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The casting of Sancho in Durfey's *The Comical History of Don Quixote, Parts I-II* (1694)*

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ABSTRACT

Thomas Durfey's *The Comical History of Don Quixote, Part I and Part II* were produced by the United Company in May/June, 1694. As was customary practice, the central characters were taken by the same actors in both plays. The signal exception was the character of Sancho, which in Part I was given to Thomas Doggett, a junior but already popular comedian, and in Part II to old Cave Underhill, who had been acting since the reopening of the theatres in 1660. The reasons for this change seem to be related to the disputes between the managers and actors on the matter of salaries. Textual evidence suggests that, as he was writing the second part, Durfey may not have been certain who would finally play Sancho. Meta-theatrical allusions show that at one point he had Doggett in mind, but eventually revised the dialogue to introduce jokes that were specifically targeted for the older comedian.

KEYWORDS: Thomas Durfey; *The Comical History of Don Quixote*; casting practices; Thomas Doggett; Cave Underhill; restoration drama.

Thomas Durfey's *The Comical History of Don Quixote, Part I and Part II* were performed in quick succession one after the other in May/June, 1694 and, according to contemporary evidence, both plays were very well received (Van Lennep 1965:435-36). In his study of acting in the

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Restoration Peter Holland (1979:69) has argued that Durfey tried to capitalize on the success of Part I while preparing the second, retaining as many actors as possible of the original cast: Bowen (Don Quixote), Bowman (Cardenio), Verbruggen (Ambrosio), Anne Bracegirdle (Marcella), Mrs. Bowman (Luscinda), Mrs. Leigh (Sancho's wife Teresa Pancha) and Mrs. Verbruggen (their daughter Mary the Buxom). The only exception was the character of Sancho, which had been given in Part I to an emerging comic star, Thomas Doggett, and was transferred in Part II to a veteran comedian, Cave Underhill.¹ Holland partly justifies the substitution observing that the role of Sancho was better suited to Underhill (1979:69) but, as shall be argued below, in his still short career on the London Stage Doggett had played the older coxcomb as often the young dolt. Moreover, the change of actor was extremely rare in Restoration practice and deserves further scrutiny. In the case of *The Comical History*, textual evidence suggests that Durfey may have written the part of Sancho in the second comedy with Doggett in mind, but added jokes specifically designed for Underhill once the company decided to replace him.

Durfey's choice of the two-part format, though not very common in Restoration theatre, was not without precedent. The clearest parallel is surely Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada*, which had been produced more than twenty years earlier (December-January 1670-1671). As Durfey did with *Don Quixote*, Dryden saw that his source material afforded abundance of incident enough to extend the adaptation over two plays, and had the shrewd commercial sense to proceed accordingly. The use of the same cast for both Part I and Part II reinforced the unity of the plays and helped entice spectators to return to the playhouse and follow the fortunes of the characters: Hart played Almanzor, Kynaston was King Boabdalin, Lydall Prince Abdalla, Major Mohun Abdemelech, Nell Gwyn Almahide, Rebecca Marshall Lyndaraxa, and Elizabeth Boutell Benzayda. When the two parts were published together, in 1672, the cast was only printed at the beginning, before Part I, inviting the assumption that there were

¹ Durfey eventually wrote a third part, which was produced in November 1695 (Van Lennep 1965:453-54). On this occasion, only Mrs. Verbruggen acted the same character as in Parts I and II: Mary the Buxom. The rest of the cast had to be replaced, since almost all the actors who took the chief roles in the first two plays had defected to Betterton's new company at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Sancho was this time played by Adrian Newth.

no changes for Part II. Should there be any doubt, prompter John Downes in his *Roscius Anglicanus* makes it clear that the roster of actors was the same for both plays, listing their names under the heading “*The Conquest of Granada, 2 Parts*” (1987:38-39).

Even if the plays were not originally conceived in two parts, in the cases when authors wrote a sequel several years later, the custom was still to retain the actors who had played the chief roles the first time. That, for instance was the case with Aphra Behn’s *The Rover* (produced 1677). Behn wrote a second part a few years later (1681), exploring the adventures of the rakish hero Willmore after his wife Hellena died and he removed to Madrid. Willmore, the Rover, was played by William Smith, the actor who had taken the role in the original production; the only other character to reappear in the second part, the country coxcomb Ned Blunt, was also assumed by the same actor as in 1677, Cave Underhill. Otway’s *The Soldier’s Fortune* (1680) and *The Atheist* (1683) – advertised on the title-page as “the Second Part of *The Souldiers Fortune*” (1932:291) – afford another example: the male leads Beaugard and Courtine were acted by Betterton and Smith in both cases. It is true that Sylvia, the only female character that is carried over from the first play, was originally given to Mrs. Price and changed to Mrs. Currer in *The Atheist*, but only because Mrs. Price was no longer available by the time this comedy was produced in 1683: as Highfill *et al.* note (1987:12.158), her last recorded appearance on stage was in the anonymous comedy *Mr. Turbulent*, in January 1682. The practice of maintaining the actors was observed even when the plays had been written by different authors. In January 1696, the Drury Lane company produced Colley Cibber’s *Love’s Last Shift; or, The Fool in Fashion*; by the end of the year they staged *The Relapse*, by John Vanbrugh, a comedy which as the title-page explicitly stated was written as “the Sequel of *The Fool in Fashion*” (1927:1). The central characters were impersonated by the same actors in both plays: Verbruggen played the rake Loveless, Mrs. Rogers his wife Amanda, and Colley Cibber Sir Novelty Fashion.²

