SHAKESPEARE LECTURE

Servant Obedience and Master Sins: Shakespeare and the Bonds of Service

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Masters are as well bound to duties as servants. God's law requireth as much. . . . So also doth the law of nature which hath tied master and servant together by mutuall and reciprocall bond.

William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*[1]

As for slaves and bondmen, we have none; nay, such is the privilege of our country by the especial grace of God and bounty of our princes, that if any come hither from other realms, so soon as they set foot on land they become so free of condition as their masters, whereby all note of servile bondage is removed from them.

William Harrison, *The Description of England*[2]

I. Rogues, players, and servants

Being your slave, what should I do but tend
Upon the hours and times of your desire?
I have no precious time at all to spend
Not services to do till you require.
Being your vassal bound to stay your leisure,
O let me suffer, being at your beck,
Th'imprisoned absence of your liberty. . . .

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[1] William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties Eight Treatises* (1622), pp. 171–2.

[2] William Harrison, *The Description of England*, ed. Georges Edelen (Ithaca: Cornell University Press for The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1968).

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> I am to wait, though waiting be so hell,
> Not blame your pleasure, be it ill or well.
> Sonnets 57, 58

SLAVE, VASSAL, BONDMAN, ATTENDANT, servant, waiting-man: these are the terms in which the speaker of this linked pair of sonnets construes his emotional dependency on the friend to whom they are addressed. On one level this extended conceit can be taken as no more than an elegant complimentary flourish—a homosocial (or homoerotic) reworking of a conventional trope from the repertory of courtly love; but such a display of erotic self-abasement itself made sense only in the context of a particular construction of master–servant relationships.[3] So, however circumspectly one chooses to interpret the witty autobiographical performance of Shakespeare's sonnet-sequence, this language of subordination is an unavoidable reminder of the extent to which the experience of service was an immediate and sometimes humiliating fact of the dramatist's life: he was, after all, a writer dependent for social and material success not simply on the commercial fortunes of the company in which he was an actor-shareholder, but on the favour of aristocratic patrons, one of whom the sonnets project as the ambiguous 'master-mistress' (Sonnet 20) of his duty and love. Under these circumstances it is perhaps hardly surprising that Shakespeare's plays should return so often to the institution of service. In this, however, they were hardly exceptional: indeed a concern with the politics of master–servant relations is so pervasive in the drama of the period that it is paradoxically easy to overlook the phenomenon altogether—very much as the politics of gender were overlooked for so long—as if such matters were an unproblematic given of the pre-industrial world. Yet the layered ambivalence that characterises Shakespeare's evocation of service in the lines I have quoted should be enough to check such complacency; and, as I hope to indicate, there were good historical reasons—some of them specific to the theatrical profession itself—why dramatists should have been interested in probing the ideology of service, exposing its contradictions and corruptions, and exploring its recurrent mortifications. In this, I am going to argue, they were responding to shifts in the ideology and material conditions of service that were of some importance in the early modern transformation of the social order.

[3] On the homoerotics of master–servant relationships, see Mario DiGangi, *The homoerotics of early modern drama* (Cambridge, 1997), esp. chap. 3 'The homoerotics of mastery in satiric comedy', pp. 64–99.

In order to understand a little better what was involved in the idea of 'service' and the players' relation to it, I should like to begin not with Shakespeare himself, but with some passages from the life of one of his earliest recorded admirers—the Jacobean highwayman Gamaliell Ratsey. Ratsey is chiefly famous these days (thanks to Andrew Gurr)[4] for the incidental light which is cast on theatre history by one of his escapades: this was the elaborate practical joke performed upon a company of strolling players, in the course of which, having persuaded the leader of the troupe to provide a taste of his quality, Ratsey commended him as a potential contender for the part of Hamlet. The story is told near the beginning of a cony-catching pamphlet entitled *Ratseis Ghost*—the second of two tracts devoted to the highwayman's 'madde Prankes and Roberies' that were published shortly after his execution in March 1605. The pamphleteer's chief interest in the story, however, lay a long way from the triumphs of Richard Burbage: what justified his giving this 'pretty prancke' pride of place in his narrative is signalled by the chapter-title's description of these players as men who impiously 'denied their own Lord and Maister, and used another Noblemans name'[5]—they were types, in other words, of the False Servant, whose humiliation at the hands of the highwayman is presented as their properly ironic nemesis. The sweetest part of the joke, to anyone familiar with Ratsey's career, was that he, after all, was not only a man out of service, but one whose criminal success depended on his ability to usurp the role of master in a series of performances that were as wittily subversive as they were lucrative.

Ratsey was in many ways a classically marginal figure: a discarded soldier whose origins in the small gentry of Lincolnshire had not prevented him from joining those predatory outcasts who haunted the imagination of early modern England—the crew of 'masterless men' whose numbers were swollen, according to William Harrison by 'our great swarms of idle servingmen', who 'having not wherewith of their own to maintain their excesses, do search in highways, budgets [pouches], coffers, mails [bags], and stables which way to supply their wants.'[6] At

[4] Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574–1642* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 60–1.

[5] Anon, *Ratseis Ghost* (London, n.d. [?1605]), A3v.

[6] Harrison, *Description*, p. 119. A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The vagrancy problem in England, 1560–1640* (1985), cites compelling statistics for the numbers of servants in the vagrant population: 'they made up nearly half of those arrested who had trades listed in Essex from 1564 to 1596; 56% of those taken to Bridewell from 1597–1608; and in Norwich a third between 1564 and 1610, rising to two thirds from 1626 to 1635' (p. 24).

the beginning of *The Life and Death of Gamaliell Ratsey* (the tract to which *Ratseis Ghost* is the sequel) this 'famous thief' is introduced as the son of an eminently respectable father, 'Richard Ratsey, a Gentleman, and *belonging to some honorable personage* of this land, whom he followed a long time in great fauour and estimation'.[7] The formula which defines the elder Ratsey's worth and locates his social 'place' is precisely that which the well-known 'Act for the punishment of vagabonds' (1572) deployed against those 'common players in interludes . . . not *belonging to any . . . honourable personage*' who were to be treated as 'rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars';[8] and the rebellious Ratsey junior became a *vagabond* in this quite literal sense—one who wandered outside the constraining bonds of the master–servant relation which the Act conceives as fundamental to the social order. Feeling himself 'disparaged by living at home' the adolescent Gamaliell 'grew less duteous and more desirous to range abroad': abandoning 'the life and exercises of a Scholler' in which he had shown such promise, he resolved to 'betake himself to the fortunes and profession of a Souldier', engaging to serve in a company that formed part of Essex's expedition to Ireland (A2v). Here he briefly prospered, rising to the rank of sergeant; with the defeat of Tyrone, however, Ratsey was discharged to join the ranks of cast soldiery whose bitter sense of displacement made them an especially dangerous faction amongst the masterless.[9] Rather than return to what he saw as his shamefully subordinate condition at home, he then embarked upon the career whose assaults on property exploited a self-consciously ironic mimicry of the very proprieties to which his father had given such devoted allegiance.

According to *The Life and Death*, Ratsey launched his life of crime with a pair of 'mad pranckes' or 'conceipts' that involved 'gull[ing] the servant . . . [to] deceive . . . the master' (A3v); the first failed, and Ratsey narrowly escaped hanging; but the second succeeded, thanks to his crafty seduction of a serving-man, whom he persuaded 'to lie at my Inne . . . and be to me as my man . . . and continue my credite' (B2v). Thus armed with the countenance of a gentleman, he used his 'credit' to possess himself of two geldings belonging to the man's master—the better of which he sold for the considerable sum of nineteen pounds,

[7] Anon, *The Life and Death of Gamaliell Ratsey* (1605), sig. A2 (emphasis added).
[8] Cited in Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage* 1574–42 (Cambridge, 1970), p. 19 (emphasis added). On actors and vagrancy, see Beier, pp. 96–9.
[9] On vagrancy amongst ex-soldiers, see Beier, pp. 93–5.

before riding away on the other. The success of this confidence trick is a reminder of the extent to which rank was a *visible* quality of this period—legible not only in the sartorial codes of the 'vestimentary system', but in the deferential theatre of master–servant relations.[10] In early modern society the mere presence of livieried followers was at least as important as any practical functions they might serve; indeed the status of a gentleman was actually marked, as William Harrison and others observed, by his extravagant capacity to maintain a retinue of 'idle servants';[11] and Ratsey was soon able to give a more permanent gloss to his gentlemanly port by the acquisition of two 'servant' accomplices, George Snell and Henry Shorthose (*Life & Death*, B3–4), as well as a page 'very richly [attired] in greene Velvet' (*Ghost*, C4). In a style reminiscent of Falstaff, these 'servants to the *Moone*' (*Ghost*, C4) impressed potential victims by waiting on Ratsey 'as dutifully, as if they had had a Maister of better condition' (*Life and Death*, C4). Snell, in particular, seems to have made a specialism of servant roles, effecting many of his most distinguished villainies through what he liked to call 'his conceipt of Blew-coats'. Hearing of any banquets or revels 'where noble men or gentlemen had cause to use their retainers forth of the countrey', Snell would insert himself into the company by assuming stolen livery and 'either buy[ing] or hier[ing] the badge or cognisance of any man that should fit his purpose'; he would then 'be as forwarde and diligent as the best' in pressing his services upon 'such as were of the best rank'; and at last, even as he 'held the bason and Euer to a Nobleman to wash his hands', he would contrive to make off with these costly items, together with such 'Velvet cloakes, plate . . . Silver and guilt Rapiers, and daggers . . . embroidered Girdles, and hangers, or any thinge of worthe as it laye in his waye' (*Ghost*, C1–C1v).

The pamphleteer's attitude towards the implicit subversiveness of these 'prankes and sleightes' (C1v) is revealingly equivocal: admiring Ratsey's generosity to the poor, even as he ostentatiously deplores his knavery to the rich, he exhibits a pleasure in the wit of the highwayman's impositions that invites us to read his life as a kind of practical satire on master–servant relations; yet he crowns the *Life and Death*

[10] Thus in *The Tempest*, the rebellious servant, Caliban, announces his submission at the point when he is overwhelmed by the spectacle of Prospero dressed in his ducal robes and attended by a train of courtly followers: 'How fine my master is' (5. 1. 262).

[11] Harrison, *The Description of England*, p. 117; and cf. the debate in the anonymous *The English Courtier, and the Countrey Gentleman* (1586) in *Inedited Tracts* ([London]: Roxburghe Library, 1868), pp. 35–43.

with a set of autobiographical verses entitled *Ratseys repentance*, ostensibly written whilst the highwayman was awaiting execution, in which, self-consciously casting himself in the role of Prodigal Son, Ratsey looks back nostalgically to 'my *service* in my countries good' (E3; emphasis added) and, proclaiming that 'my God to *serve* shall now be all my care', assumes the godly livery of penitence: 'My colour'd suits I now exchange for black' (F3; emphasis added). These 'colour'd suits' are the protean garments he shares with his fellow-highwaymen, whose course of life Ratsey presents as a travesty of vestimentary decorum:

> And like Camelions must your suites be strange,
> Who dooth by kinde change colours every day,
> Without respect, forgetting what you bee,
> Masking in sinne, as if God could not see. (E4v)

The anti-theatrical language of this stanza exactly anticipates the pamphleteer's denunciation of the players in *Ratseis Ghost*, when he describes how, on their second encounter with Ratsey, they presented themselves 'not in the name of the former Nobleman's servants, for like Camelions they had changed that colour' (A4). It is as if their habit of false service were a natural adjunct of their protean trade—a trade that ironically links them with their persecutor, who 'everie day had new inventions to obtain his purposes . . . studying as much how to compasse a poore mans purse, as Players doe, to win a full audience' (A4). But the affinity between their performance and his does not end there: just as Ratsey's deceptions rely upon the gentlemanly countenance conferred by the attentiveness of his pretended servants, so the success of this troupe of imposters is dependent on their ability to usurp the 'countenance' of the various lords whose 'servants' they claim to be as they move about the country (A4–A4v). The servingman's bluecoat livery, whose unvarying appearance was meant to proclaim the unchanging stability of the social order, becomes just another item in the actor's wardrobe of 'strange suites'. Unfortunately for these players, however, by 'denying their owne Lord and Maister' (A3v), they invite his wrath; and, sure enough, we are told that 'when he heard of their abuse, he discharged them, and tooke away his warrant', thereby reducing them to a masterless condition very much like Ratsey's own (A4). The player's risky impertinence wins no favour from Ratsey, however, who, after enjoying a taste of their quality, robs them upon the high road. Warning them that he is 'not to be played upon by Players', the highwayman exhibits a wry pleasure in presenting himself as a spokes-

man for the proprieties of servant relations, even as he relieves his victims of their material goods. Sententiously inviting them to see the robbery as a providential chastisement for their iniquity—'heereafter be not counterfaites, abuse not honorable Personages, in using their names and countenance without their consent and privitie'—he then mockingly consoles them with the offer of his own patronage: 'because you are now destitute of a Maister, I will give you leave to play under my protection' (B1). Wittily satirising the social ambitions of a profession whose leading practitioners 'buy . . . some place or Lordship in the Country' and 'are growne so wealthy, that they have expected to be knighted, or at least be coniunct in authority . . . with men of great worship' (A4), Ratsey at last dubs the leader 'one of my Knights, and the first Knight that ever was Player in England' (B1v).

