on the stage elicited a comparison with the political actors and developments of the day. This potential for political application, some insisted, ought to be weighed by the author when selecting historical materials, that is, well before composition began. A Comparison Between the Two Stages approvingly cited one writer’s decision not to dramatize ‘the Story of Edward the Second recommended to him for a Subject’. ‘The Chronicle of that Reign is the most moving in the whole History of our Kings’, observed the Critick, ‘and might be finely hightned by a good Poet; but after he read the Story, he saw it very improper for these Times, and said it was impossible to touch such a Subject without some allusions that wou’d render him Guilty, and so he threw it by’ (p. 129).
Retaliating against imputations of topical intent, authors of silenced or censored plays explained their treatment of history at length. They used two sets of arguments. Some dramatists tried to justify tendentious departures from historical fact by professing to have had decorum, verisimilitude, and poetic justice in view. This was the ploy pursued by Nahum Tate in the 'Prefatory Epistle in Vindication of the Author' in the printed edition of his The History of King Richard the Second (1681), which had been banned, illicitly acted under the title of The Sicilian Usurper, and ultimately suppressed by the Lord Chamberlain on the third night of its opening run. Tate claims to have derived his play from Shakespeare's Richard II, but also to have consulted historical chronicles. Shakespeare's rendition of historical characters is, Tate emphasizes, unadorned—'Our Shakespear in this Tragedy, bated none of his Characters an Ace of the Chronicle…His King Richard Himself is painted in the worst Colours of History'—and contrasts it with his own much-attenuated portrayal of the king (sig. A1r). 'I have every where given him the Language of an Active, Prudent Prince', he says, 'Nor cou'd it suffice me to make him speak like a King (who as Mr. Rhymer says in his Tragedies of the last Age considered, are always in Poetry presum’d Heroes) but to Act so too, viz. with Resolution and Justice' (sig. A2r). Tate compares passages in Shakespeare's play with the corresponding ones in his own to show the difference. Though the changes are ostensibly motivated by a concern with dramatic decorum, Tate's admission of having done such 'Violence to…Truth' that 'not one alter’d Page but what breaths Loyalty' (sig. A2v) shows that he had anticipated an application of the story to the Exclusion Crisis.

In contrast to Tate, Elkanah Settle freely admitted, in the dedication of The Female Prelate (1680) to the Whig leader the Earl of Shaftesbury, that his additions to the story of Pope Joan were meant as a reflection on the Catholics of succeeding ages, especially the papists of the late 1670s:

'tis your Lordship's unmasking of Rome that gave me the Light to chuse my Story…But if any of my Critical Readers should tell me that I have laid more to the charge of my Petticoat-Pope than Story will warrant…I have onely this way to make my Excuse, and rectifie my Mistake; that is, by begging her Successors to share it amongst 'em: for there have been Birds enough of that Feather through all Ages, to challenge all the borrow’d Plumes I have given her, were they ten times as many as they are. (sig. A3r-v)
The second set of arguments disclaiming immediate topicality was directly opposed to the first. If past events are represented faithfully, some maintained, any resemblance to the present is entirely coincidental. John Banks insisted that *The Innocent Usurper; or, The Death of the Lady Jane Gray* (1694), which had been banned because of the analogy between the eponymous heroine and the recently ascended Queen Mary, ‘was written Ten Years since, just as it is now, without one tittle of Alteration, and therefore I cou’d have no other design in making choice of this Subject, but its being recommended to me by Friends, for the best Story that ever was put into a Play’ (dedication, sig. A2r). ‘In it I have follow’d nicely the Truth’, Banks asserts, ‘and it (p.85) cannot be judg’d, in that Age, when it was written, that I have interwoven any thing with an intent to pattern with these Times, unless I had been a Conjurer’ (sig. A2v). This line of reasoning, however, compromised the playwrights artistic credentials as it accorded precedence to historical over poetic truth.