² The only other character to reappear was a secondary one, (Young) Worthy, who was played by different actors: Hildebrand Horden in *Love’s Last Shift* and George Powell in *The Relapse*. However, once again the change was due to the fact that the actor who originally created the role was not available. Horden had been killed in a quarrel at the Rose Tavern, Covent Garden, in May 1696 (Highfill *et al.* 1982:7.415).

The use of different actors for Sancho in Parts I and II of *The Comical History of Don Quixote* constitutes therefore a remarkable exception, one that is even more striking since the two plays were staged in the same season, one shortly after the other. In Part I the character was given to Irish born comedian Thomas Doggett, who had first appeared on the London stage c. 1690, but had speedily shot to fame acting precisely in two comedies by Durfey: *Love for Money* (1691) and *The Marriage-Hater Matched* (1692). His performance in *The Marriage-Hater* was especially celebrated and earned him the nickname Solon, after his part in the play. His rendering of this character was so memorable that the *London Mercury* asked its readers

Whether in Justice [the author] is not obliged to present Mr Dogget (who acted Solon to so much Advantage) with half the Profit of his Third Day, since in the Opinions of most Persons, the good Success of his Comedy was half owing to that Admirable Actor? (26 February 1692; Van Lennep 1965:404)

Doggett's popularity could have made him a natural candidate for a leading comic part in any new play the company had in hand but, even so, it may seem surprising at first sight that he should have been cast as Sancho: Doggett was a junior actor; his date of birth is far from certain, but there is general consensus in placing it c. 1670 (Highfill *et al.* 1975:4.442). If this is correct, he would have been in his mid-twenties when he played Sancho, a character old enough to have a grown-up daughter who goes by the name of Mary the Buxom. But either Doggett was older than we believe – his biographer T. A. Cook placed his birth c. 1650 (1908:45) – or he excelled at impersonating older men: the character he played in Durfey's *Love for Money*, Deputy Nicompoop, is the husband of a mature, domineering woman (played by a male actor, Anthony Leigh), and the doting father of a thirteen-year-old romp. In Shadwell's *The Volunteers* he was Colonel Hackwell Sr., described in the *Dramatis Personae* as "an old Anabaptist Collonel of Cromwell's," old enough to have fought in the Civil Wars and to have a grown-up son, Hackwell Jr., who is also a colonel in the army (1930:367). In Congreve's *The Old Bachelor* he played Fondlewife, "the old Banker with the handsom Wife" (2011:1.1. 64). Clearly, casting Doggett as the family man, with grown-up children, was something that was not due to a last minute change, or an emergency because another

actor was unavailable. He had been playing these roles since he first appeared on the London stage.

The United Company's straitened circumstances must also have recommended Doggett for the part of Sancho. Of the trinity of comedians that had formed a pillar of the Duke's, and then the United Company, in the 1670s and 1680s – Cave Underhill, James Nokes, and Anthony Leigh – only Underhill remained by 1694: Leigh had died in 1692 (Highfill *et al.* 1984:9.223) and Nokes had retired (Highfill *et al.* 1987:11.42). Moreover, in the 1693-1694 season the company was heavily in debt and the patentees were trying to recoup their losses cutting on actors' salaries. As Colley Cibber explains, they attempted to execute their plan putting pressure first on the senior members of the company:

The Patentees, it seems, thought the surer way was to bring down their Pay in proportion to the Fall of their Audiences. To make this Project more feasible they propos'd to begin at the Head of 'em, rightly judging, that if the Principals acquiesc'd, their Inferiors would murmur in vain. To bring this about with a better Grace, they under Pretence of bringing younger Actors forward, order'd several of Betterton's, and Mrs. Barry's chief Parts to be given to young Powel and Mrs. Bracegirdle.³ (1968:105-106)