More than a sense of shared proteanism, it should be clear, informs Ratsey's ambivalent identification with the players: for this quality itself seems consequential upon another attribute of their trade—namely their dangerously marginal position as men whose livelihood conformed only in a very tenuous way to the medieval model of service inscribed in the names of their companies. It was no accident that official hostility to players so often focused on a mode of life that threatened to evade the normal bounds of social authority: in their errant habits the members of acting companies bore a significant resemblance to men like Ratsey whose restlessness made them desirous to 'range abroad'. Though players took the livery of the nobleman whose 'servants' they nominally were, for most practical purposes the relationship seems to have been a rather distant one.[12] Whether, like Shakespeare's company, they were organised on the joint-stock system characteristic of early modern capitalism, or whether they were the hirelings of an entrepreneur like Henslowe, in the material conditions of their trade actors belonged more to the fluid world of urban commerce than to the ostensibly unchanging world of feudal retainers. Yet, just as their liveried presence might be important to their patron on certain public occasions, so the fiction of 'service' could be vital whenever they required protection from hostile authorities; and their real vulnerability was illustrated by the way in which companies often

[12] Little evidence survives as to how often, if at all, they were even summoned to perform for their nominal masters—at least until the London companies were reorganised under royal patronage by James I. See Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford, 1996), p. 34.

disintegrated or faced radical restructuring upon the death of their nominal 'masters'.[13] They were thus uneasily poised between the traditional ideal in which the social identity of a servant was in some sense subsumed in that of his master (whose 'creature' he might quite properly be called), and the subversive liberty claimed by masterless men whose histrionic 'self-fashioning', unconstrained by social propriety, could choose any shape whose 'countenance' it was capable of sustaining. It is hardly surprising that the drama produced by these companies should reflect their familiarity with the intertwined consolations and humiliations of service on the one hand, and with the mingled intoxication and abjection of the masterless condition on the other; but this restless probing of the ideology and material realities of master–servant relations also spoke to the lived contradictions of a larger society in which service was simultaneously idealised as a virtually universal state—a defining condition of social order—and recognised as a particular social institution subject to disconcerting local and historical pressures.

II. Universal service and masterless men

> This title (*Servants*) is a generall title . . . applied to al such as by any outward civill bond, or right, owe their service to another . . . of what kinde soever their servitude is: whether more servile or liberall.
>
> William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*[14]

As the elaborate organisation of royal courts into a hierarchy of often menial-sounding domestic offices reminds us,[15] the early modern world was one in which power itself, no matter how exalted, could only be imagined as the ability to command service. In Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*, for example, the protagonist construes omnipotence as an apotheosis of desire in which 'The God thou *servest* is thine own appetite' (2. 1. 11); and the action turns on the profoundly equivocal significance of that

[13] Gurr, p. 34.

[14] William Gouge, *Domesticall Duties*, p. 160.

[15] See for instance, David Starkey *et al.*, *The English Court: from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (1987); Starkey's 'Intimacy and Innovation' (pp. 71–118) gives an excellent account of the rise of the Privy Chamber and the key office of Groom of the Stool during the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII. See also Neil Cuddy, 'The Revival of the Entourage' for an account of James's substitution of the Bedchamber as the new centre of intimacy and influence.

reflexive service, which may be read either as supreme mastery or abject enslavement. Moreover, the play is actually structured as a kind of household drama in which the continuing 'duty' and 'service' tendered to his master by the loyal servant Wagner (5. 1. 58–9, 1) is set against the treachery of Mephistophilis and the other 'servile spirits' whom Faustus pretends to command (1. 1. 98). Mephistophilis introduces himself as 'servant to great Lucifer' (1. 3. 42), but ostensibly repudiates his allegiance to this infernal 'master' (1. 3. 102) through the bond of indenture that makes him Faustus's '*servant, [to] be by him commanded*' (2. 1. 97–8); and this charade of diabolic service is maintained right up to the last scene, where Faustus continues to address Mephistophilis as his 'good servant' (1. 99), even as the demon arraigns him for '*disobedience* to my sovereign lord' (1. 84; emphasis added). The B-text ushers in the ending with a stage direction for Faustus's Last Supper in which his appetite for power is parodically realised through a parade of '*Devils with covered dishes*'—a strikingly domestic demonstration of Valdes's promise to make the spirits 'always serviceable' to the magician's will (1. 1. 124); and the play ends with a show of self-consuming appetite, in which the B-text's Scholars identify 'Master Doctor's' reward for the abject servitude he confused with mastery: 'The devils whom Faustus *served* have torn him thus' (5. 1. 339). 'Witches and conjurers', as George Gifford proclaimed, 'are seduced and become *vassals* of Satan: they be his *servants*, and not he theirs.'[16]

If the fantasy of omnipotence for which Faustus gambles his soul can only be conceived as a version of the most familiar kind of household relationship, something very similar is apparent in *The Tempest*, Shakespeare's oblique revisiting of the Faust story. Here Propsero's relationship with the restive spirit he calls his 'industrious servant' (4. 1. 32) forms part of an elaborate set of variations on the theme of mastery and service that begins with that type of embattled authority, the ship's Master, and comes to include virtually every character in the play—from the rebellious slave Caliban and his patient log-bearing rival Ferdinand, to the ambitious menials Stephano and Trinculo, and Antonio, the grand usurper of '[his] brother's servants', formerly

[16] George Gifford, *A Dialogue Concerning Witches* (1603), sig. B3 (emphasis added). Gifford's treatise was first published in 1593 and its terminology may represent a direct response to Marlowe's play. For further discussion of the motif of service in *Doctor Faustus*, see Judith Weil, in Paul Whitfield White (ed.) *Marlowe, History and Sexuality: New Critical Essays on Christopher Marlowe* (New York, 1998). Unfortunately Weil's essay did not become available to me until after I had completed this paper.

his 'fellows', now his 'men' (2. 1. 268–9). Even what we are now accustomed to reading as an allegory of colonial rebellion can be figured only as the domestic treason of a servant–monster ('has a new master; get a new man', 2. 2. 185); for, as the dutiful Gonzalo's utopian fantasy of a commonwealth without 'the use of service' (2. 1. 147) reminds us, there is literally *no-place* outside the defining bonds of master and servant: to be 'free', in the way that both Prospero and Ariel, master and servant, yearn to be, is to be outside the play—so much so that Prospero can envision it for himself only in the non-space of the epilogue.

One of the hardest things to re-imagine about what Peter Laslett called 'the world we have lost' is the extensiveness of its notion of 'service': not only did it provide the model by which all relationships involving power and authority were understood, but—as the use of the term 'masterless' to define a reprobate condition of social exile indicates—it was almost impossible to conceive of a properly human existence outside the hierarchy of masters and servants that made up the 'society of orders': from this point of view, indeed, the very notion of a 'masterless man' constituted something of an oxymoron, since service was presented as a condition so universal that properly to be a man was to be somebody's 'man'. '[T]o be no part of any body, is to be nothing', wrote John Donne, in a letter lamenting the failure of his ambitions in the 'service' to which he had 'submitted [him]self.'[17] Beyond the world of service lies only the anti-social chaos of a Tempest that seems to undo all 'authority', or the a-social wilderness that *Lear* calls the Heath. 'Servant', according to the Puritan divine William Gouge, was 'a generall title':[18] not only did a period of household service form part of the normal experience of most English adolescents, but the social 'place' of every individual was to some degree determined by his servant dependence upon a more powerful master. In this construction society consisted of an unbroken chain of service that stretched from the humblest peasant to the monarch who owed service only to God.[19]

[17] John Donne, *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour* (1651), intro. M. Thomas Hester (New York: Scholars Facsimiles and Reprints, 1977), p. 51.

[18] *Of Domesticall Duties*, p. 160.

[19] On the decline in numbers of retainers in the late Elizabethan period and the progressive alienation of the gentry from domestic service, see Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 164–70; by the 1620s, according to Heal, it had become significantly more common for the sons of gentry and nobility 'to receive formal classical education than to undertake a period of service' (p. 165)—in the way that, say, Young Allworth, becomes the page of Lord Lovell in Philip Massinger's nostalgic social comedy *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (*c.* 1623).

Even those privileged males who were titular masters of their own households lived out their lives (at least nominally) as someone else's 'man': thus the wealth and prestige of a rising landowner like Master Arden in *Arden of Faversham* are evidently dependent on his being (like his confidant Franklin) 'my lord protector's man'. Minor gentry, and the younger sons of more prominent families typically filled the higher domestic offices in the households of wealthy gentlemen and nobles;[20] and even men of loftier social standing—members of parliament or justices of the peace—might commonly be enrolled as upper servants in the households of great noblemen like the Earl of Derby or of statesmen like Lord Burghley.[21] On the eve of the Restoration, William Cavendish, Marquis of Newcastle, looked regretfully back to a time when 'Sir George Booth, a Cheshire knight of six or seven thousand pounds a year, [was to be seen] wearing my Lord of Shrewsbury's blue coat on . . . St George's day, as did Sir Vincent Corbett, whose brother had twenty thousand pounds a year and who after the death of his brother, had four or five thousand pounds a year.'[22] In their turn, even the most powerful lords were themselves subjected to their own form of service, since (as the North Country squire and man of letters, Richard Brathwait, insisted) 'Men in great place . . . are thrice servants; servants of the Soveraigne, or State; servants of Fame; and servants of Businesse. So as they have no freedome, neither in their persons, nor in their actions, nor in their times.'[23]

Although no individual could be considered 'his own master' in any absolute sense, the claim to be 'master of one's own' was not a trivial one, since in the world of service, admission to full social membership depended on a man's role as 'master' of a household whose

[20] See Alice T. Friedman, *House and Household in Elizabethan England: Wollaton Hall and the Willoughby Family* (Chicago, 1989), pp. 43–5: at Wollaton most household members 'were tied to the Willoughby family through long-standing bonds of service' (p. 43) and the principal officers 'were in most cases cousins or distant relations of the Willoughby family' (p. 44). The sheer numbers of servants employed in early modern households can now seem astonishing: the average number for a noble household at the end of the medieval period seems to have been about 150, and for a gentry household about 65—see Heal, p. 47.

[21] Steinfeld, p. 18; Richard C. Barnett, *Place, Profit, and Power: A Study of the Servants of William Cecil, Elizabethan Statesman* (Chapel Hill, 1969), p. 12.

[22] Gloria Anzilotti (ed.), *An English Prince: Newcastle's Machiavellian Political Guide to Charles II* (Pisa, 1988), p. 145. Newcastle regarded such ceremonious exhibitions of the ladder of service as an essential instrument for the preservation of social order.