Though originating in the efforts of playwrights to deflect charges of political subversion, the emphasis on historical authenticity was steadily increasing. Not infrequently, the reader was invited to compare a stage version with its source, excerpts from which might conveniently be included in the printed edition of the play.79 ‘This Play on solid History depends, | Old fashion’d stuff, true Love, and faithful Friends’, announced the prologue to Mary Pix’s *Ibrahim, The Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks* (1696) (sig. A4r). In the printed preface, Pix apologized for her ‘gross…mistake, in calling it *Ibrahim*, the Thirteenth &c.’ ‘I read some years ago, at a Relations House in the Country, Sir Paul Ricaut’s Continuation of the ‘Turkish History’, she explained, ‘I was pleas’d with the story and ventur’d to write upon it, but trusted too far to my Memory; for I never saw the Book afterwards till the Play was Printed, and then I found *Ibrahim* was the Twelfth Emperour’ (sig. A3r).
Isolated calls for serious drama set at home and featuring native heroes can be found as early as the 1660s. Only three such plays, however, were written and produced in that decade. ‘No stories merit to be known, | Nor instruct us better than our own’, declared the prologue for the Court performance of the Earl of Orrery’s The History of Henry V on 28 December 1666. Three months later, in March 1667, the audience present at the première of John Caryll’s The English Princess, or, The Death of Richard The III were told to ‘prepare | For a plain English Treat of homely Fare’. This recourse to ‘plain Hollinshead and downright Stow’ stemmed from the patriotic belief that ‘English Wit should English Valour raise’ (sig. A2v). The prologue to Orrery’s The Black Prince in October of the same year, ‘Spoken by the Genius of England, (p.86) holding a Trident in one hand and a Sword in the other’, was at once a political and cultural manifesto. It summoned the English to war against France and upbraided the poets for ‘misspend[ing their] Witt | (which my Great Deeds as Greatly might have Writt)’ (Dramatic Works, ed. Clark, i. 308, 11. 3–4). Though overtly celebratory, both prologue and epilogue—the latter addressed directly to the king—reflected a sense of frustration with the current state of affairs. Charles can have drawn scant cheer from being told that in contrast to the hero of the play, who ‘Immortal Honour…did gain, By conquering France, and by restoring Spain’, his chief exploit has been to bring ‘Three Kingdomes to Remorse, | And gain…by Vertue more then he by Force’ (i. 372, 11. 5–8).

That these calls for native subject-matter were not greeted more enthusiastically is understandable. A celebration of a nation’s glorious past and martial prowess on the stage, though on occasion designed as a form of advice to princes or as criticism of them, is generally more viable as a tribute to the present. With the embarrassments of the Dutch Wars abroad, successive crises at home, and a decidedly unheroic king, the playwrights of the 1670s and early 1680s had little to celebrate. Instead of focusing on the position of England in the international arena, they tended to explore domestic troubles under the guise of exotic and remote settings. The interest in native themes and heroes revives with William III’s wars in the 1690s. It gains momentum in the early eighteenth century when Marlborough wages victorious campaigns on the Continent and when the union with Scotland is concluded.
Both new plays and adaptations of old ones participated in this patriotic revival. The noble recipient of a revised version of Fletcher’s *Bonduca: or, The British Heroine* (1696) was assured that ‘the Present...is all our own Native Growth; the History of a British Heroine’ (sig. A2v). Similarly, the dedicatee of *King Edward the Third, With the Fall of Mortimer Earl of March* (1691), appropriately subtitled ‘An Historicall Play’, was urged to accept this ‘English Story so fam’d for the Reign of its Monarch, and the management of those few good Men about him’ (sig. A2v). Mary Pix deployed rhetoric reminiscent (p.87) of Caryll’s prelude to *The English Princess* in her prologue to *Queen Catharine* (1698): ‘A heavy English Tale to day, we show | As e’er was told by Hollingshead or Stow.’ In the 1690s, however, war was a reality, not merely wishful thinking. Though she humbly figured hers as a woman’s play, Pix slyly appealed to the patriotic sentiments of men in the audience:

> To please your martial men she must despair;  
> And therefore Courts the favour of the fair:  
> From huffing Hero’s she hopes no relief,  
> But trusts in Catharine’s Love, and Isabellas grief.  
> (sig. A3v)