The first part of *The Comical History* was rehearsed and produced as the company was immersed in this war. It makes sense, therefore, that the managers should have pushed for a junior member of the troupe like Doggett, rather than old Underhill, to take on a new comic part. Durfey must initially have assumed that Doggett would act Sancho in both plays, since he introduced jokes in both comedies alluding to roles Doggett had played previously with great success. In Part I, when Sancho's wife Teresa first appears on stage, she angrily scolds her husband for deserting her, piling insults on him:

Oh, thou Dromedary, thou Founder'd Mule without a Pack-Saddle;
or what other Beast shall I call thee, for Man thou art not, nor hast
not been to me, Heaven knows the time when; art not thou
ashamed to see me, thou Nicompoop. (1694a:1.2 p.7)

³ The patentee's plan partly backfired since Mrs. Bracegirdle refused to cooperate, as Cibber notes: "their first Project did not succeed; for tho' the giddy Head of Powel, accepted the Parts of Betterton; Mrs. Bracegirdle had a different way of thinking, and desir'd to be excus'd, from those of Mrs. Barry; her good Sense was not to be misled by the insidious Favour of the Patentees" (1968:106).

The term “nicompoop” recalled the name of henpecked husband Doggett had acted in Durfey’s *Love for Money*. In Part II, when Sancho assumes government of the island of Baratavia and surprises everyone exercising shrewd judgement, his subjects acclaim him crying “A Solon, a Solon” (1694b:5.1, p.55). Whereas Cervantes – as Shelton’s English translation faithfully records – has the people compare Sancho to “a second Salomon” (1620:2.45 p.297), Durfey substituted Solon as the prototype of wisdom, playfully pointing to the foolish character in *The Marriage-Hater Matched* that had turned Doggett into a comic star.

The use of these playful allusions to parts taken previously by popular actors was frequent in Restoration comedy. In *The Rise and Fall of Caius Marius* (1679), Otway gave Mrs. Barry an epilogue which pointed to her performance in Shadwell’s recent *The Woman Captain* (1679), in which she had played the title character. The text refers humorously to the recruiting of volunteers prompted by the French invasion scare in the aftermath of the Popish Plot and Mrs. Barry then adds: “Nay, sure at last th’Infection generall grew / For t’other day I was a Captain too” (1968:Epil.13-14). Durfey seems to have been particularly fond of these meta-theatrical jokes. He wrote the Prologue to *The Virtuous Wife* (1679) in the form of a dialogue between Mrs. Barry and two of the company’s chief comedians, James Nokes and Anthony Leigh. Mrs. Barry complains that her part (the “virtuous wife”) must necessarily be dull and finds it unfair that Nokes and Leigh should have been given much better roles. Leigh and Nokes get caught up in the argument and begin to throw barbs at each other:

NOKES Ye lye.
And you’re a Pimp, a Pandarus of Troy
A Gripe, a Fumble.

LEE Nay, and you ‘gin to quarrel,
Gad ye’re a Swash, a Toby in a Barrel,
Would you were here. (1680:Prol.)

Their gibes make comic capital of characters which each of them had played before. Nokes accuses Leigh of being “a Pimp, a Pandarus of Troy,” pointing to his impersonation of Pandarus in Dryden’s *Troilus and Cressida* (1679). He had also acted Fumble in Durfey’s *A Fond Husband* (1677) and, in all likelihood, Gripe in Shadwell’s *Woman Captain*, for which no cast has been preserved. Leigh in turn mocks

Nokes as a “Swash” – a character in *The Woman Captain* that must have fallen to his lot – and a “Toby in a Barrel,” alluding to his part in Durfey’s *Madam Fickle* (1676), which includes a scene in which Toby hides in a barrel to escape the constable (5.2). But the most striking example is perhaps the scene in *The Richmond Heiress* (1693) in which Durfey introduces a character who has a passion for the theatre. He has returned to London after a long absence and wants to hear all about his favourite actors:

And prithee how does the Play-House? How does Mr. Betterton, and my old Friend, Mr. Nokes? Prithce when did he play Sir Martin last, hah? Does Mr. Sandford Act the Villain still, prithee? And jolly Cave Underhill in *Epsom Wells*? How does my Comical Justice do, hah?⁴ (1987:1.1 p.13-14)

He goes on to ask about Mrs. Barry, Powell, Bowen, Mrs. Bracegirdle, and comes at last to an actor that was just then in the ascendancy: “Then there is Mr. Doggett, that Acted Solon so purely, O Lord, what’s become of him, prithee?” (1987:1.1 p.15). The joke, of course, is that the character he is speaking to – Quickwit – was played precisely by Doggett. But the whole scene shows that the playwright expected the audience to be familiar with the most popular parts played by their favourite actors.