[23] Richard Brathwait, *The English Gentleman* (1630), p. 115.

subordinate members possessed no identity properly independent of his.[24] For servants below a certain rung in the ladder of dependency, at least, this had significant material consequences. For if women and children were consigned by nature to a condition of obedient dependency (being 'Bound to obey and serve', as Jane Seymour's motto had it),[25] male domestic servants *voluntarily* surrendered any claim they might have to authority over their own lives: 'while the terme of their service lasteth' wrote William Gouge, ' . . . they are not their owne . . . both their persons and their actions are their master's.'[26] So literally was this the case that, while a master could not legally dispose of the person of his servant, he could certainly sell his labour, which must often have felt like the same thing.[27] Servants, insisted Gouge,

> so properly belong to a master for the time of their service, as he may not only keepe them himselfe for his owne service, but also passe them over, and give, or sell them to another. By Gods law not only strangers, but Jewes also might be sold for servants. The customes and statutes of our land doe also permit masters to make over their servants from one to one: and on their death-beds to bequeath them to whom they will, even as their goods and possessions.[28]

In effect (as Steffano Guazzo put it) a well-trained and loyal servant became simply a 'part of his master', obeying him, in Dod and Cleaver's similie, 'not as a water-spaniel, but as the hand is stirred to obey the mind'.[29] In this organic figure we can begin to glimpse the symbolic meaning of 'livery' (a word that significantly links clothing and food):[30]

[24] Hence the extraordinary resonance of John Smith's claim that in the new Virginia colony 'every man may be master and owner of his owne labour and land', cited in Eric Foner, 'The Rallying Cry', *Humanities*, 19, 2 (1998), 14–18, 49–51 (18).

[25] Starkey, p. 110. For an account of the peculiar role assigned to female servants, see Burnett, chap. 4.

[26] *Domesticall Duties*, p. 604.

[27] Steinfeld, pp. 70–1.

[28] *Domesticall Duties*, p. 664. He goes on: 'Some [caring only for profit] will sell them . . . when they have them beyond sea to Turks and Infidels; some to Papists; some to profane persons; some to cruel inhumane beasts; some to men of unlawfull trades; some to men of no trades' (p. 665).

[29] Steffano Guazzo, *La civile conversatione* (1574), cited in Dennis Romano, *Housecraft & Statecraft: Domestic Service in Renaissance Venice 1400–1600* (Baltimore, 1996), p. 20; John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *A Godly Forme of Household Government* (1630), Sig. Aa3. The latter passage is worth citing at greater length: '[G]ood and faithfull servants, liking and affecting their masters, understand them at a becke, and obey them at a winke of an eye or bent of the brow, not as a water-spaniel, but as the hand is stirred to obey the minde.'

[30] The original sense of *livery* was 'the dispensing of food, provisions or clothing' to servants or retainers (*OED n.* 1a).

the liveried man was not merely clothed in his master's identity, but absorbed into his social body, to be fed as his own body was fed.[31] But the master's apparent fullness of identity was limited in turn by his obligations to a higher master. Thus when Gonzalo salutes his rescue from an outcast condition in which 'no man was his own', we can understand that claim to self-ownership only in the contingent sense that depends on the restoration of a proper hierarchy of service—one that has been disturbed by the expulsion of Duke Prospero and by the manifest contradictions of Gonzalo's own too serviceable role as 'master of that design' (1. 2. 163).

Ultimately of course the authority of masters was both authorised and constrained by their relation to God: Caliban's acknowledgement of the authority in which Prospero is now visibly dressed ('How *fine* my *master* is', 5. 1. 262; emphasis added) is functionally inseparable from his desire for 'grace' (1. 295), just as Kent's last profession of allegiance to Lear ('My master calls me, I must not say no,' 5. 3. 320) deliberately mimics the language of religious vocation. In Massinger's *The City Madam*, Luke Frugal's ambitious rebellion against the 'servile office' to which he is consigned in his brother's household, is enough to damn him as a 'Revengeful, avaricious atheist' (1. 1. 141; 5. 3. 135);[32] and the same religious language is deployed against the outcasts of the companion play, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*. Here the treacherous Marrall

[31] The Puritans Dod and Cleaver, however, exhibit a certain unease with the theological implications of their organic simile: 'For as the hand is said to be the instrument of instruments . . . so is the servant said to be an instrument of instruments, because he keepeth all the instruments of the household occupied . . . [But] he differeth from all other instruments. For where they are things without soule, he is divinely enriched with a soule: and herein he differeth from the hand, for that the hand is fastned and united to the bodie, but he is separate and disjoyned from his master' (Aa3). The paradoxical image of a hand that is at once faithfully instrumental and yet disjoined nicely suggests the contradictions of the servant's role during the early modern transformation of household government. It is rather as if 'the great toe of this assembly' (*Coriolanus*, 1. 1. 142) were to announce itself 'separate and disjoyned' from Menenius's body politic.

[32] The urban context of *The City Madam* complicates its thematisation of service by the inclusion of a pair of errant apprentices (Goldwire and Tradewell) whom Luke incites to rebellion. The relationship between apprentices and their masters constituted a form of 'service' that was often difficult to distinguish from domestic employment, and the conduct of apprentices was governed by many of the same laws that regulated the lives of household servants. But apprenticeship, because it constituted a form of training designed to lead to full membership of a guild, differed in crucial ways from domestic service; and its treatment in drama therefore deserves separate study. For a detailed social history of apprenticeship in the period, see Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560–1640* (Oxford, 1996); the literature of apprenticeship, crafts and trades is extensively dealt with in Burnett, chapters 1–2 (pp. 14–78).

abjectly acknowledges his brutal dismissal as 'the *heaven* / False servants still arrive at' (5. 1. 349–50; emphasis added), whilst his tyrannous master, the 'atheist' Overreach, who has plotted to reduce the entire aristocracy to slavish servitude, is consigned to the torments of a living hell (5. 1. 365–81). Massinger's comedies, though they lay great stress on 'fitting differences' between masters and the various ranks of servants who populate their households, hark back nostalgically to a world in which service was supposedly governed by bonds of friendship and mutual obligation rather than the economic bondage that is the source of Overreach's authority; and the idealised households of Lord Lovell and Lady Allworth conform to the model laid out by William Gouge, in which God's supreme mastery guaranteed, if not 'equalities', at least 'a common equitie between masters and servants', for '[t]*hey which are in authoritie are also under authoritie:* masters have a master. For God is *Lord of Lords*, Master of Masters . . . and all men whosoever are *brethren, fellow-servants.*'[33] Gouge's own authority for this conception of God as the universal Master lay in orthodox Anglican doctrine, represented by those well-known homilies which ransacked the Gospels for text and parables to demonstrate that 'obedience . . . [is] the principal virtue of all virtues, and indeed the very root of all virtues, and the cause of all felicity',[34] urging servants to obey their masters as an expression of their Christian duty of glad submission to a Lord 'whose service is perfect freedom'.[35] This is the paradox that underlies Ferdinand's offering of 'service' to Miranda 'with a heart as willing / As bondage e'er of freedom' (*Tempest*, 3. 1. 65, 88–9), in an episode that nicely illustrates how even the potential subversiveness of romantic love could be contained by the chivalric conventions that rewrote its affront to authority as a licensed inversion of hierarchy. The courtly lover played out the role of 'servant' to his 'mistress' in a self-consciously extravagant mimesis of social subservience that (in comedy at least) would be ended by marriage—a convention neatly upended in *Twelfth Night* when Orsino presents his betrothal to Viola as an act of manumission 'for your service done him': 'And since you called me master for so long . . . You shall from this time be / Your master's mistress' (5. 1. 313–15).

[33] Gouge, pp. 173, 175.
[34] 'An Homily against Disobedience and Willful Rebellion', in Ronald B. Bond (ed.), *Certain Sermons or Homilies* (Toronto, 1987) p. 209.
[35] See e.g. Gouge, p. 167 citing 1 Corinthians, 7: 22.

No play better represents the all-encompassing ideals I have been describing than *King Lear* (1604–5), a tragedy whose preoccupation with the true nature of 'bonds' and 'service' was first explored by Jonas Barish and Marshall Waingrow forty years ago.[36] From the servile pliability of the 'super-serviceable' Oswald and Edmund's parade of false-service, through Lear's struggle for rhetorical mastery of the 'servile ministers' who batter him in the storm, to the loyal *non serviam* of Cornwall's servant who reneges at the blinding of Gloucester, the play keeps returning to this theme, constructing a vision of human society as an order of services whose only alternative is the wilderness where 'humanity must perforce prey on itself / Like monsters of the deep' (4. 2. 49–50). It is no accident that Edgar should present 'Poor Tom'—the 'unaccommodated' creature outside that order, whose chaotic babble renders him as languageless as the 'monster' Caliban before his enslavement—as a fallen 'servingman', an ambitious upstart 'false of heart, light of ear, and bloody of hand' who, like Edmund, 'served the lust of [his] mistress' heart' and was destroyed by his corruption (3. 4. 82–90). The physical nakedness that figures Edgar's masterless condition mirrors the political undressing of the King, for whom authority is indeed a kind of dress (4. 6. 158–60) and whose waning mastery is figured in the stripping away of his hundred followers—a 'train' fittingly imagined as an extension of his royal livery ('nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st', 2. 4. 264). Lear survives his exposure to the bare heath only because of the fidelity of Kent, the man who, refusing to be 'better suited' than his livery will allow, moulds his life into a parable of true service—one that is physically enacted through his stubborn 'following' of his royal master in his frantic wanderings across the kingdom. For Kent the idea of 'service' is so comprehensive as to constitute (in another of the play's key terms) a kind of second 'nature',[37] whereas (at the other extreme) for Edmund the 'nature' to

[36] Jonas A. Barish and Marshall Waingrow, '"Service" in *King Lear*', *SQ 9* (1958), 347–55; see also Richard Strier, 'Faithful Servants: Shakespeare's Praise of Disobedience', in Heather Dubrow and Richard Strier (eds.), *The Historical Renaissance: New Essays on Tudor and Stuart Literature and Culture*, (Chicago, 1988), pp. 104–33; Frank Whigham, *Seizures of the Will in early modern English drama* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 216–17; and Mark Thornton Burnett, *Masters and Servants in English Renaissance Culture* (Basingstoke, 1997), pp. 83–6. For an historian's account of early modern service which argues that '[t]he ideal community bound together by ties of patronage and deference did exist outside the world of theory', while conceding that 'the power of masters' was open to significant abuse, see Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1988), 159–61.

[37] For Kent's debt to the classical trickster–servant, see Burnett, pp. 83–4.

whose law his 'services are bound' (1. 2. 1–2) is precisely that force which evacuates the meaning of such 'services' as he pretends to offer Kent in the opening moments of the play: 'My services to your lordship . . . I shall study deserving', (1. 1. 28–30). At the end of the play, liberated from his self-chosen disguise as the rustic retainer Caius, Kent identifies himself to his King in words whose characteristic bareness belies their extraordinary resonance: 'Are you not Kent?' the king hesitatingly enquires; 'The same / Your servant Kent', he replies. 'Where is your *servant* Caius?' And then, answering himself, he declares 'I am the very *man*' (5. 3. 280–4; emphasis added), thereby reasserting his identity with a kind of riddle that plays across the distance between two seemingly very different kinds of 'service' and manhood: the obedience and courtly deference owed by a feudal magnate to his king,[38] and the humble toil performed by a serving-man for his master. Edgar has spoken of that drudgery, in accents at once admiring and deprecating as 'service / Improper for a slave' (ll. 218–19).[39] But of course the whole point of Kent's performance has been to demonstrate the inadequacy of such a notion of propriety—to insist that these two kinds of service are essentially 'the same'. The language of this crucial exchange looks back to the beginning of the play, where the nature of true service was first opened to question—to Act 1, Scene 1, where Kent allegorised himself as Duty contending with Flattery for the favour of regal Power, and especially to 1. 4, where the newly disguised Earl first announced his riddle of identity to the uncomprehending King. There, faced with Lear's peremptory 'What art thou?' and 'What wouldst thou?', Kent in effect answered both questions with the single word that for him defines the very bonds of humanity—a word that in this play can seem almost as comprehensive as 'love', with which indeed it is often synonymous—'service'.[40] It is a term that, properly understood, defines both 'what' he

[38] For a thorough account of 'feudal' elements in the play—a topic first opened up by John Danby in *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature* (1951), and much debated since—see Richard Halpern, *The Poetics of Primitive Accumulation: English Renaissance Culture and the Genealogy of Capital* (Ithaca, 1991), chap. 6, '*Historica Passio: King Lear's* Fall into Feudalism', pp. 215–69.