The witty prologue which a friend supplied for Charles Gildon’s *Love's Victim: or, The Queen of Wales* (1701) seems to have been written to order, so apposite is its versified justification of drama based on native themes to the views expressed by Gildon in his prose writings:

> So ill our Poets have the Patriot shown  
> That they have sung all Countries but their own,  
> Old and new Greece, France, Italy, and Spain;  
> Nay distant China, and remote Japan.  
> In sooty Afric too, they’ve Hero’s found;  
> Our Vent’rous Poet makes a bold Essay  
> To show Domestic Virtue here to day,  
> And draw a generous Nation in a Play.  
> The Minor- Wits whose Malice never fails  
> May damn this Play because he sings of Wales.  
> The World of old has of her Heroes rung  
> Nor shou’d you slight the race from whence you sprung.  
> (sig. a4v)
One of the more vocal advocates of native subject-matter in drama, Gildon envisaged, in his ‘Proposal for establishing an Academy Royal for Sciences’, a two-stage process of composition: the Saxon past—‘being obscure enough to give the Poet as much room for Invention, as the fabulous Part of the Greek History did those Poets’—ought to be digested and fictionalized in novels and other narrative genres (p.88) from which playwrights might in turn derive their plots: ‘Encouragement must be given to such as shall improve the Saxon Story in little Histories, or Novels, building fine, tho’ fictitious Incidents on certain Grounds, which wou’d be a Store-house of Plots, and a great Help to the Poet’s Invention.’

Gildon was adamant that ‘none on a Foreign Story shall be admitted in Comedy, and…extremely few in Tragedy’ (p. 337).

This patriotic programme for English drama coincided with a marked shift in attitudes towards foreign sources. Playwrights in the later seventeenth century had extensively reworked continental scripts—French, Spanish, and Italian—and, to a lesser extent, had drawn upon classical drama. In the early eighteenth century the use of foreign matter showed no signs of abating. Discursive justifications of such sources, however, changed substantially. Fears that reliance on foreign plays, especially the French, amounts to a subjection to cultural colonization gradually gave way to the rhetoric of seizure and conquest. By the early eighteenth century, the troping of cross-cultural appropriation as imperial conquest was in the ascendant. At the same time, calls for native drama wholly independent of foreign sources and influences became more forceful than ever.

Adaptations of narrative sources such as historical chronicles, romances, and novels for the stage required a change of medium from narrative to dramatic. Plots, characters, and incidents which were described and narrated in a source had to be conveyed through action and dialogue. Playwrights pointed to this transformation in order to buttress their claims to authorship; their detractors often deliberately ignored the ramifications of this generic shift and advanced charges of plagiarism and lack of invention. Even when discussion of historical or romance sources focused on matters of aesthetic viability, the upshot was to draw attention to playwriting as a process of selection and appropriation of preexisting texts.
History was not an ‘authored’ text. As common cultural heritage, it could not be owned and attributed. Chroniclers had no property in their accounts of the past that a dramatic rendition might encroach upon or violate. Romance writers and novelists did possess a degree of authority over their work. This authority, however, was not held to be undermined if an episode from a (p.89) romance or a novel was turned into a play, although the adapter might be upbraided for a lack of invention. By contrast, the precarious nature of attribution of plays based on earlier plays, whether native or foreign, suggests that the dominion of the dramatic author was taken to be compromised and threatened by adaptation. This new perception of the playwright’s relationship to his or her work is manifest both in contemporary figurations of adaptation in prologues, epilogues, and prefatory epistles, and in the critical attacks on this form of appropriation.

The adaptation of Shakespeare's plays is a case in point. Modern critics have treated the late seventeenth-century propensity to alter the Shakespearean corpus as evidence of a lack of respect for the authority of the bard or of appreciation of his art. Tate's King Lear, the Dryden-Davenant Tempest, and other contemporary adaptations have repeatedly been portrayed as both aesthetic debasements of Shakespeare's works and sacrilegious violations of his symbolic property in them. Recently, Michael Dobson, Jean I. Marsden, Laura J. Rosenthal, and others have charted the construction of Shakespeare as author by exploring the adaptation of his plays in the Restoration and beyond.86 Even as they illustrate Shakespeare's authorization through adaptation, these scholars appear to accord Shakespeare's work a special status in the period when the adaptations were written. On the contrary, it should by now be clear that (p.90) the authorization of Shakespeare which gathers momentum towards the end of the seventeenth century is part of a larger conceptual transformation. The rhetoric of Shakespearian adaptation, with its identification of Shakespeare's plays with Nature, is distinctive but not unique. The retrospective conferment of prestige and status on a body of dramatic works by its association with a named individual, whose right in his or her Œuvre begins to seem inviolable, was by no means restricted to the transmission and reception of Shakespeare. Parallel forms of acknowledgement and entitlement are in evidence in adaptations of Fletcher and other writers.
Shakespearian adaptation needs to be seen in a broader cultural context. Of the many adapters of Shakespeare, we must remember, Davenant also reworked French and Spanish plays; Dryden adapted Sophocles, Corneille, and Molière, and in the last year of his life contributed a masque to a revival of Fletcher's *The Pilgrim*; Cibber altered Corneille, Fletcher, Lee, and many others; Dennis modified Tasso and Euripides; Gildon remodelled Euripides, Quinault, and Lee; D’Urfey rewrote several plays by Fletcher and one by Chapman; Crowne Anglicized Seneca, Racine, and the Spanish *No puede ser*. Early Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare and Fletcher had been barely acknowledged; the same was true of the contemporaneous revampings of Molière. In time, both Shakespeare and Fletcher were put on a par with foreign and ancient classics—Tasso, Corneille, Racine, Sophocles, Euripides—whose high reputations ensured the advertisement of their names in prologues and epilogues (and whose work was too well known to be secretly appropriated).

Michael Dobson is right to point out that Shakespeare's status as author received a boost from the political adaptations written during the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis, when to acknowledge the original to be Shakespeare's was a useful means of evading charges of risky or partisan topicality. Dobson's argument, however, offers only a partial explanation of the proliferation of such acknowledgements. They were not mere expedients of self-protection. Even as Tate, Ravenscroft, Dryden, and others were beginning to proclaim, in the late 1670s, their reliance on Shakespeare, the name of Fletcher (sometimes coupled with Beaumont) was being publicized in prologues, epilogues, and prefatory epistles to remodellings of his plays. (p. 91) Acknowledgements of foreign authors too were becoming more frequent.

Shakespeare's eventual ascent, by the mid-eighteenth century, to the national pantheon was a function of two interrelated yet distinct processes: the authorization of his corpus and its exclusive association with Englishness. While Fletcher never attained the status of a national poet, the authorization of the two writers through adaptation ran parallel courses. Shakespeare's plays were treated, well into the period, as a repository of raw material; so were Fletcher's. *The History of Timon of Athens, the Man-Hater* (1678) was advertised on the title-page as having been 'Made into a Play. By Tho. Shadwell'; in the preface to the Earl of Rochester's version of *Valentinian* (1685), Robert Wolseley affirmed that 'my Lord has made it a Play, which he did not find it' (sig. A2v). Shakespeare was repeatedly figured as the poet of Nature, and Fletcher as one in whose work Nature and Art commingled. Yet, in terms of their susceptibility to appropriation, the plays of both writers, as well as the work of more recent foreign playwrights such as Molière, were troped as 'nature' to be taken possession of and improved upon.
These tropes had long been familiar and would long remain so. As early as 1667 Richard Flecknoe had argued that by weaving several plays of Molière’s into his *The Damoiselles A La Mode* ‘I have not only done like one who makes a posie out of divers flowers in which he has nothing of his own, (besides the collection, and ordering them) (p.92) but like the *Bee*, have extracted the spirit of them into a certain Quintessence of mine own’ (preface, sig. A3'). Like Dryden, who presented his and Davenant's *The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island* as an offshoot from Shakespeare's *Tempest* (prologue, in *Works*, x. 6–7), and like Shadwell, who portrayed his *Timon* as a ‘Sciename graft upon Shakespears stock’ (epilogue, sig. M4'), Elkanah Settle, for his part, described his reworking of *Philaster* (1695) as a ‘Trifle’ validated by ‘the fairer Merit of the richer Stock I have grafted upon, the two famous Poets of the last Age, Beaumont and Fletcher, the original Parents of *Philaster* (dedication, sig. A3'). While admitting that ‘twas a Pow’r Divine first made ‘em grow’, Nahum Tate expressed a hope that ‘this Heap of Flow’rs’—Shakespeare’s *Lear*—‘shall chance to wear | Fresh Beauty in the Order they now bear’, that is, rewritten by him as *The History of King Lear* (1681) (prologue, sig. A4'). Having revised his own juvenile production, *The She-Gallants* (1696), and having published it under a new title, *Once a Lover; and Always a Lover*, George Granville professed to have 'plant[ed], as it were, fresh *Flowers* in the room of those which were grown into *Weeds*, or faded by Time' (*Genuine Works*, ii. sig. A3'). Other metaphors for adaptation such as minting, recoining, and rebuilding were likewise widely applied.