[39] Compare the services required of the Groom of the Stool—an office occupied, under James I, by his Captain of the Guard, Sir Thomas Erskine, who in addition to his 'lavatorial tasks' was required 'to sleep . . . on a pallet at the foot of the royal bed; [and] to put on the king's under-shirt' (Cuddy, p. 186).

[40] Compare Laslett's assertion in *The World We Have Lost—Further Explored*, 3rd edn. (1983), that inside the patriarchal household 'every relationship could be seen as a love-relationship' (p. 5).

is ('who' would not matter to him) and what he desires (anything he could possibly wish for). Thus Kent's servile guise is ultimately no disguise at all, for in contrast to the 'serviceable' persona of the time-serving Oswald, or the glozing manners of the play's other seemers, it is a livery in which he is absolutely vested, a personation so perfectly expressive of 'that within which passes show' that it binds him to follow Lear to the grave itself: 'My master calls me; I must not say no' (5. 3. 322).

At the opposite extreme from the 'honest-hearted' Kent's self-investment in the idea of service (one so entire that it renders his guise impenetrable even to his own master), stands the equally theatrical performance of another ostentatiously 'honest' exponent of servant obedience, Iago. Iago, we might say, has learned the politics of service expounded in Marlowe's *Edward II* by Spencer Junior and Baldock. For these ambitious royal followers, the role of servant, depending as it does not on ancient sanctities of allegiance, but on the arbitrary 'favour' of patronage and the mutual calculation of advantage, is a matter of manipulating the 'formal toys' of deferential behaviour whilst always standing ready to 'stab, as occasion serves' (2. 1. 31–53).[41] Iago, the consummate improviser, is nothing if not a master of 'occasion'; but in him the cheerful cynicism of Baldock has turned to an embittered contempt for all the signs of 'obsequious bondage'—'forms and visages of duty', 'shows of service' and 'complement extern'—with which underlings like himself, who 'keep their hearts *attending* on themselves' to 'do themselves homage' (*Othello*, 1. 1. 41–65; emphasis added), are forced to mask their real allegiance. In the envious tirade with which he opens the play, Iago justifies his bile by reference to what he calls 'the curse of service' (1. 1. 35). In Venice, he maintains, the very ground of service has been undermined, as the ancient proprieties of loyalty and reward ('the old gradation') have given way to the arbitrary interventions of patronage and influence ('letter and affection'). In such a world, he insists, the bond between master and servant—the imagined sympathy of love and service—is pure ideology, a phantom of false-consciousness:

> now sir, be judge yourself,
> Whether I in any just term am assigned
> To love the Moor . . .

[41] The fullest account of the mechanisms of patronage in the period is Linda Levy Peck's magisterial *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (Boston, Mass., 1990).

> I *follow* him to *serve* my turn upon him:
> We cannot all be *masters*, nor all *masters*
> Cannot be truly *followed*. . . .
> In *following* him, I *follow* but myself.
> 1. 1. 38–59 (emphasis added)

In his valuable study of *Masters and Servants* in the drama and culture of this period, Mark Burnett speaks of Iago's speech as founded on an 'analogy' that makes 'striking' use of 'a master and servant paradigm'.[42] But this, I think, is to misunderstand something essential about early modern ideas of service, and hence to misapprehend the significance of Iago's challenge to social convention. Military 'place' was not imagined as something *analagous* to domestic 'office', but rather (as the use of the term 'officer' in both domestic and military contexts suggests) as another aspect of precisely the same system. Thus Vallentine, in *The English Courtier*, conceives of a single 'profession of service', dependent on 'either arms or learning', and advises 'him that affecteth the war, [to] apply himself to *serve* or *follow* some nobleman, or expert captain, that is either in continual service martially, or that is likely to be used at occasion'.[43] In the absence of a fully professional army organised by the state, military 'service' was necessarily thought of in quasi-feudal terms as a form of service founded on a mutual arrangement of duties and reward, something given (in the first instance at least) to a particular individual—the commander of a company, who in turn served the 'captain' or 'general' above him. So at the end of Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, the reformed Wellborne's promise of 'service / To my king and country' can only be realised through submission to the immediate 'command' of Lord Lovell (5. 1. 395–9). In *Anthony and Cleopatra*, a play which explores the disintegration of such a system of allegiance, the petty kings and generals who progressively fall away from Anthony are defined as his 'followers' or servants ('In his *livery* / Walked crowns and crownets', 5. 2. 90–1; emphasis added), creatures who, as the 'master-leaver' Enobarbus discovers to his cost, cannot exist except as aspects of his 'presence' or 'countenance'; and though battles here are increasingly won, as Ventidius reminds us, by the mercenary exertions of 'well-paid ranks' (3. 1. 32), Anthony's entourage is bound to him, in the style of an old-fashioned aristocratic household, by the casual magnificence of 'bounty': 'realms

[42] Burnett, *Masters and Servants*, p. 1.
[43] *English Courtier*, p. 28 (emphasis added).

and islands were / As plates dropped from his pocket' (5. 1. 91–2). Similarly in *Othello*, Iago and Cassio are as much part of the general's military 'household', as courtiers like Kent and Gloucester are members of the royal household in *Lear*. *Othello* is often described as a 'domestic tragedy', on the grounds that its concern with romantic love confines it, like *Romeo and Juliet*, to an essentially 'private' world, but the common preoccupation of *Lear* and *Othello* with ideas of service is a pointer to how limiting and distortive such a notion of the domestic can be—especially when applied to literature from an era without a well-defined distinction between 'public' and 'private' spheres. In this culture all tragedy, one is tempted to say, is domestic.

III. 'The Curse of Service'

> England is the paradise of women, the purgatory of servants, and the hell of horses.
>
> French proverb, cited in Camden, *Remains Concerning Britain*[44]

Service in the essentially feudal sense espoused by Kent and Enobarbus must sometimes have seemed like a condition of being. Yet it is clear—not least from the texts that most vociferously assert its persistence—that the idea of universal service was subjected to significant strains in this period, and that these were felt not only in enterprises whose socially marginal and mercenary character made them resistant to subsumption within familiar models of service, but even within the household, at the very heart of the institution. The strain seems to have resulted, at least in part, from social and economic changes which highlighted the mercenary or commercial character of certain forms of labour, making it difficult to reconcile them with traditional notions of service. An important factor in these changes, in the minds of conservative social critics, was the decay of 'housekeeping': ushered in by the Tudor effort to curb the medieval practice of keeping large numbers of liveried retainers, it was further accelerated by changing styles of household management which led to a steep drop in the demand for domestic labour. Between 1590 and 1620 the numbers of servants in aristocratic households fell from an average of a hundred to between a

[44] William Camden, *Remains Concerning Britain* (1605), ed. R. D. Dunn (Toronto, 1984), p. 20.

half and a third of that number.[45] The anonymous *The English Courtier, and the Countrey Gentleman* (1586) is structured as a debate on the merits of old-fashioned housekeeping between Vallentine, a courtier schooled in the arts of Castiglione, and Vincent, a conservative country-gentleman. When Vallentine criticises the rural practice of supporting large numbers of 'sturdy fellows and needless servants' in idleness, Vincent sarcastically demands to know whether 'Were it for the worship of a Gentleman, having good land and revenues to keepe no more servants, then (as they doo in Citties) those that for their necessary uses they must needes imploy? . . . if hee walke in the Cittie without servants attending on him, no man wil put off his cap to him or do him reverence: how can then such a man be honorable?'[46] The whole point of such servants (like Lear's idle retinue of 100 knights) is that they should be visibly underemployed as a sign of their master's liberality and magnificence: their role, as Vincent explains, is simply to 'attend upon our table, and follow us in the streets, when we be at London, or any other great town, and furnish our halls at home . . . neither is it the manner to offer them any labour or drudgery, for thereof would they take great scorn, being comely personages';[47] instead they must exhibit those polite accomplishments best calculated to enhance their master's gentlemanly port and countenance: they must be 'expert in sundry seemly, and necessary knowledges, without which they cannot (as they doo) serve a noble man, or gentleman . . . besides that they al . . . can well and decently weare their garments, and cheefely their lyuery coates, their swordes & bucklers, they can also carue very cumly at your table . . . some of them also can wrestle, leape well, run & daunce. There are also of those, that can shoote in longe Bowes, crosse Bowes, or handgunne: Yea there wanteth not some that are both so wise, and of so goode audacitie, as they can, and doo . . . entertaine their Maister with table talke . . . bee it either of pleasure or profit, these good fellowes know sumwhat in all'.[48] For Vincent, on the other hand (as for Lear's daughters), servants are simply a commodity, to be valued according to economic 'necessity': unprofitable servants should be cut down like barren apple trees.[49]

[45] See A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men*, p. 23: in the country as a whole the percentage of persons in live-in domestic service fell from 20% of the population in 1520 to less than 10% in 1700; while the numbers of apprentices fell from 15% in 1600 to 4–5% in 1700 (pp. 23–4).
[46] *English Courtier*, p. 35, 43.
[47] *English Courtier*, pp. 33–4.
[48] *English Courtier*, p. 39.
[49] *English Courtier*, pp. 40–1.

However rational such views might seem, their effect, from the standpoint of commentators like 'I.M.', the author of *A Health to the Gentlemanly profession of Seruingmen: or, The Seruingmans Comfort* (1598), was to undermine the pieties of mutual obligation, of 'hospitality' and 'liberality', that had governed relations in the traditional household, tying servants with an 'undissoluable bond of assured friendship' to their masters.[50] In Marston's *Histrio-mastix* (1599) the devaluation of traditional service is seen as a consequence of urban consumerism: the young lords Mavortius and Philarchus strip their servants of their liveries and discharge them on the grounds that these 'drowsie drones' are 'chargeable . . . to feed' and threaten to 'break our backs'; no, reply the victims of this 'savage recompense', it is the toys of conspicuous consumption, 'rich lac'd sutes . . . straight lac'd mutton . . . [and] rascall boyes, / Who Ape-like jet, in garded coates,' that are undoing them—an accusation soon confirmed by Mavortius's gleeful admission that he alone will save 'A thousand pound a yeare . . . For revelling, and banquetting and plays' (III, p. 271).[51]

Explicit anxiety about the nature and conditions of service in the new dispensation is a marked feature of many of the tracts, conduct books, and manuals that offer advice on the discipline of domestic government. 'What doth a gentleman care nowadays for his man than to serve his present turn?' asks 'I.M.', in a passage that recalls the plight of Old Adam in *As You Like It*:

> No, no more for him than he doth for his dog or his horse, who, while they can do him service, he is content to allow them meat and other necessaries. But when the horse falls blind or lame, knock him in the head; when the dog grows so old as he can do nothing but lie by the fire, cut his throat; and the

[50] 'I.M.', *A Health to the Gentlemanly profession of Seruingmen: or, The Seruingmans Comfort* (1598) in *Inedited Tracts*, pp. 114–15. The hypocritical Luke Frugal appeals to this same ideal of service in *The City Madam*, when he says of his apprentices 'What's mine is theirs. They are my friends, not servants' (4. 1. 38). For an extended treatment of hospitality and its decline see Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*.

[51] Cited from H. Harvey Wood (ed.) *The Plays of John Marston*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1939), Vol. 3. In Chapman's *The Gentleman Usher* (*c.* 1602–3) the degraded condition of the servants retained by the upstart 'minion' Medice / Mendice is attributed to simple want of aristocratic magnanimity: not only does Medice himself 'go . . . like / A prince's footman, in old-fashioned silks' but he is 'So miserable [miserly] that his own few men / Do beg by virtue of his livery; / For he gives none, for any service done him / Or any honor, any least reward' (1. 1. 113–19); Medice's meanness is contrasted with the generosity of the true nobleman, Lasso, towards his gentleman usher, Bassiolo: 'He has been my good lord, for I can spend / Some fifteen hundred crowns in lands a year, / Which I have gotten since I serv'd him first . . . so much as makes me live, my lord, / Like a poor gentleman'—cited from the Regents edition, ed. John Hazel Smith (Lincoln, Neb., 1970).