When, around the turn of the seventeenth century, the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays came under attack, so, too, did that of Fletcher's. Indeed, contemporaries saw the adaptation of Shakespeare and that of Fletcher as belonging to a single process. In the 'Advertisement to the Reader' prefixed to *The Jew of Venice* (1701), a version of *The Merchant of Venice*, Granville argued that 'Undertakings of this kind are justify’d by the Examples of those Great Men who have employ’d their Endeavours the same Way', and proceeded to cite Waller's revision of *The Maid's Tragedy*, Rochester's *Valentinian*, Buckingham's *The Chances*, the Dryden—Davenant *Tempest*, as well as *Troilus and Cressida*, *Timon*, and *King Lear*, [which] were the Works of three succeeding Laureats’ (sig. A3'). Other contemporary commentators questioned the aesthetic value of adaptations of both Shakespeare and Fletcher by professional playwrights in much the same terms and denounced the practice as unethical; revisers multiplied acknowledgements and stressed their investment of labour in overhauling old scripts.
The ownership of language came to be circumscribed in print. The original author’s property in specific words and lines was distinguished typographically from that of the adapter’s in several new versions of plays by both Shakespeare and Fletcher. Margreta de Grazia has traced to the later eighteenth century the establishment of quotation marks as a grammatical convention for marking off the words of another. If more rudimentary and erratic in scope, the use of typographical markers by adapters writing at the outset of the eighteenth century fulfilled the same function. ‘Tho’ there was no great danger of the Readers mistaking any of my lines for Shakespear’s’, wrote Colley Cibber in the preface to The Tragical History of King Richard III (1700), ‘yet, to satisfy the curious, and unwilling to assume more praise than is really my due, I have caus’d those that are intirely Shakespear’s to be Printed in this Italick Character, and those lines with this mark (’) before ‘em, are generally his thoughts, in the best dress I could afford ‘em: What is not so mark’d, or in a different Character is intirely my own’ (sig. A4⁷). In contrast to Cibber, who italicized what remained of the Shakespearian original, George Granville marked off his own interpolations into The Merchant of Venice. ‘That nothing may be imputed to Shakespear which may seem unworthy of him’, he notified the reader, ‘such Lines as appear to be markt, are Lines added, to make good the Connexion where there was a necessity to leave out; in which all imaginable Care has been taken to imitate the same fashion of Period, and turn of Stile and Thought with the Original’ (sig. A3⁵⁻⁷). In the preface to Love Betray’d (1703), a version of Twelfth Night, William Burnaby explained: ‘Part of the Tale of this Play, I took from Shakespear, and about Fifty of the Lines; Those that are his, I have mark’d with Inverted Comma’s, to distinguish ‘em from what are mine’ (sig. A2⁵). Elkanah Settle admitted, in the preface to The City Ramble (1711), that he had relied on ‘Two of the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, viz. The Knight of the Burning Pestle, and The Coxcomb’, but ‘not to rob the Dead, ev’n of the least borrow’d Plume those celebrated Authors have furnish’d me, without a particular Acknowledgment of what and where I stand indebted to them: I have set this ["] Characteristick before every Line of the Original, for the more curious Reader’s Satisfaction’ (sigs. A3⁵⁻⁷, A4⁷). The one female adapter in the period, who allowed only her initials, ‘M.N.’, to appear on the title-page of The Faithful General (1706), inserted an ‘Advertisement’ clarifying the significance of the typography of her printed quarto: ‘The Episodes are all new form’d; the main Design is alter’d; and the Language is my own; those few Lines excepted that are all distinguish’d with a Note of Quotation; most of which I have Corrected, Transpos’d, and reduc’d to Measure’ (sig. A4⁷). Such typographical distinction between meum and suum was merely the most extreme form of the acknowledgement of sources. It offered recognition to the original author (or authors) and allowed the appropriator to flaunt what was his or her own.
The change that I have been documenting occurred slowly and erratically. Charges of plagiarism had been levied in the 1660s and covert appropriation was sometimes practised after 1700. There is no doubt, however, that attitudes shifted substantially in the half-century after 1660. There was, as we have seen, a steady decade-by-decade increase in the frequency of the acknowledgement of sources. A few writers boasted of their literary debts; most were defensive about them. For any but the boldest or most shameless appropriator, acknowledgement was mandatory: however reluctant their admissions of indebtedness, writers had learnt that self-justification was wiser than risking exposure by others.

Justifications varied, but taken broadly they fall into two categories: the claims for improvement and the appeals to the stature of particular sources. To ‘improve’ one’s source was to demonstrate one’s skills, and to enhance the quality both of the current repertory and of the native dramatic tradition. To absorb ‘respectable’ sources was quite different from filching from outlandish romances or from obsolete plays. By contemporary standards, the plays of Shakespeare and Fletcher needed upgrading and modernization, even if their authors were revered in literary circles. A Dryden or a Vanbrugh created a work that was ‘better’ by the standards of the day, whatever our opinion of *Troilus and Cressida* or *The Pilgrim* may be. The modern response to Dryden’s remark about the ‘heap of Rubbish’ in Shakespeare’s *Troilus* is one of outrage and ridicule, but Dryden was speaking for his time.

By the early eighteenth century there had emerged a consensus among writers and critics that sources should be acknowledged. Those who failed to make an acknowledgement were violating the nascent proprieties of appropriation. There was also a growing agreement that when a play (whether English or foreign) was adapted for stage presentation, it should be credited to the original author, with the adapter taking credit only for revision. Attitudes towards particular kinds of sources varied and changed; so did opinions about what constituted valid justification of appropriation. Not only had the proprieties of appropriation evolved substantially from what they had been a generation earlier, they were also increasingly ‘codified’. In the 1660s the views of appropriation were scattered in prefaces and dedications. By the 1690s and 1700s they were being defined and exemplified in substantial critical and bibliographical projects such as Gerard Langbaine’s *Momus Triumphans* and his *Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, and disseminated in literary journals and anthologies. Appropriation continued to be practised on a grand scale, but attempts at covert borrowing became increasingly rare.
In 1698 Jeremy Collier threw the theatrical scene into turmoil with his *A Short View of the Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage.* We can only speculate what would have happened to dramatic criticism at the turn of the century had Collier not written. My guess is that the discussion would have focused, not on the issues of immorality and profaneness raised by him, but on the questions of plagiarism and authorial propriety which this chapter has addressed.

Notes:

(2) *The Lovers’ Progress* (Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Comedies and Tragedies* (London, 1647), 94, *The Chances, The Loyal Subject, The Womans Prize, or The Tamer Tam’d* (Loves Cure Wit at several Weapons


(7) On dramatic publication during the period 1642–60 see Wright, ‘Reading of Plays’; Kewes, “Give me the sociable Pocket-books...”; Randall, *Winter Fruit*, 229–47.


(9) John Curtis Reed, ‘Humphrey Moseley, Publisher’, *Oxford Bibliographical Society Proceedings and Papers*, 2 (1929), 60–142,


(15) Orrery, *Dramatic Works*, ed. Clark, i. 25.

(16) *London Stage*, Part I, p. 74


(19) Danchin, i. 270. ‘Toom’ is probably a misprint for ‘Loom’.

(20) Philips ‘To the Excellent Orinda’, in, Poems, sig. d2r.