> servingman, when the summer of his years are spent, and that crooked old age hath summoned him to make her many courtesies, with bended knees . . . then off go his shoes and he is turned into the common . . . What estate, degree, or calling, can then be more miserable than that of a serving man? Here today and gone tomorrow. In good credit with his master at noon, and Jack-out-of-office before night.[52]

The neglect railed at by the likes of Marston and 'I.M.' must have been partly an effect of the economic difficulties faced by many households during the crisis of the 1590s; but in the judgement of the conduct-book writer Richard Brathwait, things were no better thirty years later: 'of all other vices incident to *masters*', he writes in *The English Gentleman*, 'there is none more hateful in the sight of God and man, than the unthankfullnesse or disrespect of *masters* towards their *servants*, when they have spent their strength, and wasted them in their service . . . But, alas, doe we not see how nothing is more contemptible than an old Serving-man. . . . There is no man that will know him, since his blew-coat knew no Cognizance.'[53] The 'hatefulness' of such ingratitude lay precisely in the way that it threatened to expose the increasingly threadbare fiction of 'assured friendship' that was so crucial to the ideology of service;[54] and Iago's power to compel the sympathy of his audience must have lain partly in his ability to articulate the discontents that such commentators were so anxious to dispel:

> You shall mark
> Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave,
> That doting on his own obsequious bondage,
> Wears out his time much like his master's ass,
> For naught but provender, and when he's old, cashier'd. (1. 1. 44–8)

The brutal effectiveness of Iago's analysis lies partly in the ferocity with which 'cashiered'—a newly coined term-of-art imported by soldiers returning from the Low Countries in 1585—exposes the pecuniary realities concealed by the chivalric rhetoric of military 'service'.[55] Not

[52] *Seruingmans Comfort*, pp. 165–6; cf. also p. 117, and Richard Brathwait, *Rules and Orders for the Government of the House of an Earle*, in *Miscellanea Antiqua Anglicana* (1816), pp. 32–3.
[53] Richard Brathwait, *The English Gentleman* (1630), pp. 158–9.
[54] For a good account of the importance of 'gratitude' in the Senecan doctrine of 'benefits' which underpinned sixteenth century ideas of generosity and housekeeping, see John M. Wallace, '*Timon of Athens* and the Three Graces: Shakespeare's Senecan Study', *Modern Philology*, 83 (1986), 349–63; and Peck, pp. 12–14, 28–9.
[55] It is symptomatic of the lack of felt distinction between military and other forms of service that the word was immediately extended to the domestic realm—so in *Histrio-mastix* (1599) the young lords are described as having 'cashiered their traines' of servants (III, p. 370).

to achieve promotion is already to feel the violence of cashierment, to know its constant possibility as a degrading condition of 'soldiership'. Properly understood, Iago insists, military 'service' is not (as presupposed by 'the old gradation') a relationship determined by natural ties of 'love' and 'duty', but a species of commercial contract, a system of calibrated rewards for services rendered, governed by legally enforceable 'just term[s]' (ll. 37–40): to imagine otherwise is to deliver yourself to the disparagement of an 'obsequious bondage' in which livery is reduced to stable 'provender'—a bondage that mockingly disguises itself in the naturalised language of 'bonds' and 'following'. Thus it is not any diabolically unmotivated machiavellism that compels Iago to trim himself in the 'forms and visages of duty' (1. 50); rather his 'shows of service' (1. 52) themselves constitute (or so he would like Roderigo and the audience to believe) a *demonstration* of the necessary hypocrisies to which an honest servingman is driven if he is not to fall victim to the ideological cheat by which his profession is controlled. The sneering force of 'cashiered' is enhanced, of course, by the quibble that links it to Iago's denunciation of the Cassio ('Cashio')—whose name itself appears to derive from the Italian, *casso* = 'cashiered'. Iago has presented this alleged 'counter-caster' as an epitome of the mercenary world of 'debitor and creditor' where cash is the key to all relationships—the world whose cynical values he must patiently explain to Roderigo ('Put money in thy purse'). But of course it is actually Iago himself who is the perfect denizen of that world; and it is the essentially mercenary nature of the service he professes that has led some modern producers to interpret his role in anachronistic class terms, typing him as a disgruntled NCO.

The conflicting attitudes towards service exemplified by Iago and Cassio are mirrored in their close kinsmen Antonio and Bosola, the true and false servants of *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613–14). As Master of the Household and Provisor of the Horse, these men are senior court officers; but their lofty titles count for little in a world that allows scant room for the exercise of honourable service, and the action of the play repeatedly collapses the difference between them. For to be a servant of any kind in Webster's corrupted palaces is to expose oneself to insufferable degradation, since 'places in the court' as Bosola insists 'are but like beds in the hospital where this man's head lies at that man's foot, and so lower and lower' (1. 1. 68–70). Antonio's sense of himself as a gentleman who has 'long served virtue, / And ne'er te'en wages of her' (1. 1. 443–4) is no defence against Ferdinand's contemptuous dismissal

of him as a venal drudge, 'A slave, that only smelled of ink and counters, / And never in's life looked like a gentleman, / But in the audit time' (3. 3. 71–3); and what Antonio calls 'the inconstant / And rotten ground of service' (3. 2. 198–9) is amply illustrated in Bosola's humiliating quest for the 'reward' and 'pension' he considers due to one who has placed obedience above integrity and 'rather sought / To appear a true servant than an honest man' (4. 2. 292, 310, 330–1). For this disappointed scholar, service offers only a succession of humiliations, the reward for his faithfulness to the Cardinal being seven years in the galleys and a place whose lofty title is merely a euphemism for 'the base quality / Of intelligencer' (3. 2. 326–7). 'You may see, gentlemen', says Antonio in his playlet of the Just Steward Falsely Accused, 'what 'tis to serve / A prince with body and soul,' (3. 2. 207–8); and his motto reflects the play's deep and pervasive scepticism about the very nature of service.

Such scepticism is perhaps unsurprising in a dramatist whose first tragedy had satirically anatomised the systematic corruption of 'courtly reward / And punishment' (*WD*, 1. 1. 3–4); and one whose sturdily independent dedicatory epistle, with its measured offer of 'duty and *observance*', is so careful to repudiate any suggestion of servility towards his intended patron.[56] Indeed Webster's stance can be explained, at least in part, as that of city dramatist instinctively suspicious of court culture. But his indignation at the venality of master–servant relations brings him close to conservative social commentators like 'I.M', for whom it was precisely the reinscription of service as a purely monetary connection that threatened to unstitch the proper bond between master and servant. In an analysis that anticipates Marx's description of how the bourgeoisie annihilated 'the motley feudal ties that bound man to his *natural superiors*, [leaving] no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous *cash-payment*',[57] the pamphleteer describes how a purely material relationship, in which masters 'reward only with bare wages', is taking the place of the old 'kind usage and friendly familiarity';[58] no wonder, then, that for servants money has become 'the mark whereat they all shoot, the master whom they all obey . . . and the man to whom they all do

[56] See Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford, 1997), p. 334.

[57] *The Communist Manifesto*, quoted in Laslett, p. 16.

[58] *Seruingmans Comfort*, p. 158. On wages as a defining condition of the servant role, see Burnett, pp. 2–3.

reverence'.[59] Of course household relations continued to be governed to some degree by the traditional notion of servants as inferior members of the master's family, dependent more upon his bounty than upon the mechanical regulation of 'bare wages'; yet by the early 1620s William Gouge appeared to take it for granted that service was to be treated as a marketable commodity when he reminded masters that 'wages is due for labour, *as money for wares*'.[60]

In this world of progressively demystified relationships, most household service was coming to seem like a form of wage-slavery, more and more difficult to reconcile—whatever Kent would have us think—with honour or gentility.[61] Even in mercantile Venice, Tommaso Garzoni regarded such employment as vile because the servant, abandoning his 'dear liberty', must 'surrender himself to his master in exchange for money'.[62] As a result, those like 'I.M.' who were anxious to uphold the dignity of their 'gentlemanly' profession, were at pains to establish a qualitative difference between the honourable calling of 'serving men' and the base 'droyling drudgery' or 'servile servitude' of those dismissed as mere 'servants'.[63] But such distinctions—as Antonio's prickly insistence that his virtuous service is something for which he has 'ne'er ta'en wages' indicates—were hard to draw. The status of upper servants and 'officers' had always been an ambiguous one, uneasily poised between family intimacy and dependence;[64] and there is evidence that by the latter end of Elizabeth's reign 'the services of well-born retainers' were increasingly 'neither sought nor offered' as 'more and more men came to feel that household service imposed too

[59] *Seruingmans Comfort*, p. 147. It was not, of course, that 'I.M.' undervalued the material rewards of service, but rather that the reliance on wages as the sole form of reward seemed to him a niggardly and mechanical substitute for the exhibitions of bounty on which serving-men had once relied: '"Why do I give you wages, but in regard of your service"' he imagines a master snarling at his superannuated servant, who has expected 'the lease of a farm . . . or some other preferment' in exchange for his 'long and dutiful' career. '"If you like not me or my wages, you may provide for yourself when you will, I will not be your hinderance", not weighing and considering that his wages is not able to find his man necessities from the middle down: but I dare not speak what I think, neither what might be spoken, concerning wages in these days' (p. 160).

[60] Gouge, p. 685.

[61] Compare the Henry Fitzgeoffrey's 1617 satire cited by Burnett (p. 98): 'What bred a *Scholler*, borne a *Gentleman* . . . And shall I basely now turne *Seruing-Creature*?

[62] Tommaso Garzoni, *Piazza universale di tutti le professionii del mondo* (1586), cited in Dennis Romano, *Housecraft & Statecraft: Domestic Service in Renaissance Venice 1400–1600* (Baltimore, 1996), p. 25.

[63] *Seruingmans Comfort*, pp. 106–7, 112, 113, 146, 157.

[64] Friedman, p. 44.

many burdens for too little reward.'[65] Moreover, at least in I.M.'s view, the boundaries between 'servingmen' and mere 'servants' were liable to constant blurring by the ambitions of an upstart group that was busily inserting itself into the ranks of his own profession, thereby 'compounding . . . this pure and refined metal (whereof servingmen were first framed) with untried dregs and dross of less esteem'.[66] The pamphleteer's indignation echoes the defensive snobbery of the protagonist in *Arden of Faversham*, when he denounces the erstwhile 'velvet drudge' Mosby as a 'base peasant' who has 'Crept into service of a nobleman, / And by his servile flattery and fawning / Is now become the steward of his house, / And bravely jets it in his silken gown' (ll. 322–3, 27–30).[67]

Whatever the objective truth behind such claims, it is clear that, in the minds of some gentlemen at least, household service of any kind had become a source of disparagement: 'when this mixture of mingle-mangle begun' wrote I.M. 'and that [the gentlemanly] servingman saw himself consorted with a crew of such clusterfists, he began to wax weary of his profession, even loathing to live in fellowship with such unserviceable people, and disdaining the degree of a servile drudge' (p. 134).[68] Indeed such abject employment could appear incompatible not merely with gentle birth, but with the increasingly powerful idea of the 'free-born Englishman'[69]—that fortunate inhabitant of a country from which (in William Harrison's phrase) 'all note of servile bondage is removed'.[70]

[65] Friedman, p. 45.

[66] *Seruingmans Comfort*, p. 116.

[67] On extravagance of dress as a symptom of ambition and social irreverence amongst servants, see Gouge pp. 602–3: 'The apparel also which servants wear must be so fashioned and ordered, as it may declare them to be servants, and under their masters, and so it will argue a reverend respect of their masters. One end of the apparel is to show a difference betwixt superiors and inferiors, persons in authority and under subjection. . . . Exceeding great is the fault of servants in their excess apparel. No distinction ordinarily betwixt a man's children and servants: and none betwixt masters and their men, mistresses and their maids. It may be while men and maids are at their masters' and mistresses' finding, difference may be made: though even then also, if they can any way get it, they will do whatever they can to be as brave as they can. . . . New fashions are as soon got up by servants as by masters and mistresses. What is the end of this but to be thought as good as master or mistress? If the Queen of *Sheba* were now living, she would as much wonder at the disorder of servants in these days, as then she wondered at the comely order of Solomon's seruants'.

[68] For further evidence of the decline of the gentleman-servant, see Burnett, pp. 176–8.

[69] See Robert J. Steinfeld, *The Invention of Free Labor: The Employment Relation in English and American Law and Culture, 1350–1870* (Chapel Hill, 1991), pp. 79–98. For the Virginia pioneer Captain John Smith the new colony was a place where 'every man may be master and owner of his owne labour and land', see above, n. 24.

[70] William Harrison, *Description of England* (1587), ed. George Edelen (Ithaca, 1968), p. 118.

The Swiss traveller Thomas Platter described England as 'a servant's prison, because their masters and mistresses are very severe'[71]—a view that would have been understood by Thomas Whythorne, the musician and autobiographer. Whythorne was so convinced that his profession entitled him to be considered 'mine own man, and therewith a master' that when he was approached by a wealthy widow to become 'both her servant and also her schoolmaster' he was outraged: 'I said that to be a schoolmaster I did not mislike, but to be a serving-creature or serving-man, it was so like the life of a water-spaniel, that must be at commandment to fetch or bring here, or carry there, with all kind of drudgery, that I could not like of that life.'[72] So much for Dod and Cleaver's instinctive union of hand and mind! For all his proud speeches, however, Whythorne enrolled himself in the widow's household and, fearful of losing her good will, made himself 'very serviceable to please her'.[73]

Whythorne's rhetorical *non serviam* reflects his conviction that to be a 'serving-creature' was incompatible not merely with the gentle status proudly announced on the title-page of his autobiography, or with the dignity of his calling as a musician, but in some fundamental way with what it meant to 'be one's own man': Whythorne's language prises open the gap between Harrison's 'servile bondage' and the 'undissoluble bonds' of service celebrated by 'I.M.'; and in his determination 'to be free and not bound . . . [or] slave-like'[74] he looks forward to the defiant proclamation of the leveller Richard Overton in *Vox Plebis* (1646) that '[t]o every individual in nature is given an individual property by nature, not to be invaded or unsurped by any. For every one as he is himself, so he hath a self-propriety [property], else he could not be himself . . . by natural birth all men are equally and alike born to propriety, liberty and freedom.'[75] That ideas of this kind were already widespread in the 1620s is indicated by the seventh treatise of Gouge's *Domesticall Dvties*, which prefaces its account of the duties of servants, with a lengthy demonstration '*Of the lawfulness of a master's place and power*', including a point-by-point rebuttal '*Of the Anabaptists' arguments against the authority of masters, and subjection of servants*'. Among the objections that Gouge professes to demolish, by his insistence that true liberty is an inward

[71] Cited in Beier, *Masterless Men*, pp. 24–5.
[72] James M. Osborn (ed.), *The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne* (1962), pp. 10, 28.
[73] Whythorne, p. 34.
[74] Whythorne, p. 46: 'I do think that the teachers thereof [i.e. music] may esteem so much of themselves as to be free and not bound, much less to be made slave-like.'
[75] Cited in Steinfeld, p. 79.

condition, unaffected by the outward constraints necessary to our fallen condition, are the following: (2) 'It is against nature for one to be a servant, especially a bond-servant to another'; (3) 'It is the prerogative of Christians to be *all one*: but subjection of servants to masters is against that prerogative'; (4) 'This subjection is against the liberty that Christ hath purchased for us, and wherewith he hath made us free'; (5) 'we are expressly forbidden to be *servants of men* (1 Corinthians, 7: 23).'[76] Gouge's domestic world is full of servants who, failing to understand that they are 'the Lord's freemen', just as their masters are 'the Lord's servants' (p. 691), think 'their master's house a prison to them, muttering and murmuring against their strait keeping in, as they deem it' (p. 611); this vicious insubordination has become especially prevalent, he maintains, amongst the very servants 'born of gentlemen, and men of good degree' in whom 'I.M.' vested the dignity of his 'gentlemanly profession':

> the reason is, because their birth and parentage maketh them forget their present place and condition; or else (which is worse) maketh them wilfully presume aboue it . . . *Muttering* and murmuring . . . [daring] *unseasonable interruption . . . answering their master at their own leisure . . . flapping their master in the mouth with a lie . . . [and using] evil language . . . behind his back* (pp. 599–600).

Reading such passages one is likely to be reminded of the fuming resentments of Massinger's Luke Frugal or of De Flores in Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*. Reduced to the condition of a 'slave' by his own nieces who 'find employment for him / Fitting an underprentice, or a footman' (1. 1. 102, 42–3), Luke sees himself as 'the family's drudge, design'd / To all the sordid offices their pride / Imposes on me' (3. 2. 5–7), and dreams only of usurping 'The reverence, respect, the crouches, cringes' which his brother can command (2. 1. 83)—a fantasy that achieves temporary fulfilment in his enslavement of Lady Frugal and her tyrannic daughters.[77] De Flores' even more savage indignation at the degrading nature of household service is first expressed in the course of a prolonged meditation on his unlucky physiognomy, where, in a sudden indignant swerve, he appeals to a sense of what is owing to him by virtue of his birth: 'Though my hard fate has thrust me out to servitude, / I tumbled into th'world a

[76] Gouge, pp. 591–4.

[77] Ironically once installed in his new role as bourgeois tyrant Luke complains that 'The masters never prosper'd since gentleman's sons grew prentices' (5. 2. 47–8).

gentleman' (2. 1. 48–9). Like Bosola or Antonio, De Flores appears to be an upper servant, some sort of steward or seneschal, a man entrusted with keys to Vermandero's whole castle; yet the text is curiously non-specific about his precise place, and his life is measured out in trivial 'errands' (2. 1. 30. 59) in a way that makes it (as Whythorne would say) 'no better than a water-spaniel's': his master can order him to retrieve a fallen glove as though he were a mere lackey (1. 1. 226). Moreover even this humiliating kind of employment, we are made to see, hangs on the whim of Vermandero's spoiled daughter—'The next good mood I find my father in, / I'll get him quite discarded' (2. 1. 92–3). De Flores's sexual obsession with Beatrice Joanna is shown as inseparable from the deep sense of social displacement that results: when she engages him to get rid of her inconvenient fiancé, he masks the role of hired killer with a half-satiric, half-sentimental appeal to worn-out conventions, dressing himself in the rhetoric of chivalry, as though he were some medieval knight offering 'service' to his chatelaine in exchange for a grant of 'mercy' (2. 1. 64): 'I would but wish the *honour of a service* / So happy as this mounts to . . . It's a *service* that I kneel for to you' (2. 1. 96–6). De Flores' model here (as in so much else) is Iago, whose mock-betrothal to Othello is similarly sealed by a ritual kneeling and an offer of a bloody but eroticised 'service': 'Witness that here Iago doth give up, / The execution of his wit, hand, heart / To wronged Othello's service' (*Othello*, 3. 3. 468–70). For her part Beatrice—though we know that she means only to '*serve* [her] turn upon him' (2. 1. 68)—almost seems too ready to gratify De Flores' fantasy: 'Hardness becomes the visage of a man well, / It argues *service*, resolution, manhood. . . . There's horror in my *service*, blood and danger . . . I throw all my fears upon thy *service*' (1. 1. 92–3, 117, 140; emphasis added).[78] De Flores's courtly flourishes may be undercut by his acknowledged appetite for the grosser form of 'service' inscribed in his name[79] ('That were much /

[78] It is characteristic of the remarkably dense linguistic texture of this collaborative play that the same romantic language is deployed by the courtly Alsemero in his offer to fight with Piracquo for Beatrice's hand (2. 2. 22–6), and by the disguised courtier, Antonio in his attempted seduction of Isabella (3. 3. 127).

[79] For extended analysis of the play's quibbling on service, see Christopher Ricks, 'The Moral and Poetic Structure of *The Changeling*', *Essays in Criticism*, 10 (1960), 296–9; and Anthony B. Dawson, 'Giving the Finger: Puns and Transgression in *The Changeling*', in A. L. Magnusson and C. E. McGee (eds.), *The Elizabethan Theatre XII* (Toronto, 1993), pp. 93–112). Cf. also Lucio's bawdy compliment to the Duke in *Measure for Measure*: 'he had some feeling of the sport; he knew the *service*' (3. 2. 115–16).

For one of my *performance*, and so *warm* / Yet in my *service*', 3. 4. 55–7; italics added); but his sense of social outrage, when Beatrice discloses the mercenary nature of his 'employment', is none the less genuine for that:

> What, *salary*? Now you move me . . .
> Do you place me in the *rank* of *verminous fellows*
> To destroy things for *wages*? Offer *gold* . . .
> I could ha' *hir'd*
> A *journeyman* in murder at this rate,
> And mine own conscience might have slept at ease,
> And have had the work brought home. (3. 4. 63–71)

'Salary', 'wages', 'hire'—to soil oneself with such considerations is to be reduced from the stately rank of gentleman to the rank state of a louse-ridden peasant, a mercenary mechanical.

At the end of Middleton and Rowley's tragedy, the baffled Alsemero begins a chorus of moralisation on the seeming metamorphoses that have turned his world upside down: as he contemplates his bride's murderous adultery with De Flores, it seems to him not only that beauty (which his naïve platonism equated with virtue) has 'turned to ugly whoredom', but that '*servant* obedience' has unmade itself in the performance of 'a *master*-sin, *imperious* murder' (5. 3. 197–9; emphasis added). Technically, as Frances Dolan and others have shown, De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna's crimes are alike, since each (according to the statutes that legally defined the patriarchal order of things) is guilty of petty treason. But there the resemblance ends: for, in sharp contrast to that earlier tragedy of domestic usurpation *Arden of Faversham*—where the discontented wife, just as much as the ambitious subordinate, is drawn into murder by a desire to 'rule herself', to be her own master—*The Changeling* attributes no conscious politics to Beatrice-Joanna's crime. It appears to issue simply from the caprice of an over-indulged child. In De Flores, by contrast, the dramatists uncover a murderous resentment that springs less from mistaken ambition than from the rankling sense of displacement produced by his servile condition: and his 'master-sin', with its violent usurpation of authority, is shown as driven by desires that are inseparable (indeed almost indistinguishable) from his social resentments. For De Flores' desire for Beatrice is also a desire to level her with himself and thereby render her his 'equal' (3. 4. 13)—a desire to literalise the fantasy of disparagement inscribed in the codes of courtly 'service'. The measure of his triumph lies in the way he compels Beatrice to accept their liaison

in his own pseudo-chivalric terms ('The east is not more beauteous than his *service*', 5. 1. 72; emphasis added), even as he himself sardonically describes it in the language of peasant debauch ('I coupled with your mate / At barley-brake', 5. 3. 163).

William Gouge saw refractory servants as impious social revolutionaries, declaring that '[t]hey who are contrary minded, who are rebellious, and disdain to be under the authority of another, and are ready to say of their master, *We will not have this man to reign over us*, are fitter to live among Anabaptists, then orthodoxal Christians',[80] and from Alsemero's appalled perspective, De Flores' crime is tantamount to such a domestic revolution. But it is 'revolution' in a peculiarly seventeenth-century sense, one which seeks to reassert old values rather than to install new ones. Like the savage melancholy of the satyr-satirists who scourged the corrupt courts of earlier Jacobean drama, or like the protestations of those political dissidents who sought to reaffirm the pieties of an 'ancient constitution', De Flores' bitterness is fuelled more by nostalgia than by any desire of radical innovation. In that sense he is as much the kinsman of Kent, as he is the offspring of Iago.[81]

IV. Domestic enemies and the histrionics of service

> The natural tendency of slavery is to convert the master into a tyrant, and the slave into the cringing, treacherous, false, and thieving victim of tyranny.
> Father Josiah Henson, *Story of His Own Life*[82]

When Vermandero is at last forced to recognise the true nature of the man everyone thinks of as 'honest De Flores' he does so in words that fasten on the public significance of what has been exposed: 'An host of *enemies* entered by citadel / Could not amaze like this' (5. 3. 147–8; emphasis added). What a-mazes him, turning his secure fortress into the menacing 'labyrinth' of Beatrice's imagination (3. 4. 71), is his discovery that the real enemy lies within, concealed, as it were, in those secret spaces to which De Flores' keys and his intimate mastery of domestic topography give him privileged access.[83] The way in which

[80] Gouge, p. 604.