(21) Cf. Abraham Cowley’s commendatory poem on Tuke’s Adventures of Five Hours in the second edition of the play in 1664: ‘W’have seen how well you forein Oar refine; | Produce the Gold of your own Nobler Mine’ (sig. A4v). Though attenuated, the sentiment recurs in An Essay on Translated Verse (London, 1684) by Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon: ‘’Tis true, Composing is the Nobler Part, | But good Translation is no easie Art’ (p. 5).

(22) Racine’s Andromache (1675), sig. A3v


(25) Alfred Harbage identifies the author as John Ford (‘Elizabethan-Restoration Palimpsest’, 297–304). The attribution has been questioned by H. J. Oliver who suggests that Ford may have written the play in collaboration with another writer, possibly James Shirley: Sir Robert Howard (1626–1698) (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1963), 140–1.

(26) The title-page of Sir William Killigrew’s The Imperial Tragedy makes a similar claim in condensed form: ‘Taken out of a Latin Play, And very much Altered: By a Gentleman for his own Diversion. Who, on the Importunity of Friends, has consented to have it Published; but without his Name: because many do censure Plays, according to their Opinions of the Author.’


(31) The postscript was omitted from the second edition in 1672 and not reprinted in the third, revised, edition in 1675.


(34) *Triumphant Widow*, Act II; p. 21


(37) *The Wild Gallant* /The Great Favourite*’Elizabethan-Restoration Palimpsest*, 304–9


(40) *Notes upon Mr. Dryden’s Poems in Four Letters* (London, 1687), 3.


(42) *The Friendly Vindication of Mr. Dryden From the Censure of the Rota by His Cabal of Wits* (Cambridge, 1673), 12, 13.

(43) *A Description of the Academy of Athenian Virtuosi: with A Discourse held there in Vindication of Mr. Dryden's Conquest of Granada; Against the Author of the Censure of the Rota* (London, 1673), 17–30.

(44) *Mr. Dreyden Vindicated, in a Reply to the Friendly Vindication of Mr. Dreyden, with Reflections On the Rota* (London, 1673), 9.


(46) Downes, 71.
(47) See also Elkanah Settle, Notes and Observations On the Empress of Morocco Revised (London, 1674); [Thomas Shadwell], The Medal of John Bayes: A Satyr against Folly and Knavery (London, 1682); Tom Brown, The Late Converts Exposed: or the Reasons of Mr. Bayes's Changing his Religion (London, 1690), and many others.

(48) e.g. Edward Pechter, Dryden's Classical Theory of Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 93. Even J. A. Winn, Dryden's best biographer to date, largely ignores the accusations levelled at Dryden by Martin Clifford and the Rota pamphlets (John Dryden, 231–2, 238–9).


(51) Lust's Dominion; or The Lascivious Queen was first acted around 1600, but not printed until 1657, when it was attributed on the title-page to Christopher Marlowe (Annals, 80).

(52) See Langbaine's rejoinder in the Account: ‘notwithstanding her Apology in the Postcript...I cannot acquit her of prevarication, since Angelica is not the only stol’n Object, as she calls it: she having borrow’d largely throughout...What she has omitted of worth in her first Part, she has taken into the second; and therefore could not justly call these Plays her own’ (p. 21).


(54) Plays Written by the late Ingenious M'ts Behn, 2 vols. (London, 1702), i, preface, sig. A2r.

(55) Account, 17–18.

(56) Titus and Berenice, The Destruction of Jerusalem‘New Directions in Serious Drama on the London Stage, 1675-1678’, PQ 73 (1994), 219–42,
The Proprieties of Appropriation


(60) *The Intrigues at Versailles* (1697), "The Modern Prophets"

(61) *Making of the National Poet*, 102.


(65) Phillips, *Theatrum*, 168 (second pagination); Charles Gildon, preface to *Love’s Victim* (1701), sig. a2v.


(67) Dedication to *The Tenth Satyr of Juvenal*, sig. A3r.