[81] Burnett similarly concludes, though on rather different grounds, that although 'De Flores might be a subversive . . . he is equally a force for the restoration of order' (p. 109).

[82] *Father Henson's Story of His Own Life* (1849), intro. Walter Fisher (New York, 1962), p. 15.

[83] See Michael Neill, '"Hidden Malady": Death, Discovery, and Indistinction in *The Changeling*,' *Renaissance Drama*, NS 22 (1992), 95–121.

Middleton and Rowley capitalise on traditional allegory, to associate control of the castle with possession of the aristocratic body, perfects this nightmare of intimate betrayal—a nightmare that corresponds to a significant change in the attitude of masters towards servants and their place in the family. Dod and Cleaver warn masters against the kind of abuse that can make a servant feel 'hated like a dog . . . [so that] after he becommeth desperate like an horse which turneth upon the striker'.[84] But in the seventeenth century such enmity was increasingly seen as structural to the master–servant relationship. Dod and Cleaver's servant is supposed 'to love [his master and mistress], and to be affectioned towards them, as a dutifull childe is to his father';[85] but servants are more likely to be characterised as 'enemies to their masters, to their friends, and to themselves'.[86] So William Wentworth, in his *Advice to His Son* (1604), warns him against the duplicitous flattery of servingmen, insisting that 'almost all treacheries have been wrought by servants, [because] the final end of their service is gain and advancement.'[87] Because of 'the small love that servants commonly bear to their masters', only 'trembling fear' will keep such creatures under control because, after all, as William Gouge acknowledged in a significant repudiation of patriarchal sentiment, '[t]here are not those motives to stir up love in servants to their masters, as in children to their parents. Except, therefore, through awe and dread they be kept in compass, they will exceedingly transgress.'[88]

The same fears seem to have haunted sixteenth-century Venetian householders who, according to Dennis Romano, 'projected onto servants their fears of murder and mayhem'.[89] 'One has as many enemies as one has servants', declared Fabio Glissenti, who dismisses them all as 'rogues, parasites and sluggards';[90] while Tommaso Garzoni denounced haughty and disloyal domestics (in language that resonates interestingly

[84] *Household Gouernment*, Sig. Aa2v.
[85] *Household Gouernment*, Sig. Aa5.
[86] Harrison, *Description*, p. 119.
[87] Quoted in Friedman, p. 60.
[88] Gouge, p. 616. Cf. also p. 650: 'After that masters have chosen good servants, their duty is well to use them: which by reason of the difference betwixt masters and servants cannot be well done, except masters wisely maintain their authority. A master therefore must be able *well to rule his own house* . . . Not one servant of a thousand, that is not kept under authority, will doe good service . . . [so t]hat masters [must] keep their servants in awe and fear. Children must be *kept in subjection*: much more servants.'
[89] Dennis Romano, *Housecraft & Statecraft: Domestic Service in Renaissance Venice 1400–1600* (Baltimore, 1996), p. 220.
[90] Fabio Glissenti, *Discorsi morali contra il dispiacer del morire* (1596), cited in Romano, p. 38.

with *Othello*) as 'vile kings of trickery . . . unfaithful like the Moors, thieves like Gypsies, assassins like the Arabs, traitors like the Parthians—people who were "created from nothing" and deserve nothing but discipline and labor.'[91] 'The image that emerges,' writes Romano, 'is of duplicitous rogues and rascals who feign loyalty and obedience but in the end disobey and rob their masters. They turn the world upside down and become masters of the situation themselves.'[92] So too in *Ancien Régime* France, Cissie Fairchilds demonstrates a growing tendency for servants to be regarded less as members of the family than as mercenary and 'self-interested stranger[s]' who might at any moment 'rise up and murder them in their beds'.[93] 'He is my domestic enemy', says the master of his 13 year-old valet in Marana's *L'espion dans les cours des princes*;[94] while a contemporary police ordinance remarks on the 'general belief that those whom necessity subjects to servanthood consider their masters as so many enemies.'[95] Among English commentators, 'I.M.' compares mercenary servants to 'Judas, that false traitor, [who] even for the covetous desire of coin, betray[ed] his own master, Christ' (p. 148); whilst Gouge similarly denounces neglectful servants as 'enemies to their masters, to themselves, to the city and country where they live, and to their friends and parents' (p. 609)—not merely because they neglect their duties, but because they often act 'even as treacherous spies, the most dangerous enemies that may be' (p. 629), or are 'so possessed with a devil, as they will seek all the revenge they can, if they be corrected [and] secretly endeavour to take away the life of their masters' (p. 614). Nor is such malice confined to those who are seen to act upon it, since 'many that have not the opportunity to practice such villainies, do notwithstanding in their hearts wish their masters' destruction, and make most fearful imprecations against them; whereby they make themselves guilty of blood before God' (p. 614). Any servant, apparently, no matter how honest and obliging he seems, may nourish rebellion in his heart.

No wonder, then, that so many dramatic texts focus on the figure of 'the ambitious frustrated servant' locating his duplicitous subjectivity,

[91] Tommaso Garzoni, *Piazza universale di tutti le professionii del mondo* (1586), cited in Romano, p. 25.
[92] Romano, p. 40.
[93] Cissie Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies: Servants and Their Masters in Old Regime France* (Baltimore, 1984), p. 156, 131.
[94] Quoted in Fairchilds, p. 137.
[95] Quoted in Fairchilds, p. 100.

as Frances Dolan notes, 'in anger and violence'.[96] Like the routine violence meted out to stage servants, such emotions have been too easily explained away by appeal to theatrical conventions deriving from Greek and Roman comedy (as though convention operated in a social vacuum). The work of Dolan, Burnett, and Frank Whigham has gone some way towards correcting such misconceptions;[97] but because contemporary historicism has generally been more interested in gender than in class, rebellious servants have attracted less attention, even from historically minded critics, than the refractory women with whom they are often associated. Part of the problem may be that, as social historians have taught us, it is not strictly 'class' that is at issue, but rather less familiar discriminations of status in what Laslett described as a 'one-class society'.[98] This is why the disaffections of service typically appear not as the anger of an oppressed under-class, but as the envy or resentment of marginal men—figures whose claims to gentility are felt as increasingly compromised by anything that smacks of a servile dependency. The vicious baiting of Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* (1601) by a confederacy involving an impoverished kinsman, the waiting-woman he is destined to marry, and a compliant household gentleman, has everything to do with the precariousness of rank and the uncertain nature of 'alliance' and 'rule' at the ambiguous social margin which they all inhabit; and Toby's challenge to Malvolio 'Art any more than a steward?' (2. 3. 102–3) serves only to illustrate the instability of the status-boundary it means to declare. Employing the embittered Feste against Malvolio to 'make a fool of him . . . and . . . a *common* recreation' (115, 121; emphasis added) is their way of shoring up their own place by reducing the ambitious steward to a position inferior even to that of the mercenary clown who (for all his 'allowance') is amongst the lowest members of Olivia's household.[99]

[96] Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550–1700* (Ithaca, 1994), p. 41.

[97] See above, fnn. 33, 86. Burnett, Chap. 3 pays particular attention to the way in which the trickster-servant of classical comedy was adapted as an instrument for exploring 'a perceived crisis in service' (p. 79).

[98] Some more recent historians, such as Susan Amussen, have been less embarrassed about using the word: for her 'class' seems to be little more than a synonym for 'rank', and 'refers to the socio-economic hierarchy and the social relations imposed by it' (*An Ordered Society*, pp. 3–4).

[99] *The English Courtier, and the Cuntrey-gentleman* lists fools amongst 'subseruingmen'; this lowly category includes 'bakers, brewers, chamberlains, wardrobers, faulconers, hunters, horsekeepers, lackeys; and (for the most part) a natural fool or jester to make us sport: also a cook, with a scullion or two, launderers, hinds and hog-herds, with some silly slaves, as I know not how to name them' (p. 39).

It is probably no accident that the seventeenth century's two most powerful dramatisations of servile resentment and domestic subversion should have been the work of marginal gentlemen whose fathers had both been stewards in great houses—Philip Massinger and William Congreve. The same 'anger and violence' which *Twelfth Night* reveals as the ground (or even the source) of Malvolio's ingratiating desire provides one of the central motifs in Massinger's deeply reactionary comedy of social-climbing, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1621–5). As the title indicates, Massinger's satire is aimed at an upstart 'money-get' world in which riches have been transformed (in Lady Allworth's words) from a 'useful servant' to a 'bad master' (4. 1. 188–9), and in which the ideal of liberality, exemplified in the households of Lord Lovell and Lady Allworth, is travestied in the generous lines of credit that the usurer Sir Giles Overreach winds around the victims he means to enslave. The play ostensibly celebrates a vision of domestic reciprocity and grateful obedience in which master and servant are indeed joined by I.M.'s 'undissoluable bond of assured friendship', epitomised in the affectionate offers of mutual 'service' (2. 2. 13–14) between Young Allworth and his mother's domestic staff. But all of Massinger's imaginative energy is invested in the nightmares of servile enmity generated by the primitive capitalism of Overreach with his aggressive desire to 'have all men sellers, / And I the only buyer' (2. 1. 32–3). The play begins with a scene in which the prodigal Wellborne attempts a brutal reassertion of authority over his former under-butler, Tapwell, who takes a sneering pleasure in the prospect of changing places with his déclassé master: 'I may allow you thirteen pence a quarter, / And you shall thank my worship' (1. 1. 70–1); and its denouement is precipitated by the fulfilment of the abject Marrall's fantasies of revenge against his own master, Overreach. Accused of being a 'rebel', the parasitical lawyer hurls Sir Giles's overweening insults back in his teeth:

> The 'idiot', the 'patch', the 'slave', the 'booby',
> The property fit only to be beaten
> For your morning exercise, your 'football' or
> 'The unprofitable lump of flesh', your 'drudge',
> Can now anatomize you, and lay open
> All your black plots, and level with the earth
> Your hill of pride, and, with these gabions guarded,
> Unload my great artillery and shake,
> Nay, pulverize the walls you think defend you. (5. 1. 215–24)

The irony which the play means us to relish is that this levelling language is aimed at a tyrant whose 'strange antipathy' to 'the true gentry' has made him a leveller in his own right, one whose most powerful desire is to annihilate those 'fitting difference[s]' by which Lord Lovell's world is ordered (3. 1. 27), and to humble his aristocratic enemies by forcing 'their issue . . . [to] kneel to mine as bondslaves' (2. 1. 82–3). We are asked to recognise that the rebel Marall, like the vindictive Tapwell, is merely an Overreach writ small; so that all three insurgents rightly suffer the same fate of expulsion from the social order they have sought to undo. In this sense the play seems the proper testament of a dramatist whose epistle dedicatory subscribes him 'true servant' to the Earl of Caernarvon, and boasts of his having been born 'a devoted servant to the thrice noble family of your incomparable lady'. But Sir Henry Moody's encomiastic verses on *A New Way*, in their playful vision of an audience helplessly indebted to the poet's wit, toy with a different Massinger, whose mirror-figure in the play is not the dutiful steward, Order, but Overreach himself:

> whilst you teach to pay, you lend . . .
> . . . All are grown indebted more,
> And when they look for freedom run in score.
> It was a cruel courtesy to call
> In hope of liberty, and then enthrall,
> The nobles are your bondmen, gentry and . . .
> I am your debtor, too, but to my shame
> Repay you nothing back, but your own fame. (ll. 3–18)

It is not just the retrospective knowledge of Moody's death as an undischarged bankrupt in Restoration Virginia that gives his mercenary conceits their edge, since they speak to material and psychological realities masked by the deferential gallantry of Massinger's address to his hoped-for patron. Nowhere is such masking more brilliantly exposed than in the ambiguous anti-hero of Congreve's comedy of domestic revolution, *The Double Dealer*. A man poised uneasily between the roles of upper servant and family confidant, the treacherous Maskwell is Marrall's lineal descendant; and, in the mastery of domestic topography that facilitates his erotic ambition, he is the heir of De Flores too. His name, however, draws attention to another aspect of his servile lineage, recalling, for example, Mosca's self-delighting hymn to the profession of parasite—a 'fine elegant rascal that can . . . change a *visor* swifter than a thought' (*Volpone*, 3. 1. 29; emphasis added)—and Iago's egotistical homily on those 'fellows [with] some soul' who 'trimmed in

forms and *visages* of duty, / Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves' (1. 1. 50–1; emphasis added). It is not enough to say that the histrionic parasite, like the witty insubordinate or the boneheaded drudge whose master must cuff him into reason, is a stock figure deriving from Plautus and Terence: the convention takes on new life in this period precisely because it speaks to the very anxieties about domestic enmity that I have been tracing. Thus the enigmatic 'I am not what I am' in which Iago defines his 'native act' and 'show of service' might almost be a deliberate paraphrase of the deceitful servant in Glissenti's *Discorsi* who reveals that 'in the presence of the master I'm on guard and this rather pleases me, for he doesn't really come to know me, and in his presence *I put on a show of being that which I am not*' (p. 193, emphasis added). Cissie Fairchild's description of how servants in the *ancien régime* became 'of necessity skilled actors and actresses, constantly engaged in and extremely adept at hiding their true feelings from their masters'[100] would scarcely have surprised William Gouge. For Gouge, even virtuous service is histrionic in character, since 'rule and subjection are matters of outward policy';[101] but this is even more the case with that deceitful subservience which, following St Paul, he calls 'eye-service' (Ephesians 6. 6). As the vicious 'contrary to sincere service', eye-service takes two forms: 'parasitical service' and 'hypocritical service'. The first of these is a subtle form of disobedience like that practised by Ratsey's actors:

> such servants are they who will be very diligent and faithful in doing such things as their masters see . . . but otherwise behind their master's back, and in things which they hope shall never come to his knowledge, they will be as negligent, and unfaithful as if they were no servants. Yet to satisfy their masters, and to soothe them, they will do anything though never so unlawful.[102]

The second is much more menacing: '*hypocritical* service' is described in language uncannily reminiscent of Iago's self-homage as that 'which is done merely in show: when that is pretended to be done which indeed is

[100] Fairchilds, p. 100.

[101] Gouge, p. 593.

[102] Gouge, p. 165; on eye-service, see also Brathwait, *English Gentleman*, p. 159. An exemplar of such service is Bassiolo, the foolishly ambitious title-character of Chapman's *Gentleman Usher* whose meticulous 'show' of 'order' and 'fit attendance' amongst the under-servants of Lasso's household (3. 2. 4–21) masks 'two inward-swallowing properties . . . servile avarice / And overweening thought of his own worth' (1. 2. 169–71); Bassiolo, however, is a more ambiguous figure than most servants of his kind—a gentleman-servant who, unlike the placeless former mendicant Medice / Mendice, can be recuperated at the end of the play.

not done . . . when servants have *a heart*, and a heart—making show of one heart outwardly, and have another, even a clean contrary heart within them . . . such as one was *Judas*.'[103] But such a one also was Thomas Whythorne, the recalcitrant music-master. On discovering that the 'service' required by his employer was erotic as well as domestic, Whythorne feared that the widow meant only to increase her power over him by bringing him 'in such doting love towards her, whereby I should suffer her to ride and deride me as she list'. Concluding 'that to dissemble with a dissembler was no dissimulation', he therefore resolved to preserve his 'self-propriety' through a strategy of outward compliance, 'playing with her as the hunter doth who hunteth a hare' and preserving 'her good will' by making himself 'very serviceable to please her'—a machiavellian proceeding which he justifies in language startlingly reminiscent of Iago: '[a]nd as she so intended but to make me *serve her turn*, so in the meanwhile I intended to make the most of her that I could to *serve my turn* . . . [and thus] well feathered my nest.'[104]

In the figure of the hypocritical servant, the man with 'a heart and a heart', who is not what he is, and who claims a kind of liberty-in-servitude through his mastery of performance, we are confronted by the baser and more calculating equivalent of Hamlet's claim to have 'that within which passes show'; and in Whythorne's confession or Iago's soliloquies it is possible to witness the production of a recognisably modern subjectivity—the style of selfhood that will achieve its apotheosis in Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew*. To place the perfectly veiled egotism of an Iago or a De Flores beside the resolute self-abnegation of a Kent, the servant who can realise himself only in the enactment of absolute fidelity, is to sense a sharp historical divide: on one side of it lies the 'society of orders' described by social historians—a society that still imagines itself as an organically connected hierarchy, bound by reciprocal duties and obligations which insist that to be a man at all is to be another's 'man'; on the other lies a world of competitive individuals, organised by the ruthless and alienating power of money into something that is beginning to resemble a society of classes. *King Lear* had insisted that the bonds between master and servant were as irrefragable as those between parent and child: Lear may banish Kent, but it is a form of discharge paradoxically sustainable only through Kent's continuing loyalty ('on thine *allegiance* hear me'); and since, in terms of

[103] Gouge, pp. 165, 617.
[104] Whythorne, *Autobiography*, pp. 29–34.

the moral allegory he spells out to the King, Kent's dismissal is based on a misconception of the proper relation between 'power' and 'duty', he is duty-bound to repudiate it, and to reassert the proprieties of the master-servant bond by reappearing—a return of the feudal repressed—in the guise of 'servant Caius'. Hence Kent's refusal, even after Cordelia's restoration of the king, to 'be better suited' expresses an insistence upon the symbolic power of livery to express the proper relation between him and his royal master: 'Where is your servant Caius? . . . I am the very man' (5. 3. 281–4). De Flores, by contrast, already inhabits a world of temporary engagements where the merest whim can 'get him quite discarded' (2. 1. 93). There is no heath in *The Changeling*, only a madhouse whose seething, barely governable appetites make it the secret double of the aristocratic castle; the offstage cries of its lunatics 'within' announcing that the space of the other, of alienation from the bonds of service is not outside, but within.

In a provocative recent essay on *Othello*, Camille Slights has argued that, for early modern culture, slavery and autonomous subjectivity were analogous (and quite readily interchangeable) states, forms of alienation from the body of humankind which amounted to 'social death':[105] it is Othello's 'unhoused free condition' that renders him liable to enslavement by Iago, just as it is Iago's contempt for what Donne called 'just relation' that finally renders him in Venetian eyes no better than a slave. Given the play's explicit concerns, however—the way in which it circles from Iago's repudiation of servile 'follow[ing]' back to Othello's claim to 'have done the state some service'—these arguments might be strengthened and complicated by placing slavery inside the larger matrix of changing attitudes towards service. In this paper I have tried to sketch part of the process by which the notion of what it meant to be a 'servant' was progressively narrowed and specialised until it came to refer almost exclusively to a form of domestic wage-labour, a potentially degrading occupation fundamentally distinct from other forms of 'service'. Of course the process was neither as uniform nor as rapid as I have made it appear: like most historical processes it was piecemeal and fraught with contradictions. With hindsight, it would be easy to mistake the gap between the idealisation of service in *King Lear* and the cynical realism of *The Changeling* as representing a chronologically definable shift towards the modern. But the real significance of

[105] Camille Wells Slights, 'Slaves and Subjects in *Othello*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 48 (1997), 377–90.

this opposition lies in what it reveals about the tense co-existence of such fiercely conflicting attitudes. That said, it is clear that De Flores' ability to articulate the humiliations of servitude marks a symbolically important moment. Ghosts of the old idea of universal service would linger for a long time—whether in trivial forms like the epistolary subscription 'your humble servant', or more substantially in the ideology attached to concepts like that of the 'civil servant', and of national or military 'service'. For at least another two centuries, moreover, small gentry would continue to be employed in superior household offices; but these functions were increasingly set apart from those of the liveried caste (or class) now properly described as 'servants',[106] a growing number of whom (significantly enough) were now women.[107] By the end of the seventeenth century 'Celia Fiennes could find it incongruous that Lord Paget could still summon local gentlemen to wait on him on solemn feast days';[108] and her sense of the incompatibility of servitude with gentility is reflected in the company's tactful obfuscation of Maskwell's domestic role in *The Double Dealer*: is he servant or friend? He cannot easily be both, for 'servants' are no longer automatically defined as part of the 'family'.[109]

By the time we reach Farquahar's *The Beaux' Stratagem* (1706), though it contemplates a dangerously fluid society where 'there is no scandal like rags, nor any crime so shameful as poverty', and where yesterday's handsome footman 'rides in the coach, that he formerly used to ride behind' (1. 1. 127–8), there is no longer any real intermediate space to be exploited between the downstairs world of Scrub the butler and the upstairs world of Lady Bountiful. Struggling to demonstrate their 'intrinsic value', the decayed gentlemen-of-fashion, Aimwell and Archer, are able to maintain the countenance necessary to their amorous 'knight-errantry' (1. 1. 155, 180) only by the Ratsey-like

[106] Felicity Heal also detects 'a widening gulf between employers and employed' as a result of which '[s]ervants became more definitively part of the lower household' (p. 166).
For another valuable account of conditions of service in 18th-century English households, see J. Jean Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth-Century England* (1956). Hecht stresses the importance in this period of the increasingly 'independent attitude of the servant' in the progressive elimination of what remained of a 'system based upon fixed status' and its replacement by 'one that [was] almost entirely contractual' and based on 'the purest self-interest' (p. 71).

[107] Heal, p. 167. Heal notes that the household of the Archbishop of Canterbury, for example, remained 'overwhelmingly male' until at least the 1630s, whereas 'after the Restoration . . . about a third of the smaller establishment was female' (p. 167).

[108] Heal, p. 167.

[109] Ibid.

device of alternating as each other's man-servants. But their stratagem is a fragile one: not only does their landlord suspect that the 'master . . . is so much a gentleman in every manner of way, that he must be a highwayman' (2. 2. 58–9), but the real highwayman, Captain Gibbet, dreams of 'buy[ing him]self some pretty employment in the [royal] household' where he will 'be as snug and honest as any courtier of them all' (4. 2. 145–7). Even Cherry, the innkeeper's daughter and chambermaid, recognises in Archer's degrading guise a tacit capitulation to the levelling world of monetary reward that will license her to purchase him as a husband:

> O sweet sir, I'm *your humble servant*; you're fairly caught. Would you persuade me that any gentleman who could bear *the scandal of wearing a livery* would refuse two thousand pounds, let the condition be what it would. No, no, no, sir.—But I hope you'll pardon the freedom I have taken, since it was only to inform myself of the respect I ought to *pay* you.
>
> 2. 2. 215–20 (emphasis added)

Like *The Tempest*, *The Beaux' Stratagem*, is a comedy of manumission: the *deus ex machina* who resolves its plot is called Sir Charles Freeman; and the play's closing couplet cheerfully insists that 'Consent is law enough to set you free'. But the ambitious Cherry's reward is to be returned to the natal 'servitude' she so hated (2. 2. 190): 'and for the daughter' (Archer asks the now wealthy Aimwell), 'persuade your bride to take her into service' (5. 4. 162–3). What the play unequivocally shows is that 'freedom' is contingent less upon consent than upon cash; and for those like Cherry who cannot keep their hands on it, the happiest ending is to submit to the chains of class and wages, and to accept—as one of Farquahar's own penurious daughters had soon to do—the 'scandal of wearing a livery'. Cherry's perception of that 'scandal' marks the precise distance at which her society stands from the world nostalgically celebrated by the Marquess of Newcastle—the world of universal service in which even 'a knight of six or seven thousand pounds a year' might take pride in 'wearing my Lord of Shrewsbury's blue coat'.

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