(69) See e.g. William Congreve’s preface to *Incognita: or, Love and Duty Reconcil’d. A Novel* (London, 1692): ‘Romances are generally composed of the Constant Loves and invincible Courages of Hero’s, Heroins [sic], Kings and Queens, Mortals of the first Rank, and so forth, where lofty Language, miraculous Contingencies and impossible Performances, elevate and surprize the Reader into a giddy Delight…Novels are of a more familiar nature; Come near us, and represent to us Intrigues in practice, delight us with Accidents and odd Events, but not such as are wholly unusual or unpresidented, such which not being so distant from our Belief bring also the pleasure nearer us. Romances give more of Wonder, Novels more Delight. And with reverence be it spoken, and the Parallel kept at due distance, there is something of equality in the Proportion which they bear in reference to one another, with that between Comedy and Tragedy; but the Drama is the long [sic] extracted from Romance and History: ‘tis the Midwife to Industry, and brings forth alive the Conceptions of the Brain’ (sigs. Asv–A6r).


(72) *Comparison*, 26; Dialogue ‘Between Heywood, and Tom Durfey the Songster’, in Part II of *Visits from the Shades* (London, 1705), 79.

(73) *Reflections on Aristotle's Treatise of Poesie* (1674), trans. Thomas Rymer


(76) Rymer, *Critical Works*, 221.

(77) Cf. Rymer’s Advertisement to *Edgar, or The English Monarch* (1678): ‘The Histories examined, nothing in the Fable can seem Romantick or affected. But I must appeal from the late Epitomizers, who make Edgar point-blank guilty of Ethelwold’s Death, without any sufficient ground from Antiquity’ (*Critical Works*, 77).

(79) *King Edgar and Alfreda* *Cleomenes* (1692)*Life of Cleomenes*

(80) Danchin, i. 222, 11. 5–6. The prologue was first printed in a postscript to R.F.’s *A Letter...To the Honourable Ed. Howard* (1668), where its function was to discredit Dryden’s borrowings from French and Spanish sources and his excessive reliance on foreign subject-matter (pp. 13–14). On the political implications of *Henry the Fifth* see Maguire, *Regicide and Restoration*, 175–6.


(82) Charles Hopkins’s *Boadicea Queen of Britain* (1697)*Bonduca*

(83) See also the preface, sig. a3r–v. Gildon had voiced similar sentiments in *Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets*, a patriotic enterprise in its own right.


(87) *Making of the National Poet*, 62 et passim.

(88) In the 1660s Corneille had been named in prologues and epilogues to plays which were basically straightforward translations of his work into English; in the 1670s foreign writers were being cited in the preliminaries to looser renditions of their plays. Thus the prologue to Elkanah Settle’s *Pastor Fido* (1677) assures the audience: ‘we’ve been just | To the Renown’d Guairines sacred Dust’ (sig. A4v); the epilogue to John Caryll’s *Sir Salomon; or, The Cautious Coxcomb* (1671) tells them: ‘if our Cheer | Does hit your Pallats, you must thank Moliere’ (sig. N3v); while the title-page to *Tartuffe: or The French Puritan* (1670) advertises it as having been ‘Written in French by Molière; and rendered into English with much Addition and Advantage, By M. Medbourne’. On the proliferation of acknowledgements of Molière see H. M. Klein, ‘Molière in English Critical Thought on Comedy to 1800’, in Roger Johnson, Jr., Editha S. Neumann, and Guy T. Trail (eds.), *Molière and the Commonwealth of Letters: Patrimony and Posterity* (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 1975), 218–31, at 222.

(90) Although revisions of plays by less prominent pre-Civil War writers such as Middleton and Brome were not acknowledged as such, their appropriators, as we shall see, were increasingly being denounced as plagiarists.


(92) *Puny Poetaster* Petticoat Stock Beaumont Fletcher By-Blow The Loyal Subject; or, The Faithful General: a Play...The Authors Mr. Beaumont and Mr. Fletcher (1706),

(93) Collier was himself widely decried for filching a large portion of his harangues against the stage from Prynne and others. See e.g. *Comparison*, 94; Thomas Baker’s dedication to *An Act at Oxford* (1704), sig. a2v; Gildon’s preface to *Phaeton* (1698), sig. ci; James Drake, *The Antient and Modem Stages Survey’d. Or, Mr Collier’s View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage Set in a True Light* (London, 1699), 247.