As he introduced the allusions to Nicompoop and Solon, then, Durfey was obviously thinking that Doggett would act Sancho. However, when the second part of *Don Quixote* opened, the character was played by Underhill. The removal of Doggett from the cast may, once again, have been related to a squabble over salaries. Doggett’s pay had been substantially reduced during this season and about May/June 1694 he appealed to one of the patentees, Charles Killigrew, who agreed to give him a raise (Sawyer 1986:12). In light of the iron hand policy pursued by the leading manager, Christopher Rich, the chances that this promise would be honoured were slim. Instead, as they had done before with Betterton or Barry, the patentees seem to have decided to teach Doggett a lesson depriving him of a good part.

⁴ James Nokes had played the title character in Dryden’s *Sir Martin Marr-All* (1667), with resounding success. Samuel Sandford was a character actor who specialized in the parts of evil men, such as Maligni in Thomas Porter’s *The Villain* (1662). In Shadwell’s *Epsom Wells* (1672), Underhill had acted Justice Coldpate, a country coxcomb who hates London.

The choice of Underhill to replace Doggett, besides, was far from being a desperate remedy. Underhill was a seasoned comedian and, though he had already turned sixty, he kept appearing regularly and creating new roles. According to Cibber, he excelled in the portrayal of “the Stiff, the Heavy, and the Stupid” (1968:89). He had made a trademark of the characters of the formal fool and the hypocritical puritan, like Obadiah in Sir Robert Howard’s *The Committee* (1662), but he also specialized in rustic types and country clowns, from the Gravedigger in *Hamlet* (1661), to Justice Clodpate in Shadwell’s *Epsom Wells* (1672) or Blunt in Behn’s *The Rover* (1677). Sancho’s sententious speech, his earthy humour and coarse jests would fit him to a tee. Durfey must have been satisfied with the replacement, or at least endeavoured to make the most of the situation, and introduced small changes to adjust the character to the older comedian. The *Dramatis Personae* presents him in Part I as “a dry shrewd Country Fellow, Squire to Don Quixote, a great speaker of Proverbs, which he blunders out upon all occasions, tho’ never so far from the purpose.” In Part II, the description of the character is modified slightly to incorporate the “heaviness” that, according to Cibber, distinguished Underhill: “a dull, heavy, Country Booby in appearance, but in discourse, dry, subtle, and sharp, a great repeater of Proverbs [...]” Moreover, whereas in Part I, there is no reference to Sancho’s age beyond what must be inferred from his family circumstances, in Part II he is clearly portrayed as being older. Thus, in the Epilogue, which he speaks with his daughter, he refers to himself as her “old Dad” (1694b: Epil).

Durfey must also have seen his chance to exploit the comic potential of Underhill’s long career on the Restoration stage and create some jest building on one of his previous roles. The second part of *The Comical History* introduced the episode in which the Duke and Duchess play a prank on Don Quixote and Sancho, making them believe that Dulcinea has been enchanted and that the spell can only be broken if Sancho agrees to take three thousand lashes on his buttocks. Don Quixote is naturally overjoyed to hear that his lady can be disenchanting so easily, but Sancho does not appear too willing to collaborate. When the Duchess insists, trying to persuade him, he retorts:

Why, what a plague has my generous Backside to do with
Inchantments? or why must I be oblig’d to demolish the Beauty of
my Backside, to recover the Beauty of her Face; ‘tis my Masters

business I think, and since he is to enjoy the one, let him take the tother along too, for my part Ile have nothing to do with it. (1694b:2.2 p.20)

At that point, the page impersonating the enchanted Dulcinea breaks in, pretending outrage at Sancho's cowardice and lack of compassion:

Is it then possible, thou Soul of Lead, thou Marble-breasted Rocky-hearted Squire, that thou shouldst boggle at such easie penance, to do thy Lord and me so great a favour? [...] The thing impos'd is but a flaunging, a punishment each paultry School-boy laughs at, and which each rampant antiquated Sinner chooses for Pleasure. (1694b:2.2 p.20)

The page's words introduce a bawdy joke at the expense of the pervasive resort to corporal punishment in English schools and what is presented as an almost natural consequence: a penchant for sadomasochist practices later in life. The contrast between the disciplined schoolboy and the debauched adult who willingly engages in the same activity would be comical enough, but Durfey's choice of the adjective "antiquated" to describe this man turns the jest accusingly on Sancho as impersonated by the ageing Underhill. It slyly suggests that, for all his protests, Sancho may actually relish the prospect of the flogging or, if not, he will very likely warm to the task in time.

For the regular theatre-goer, or avid reader of play-texts, the scene would resonate with added mirth. They had seen Underhill before in the character of such an "antiquated sinner," eagerly demanding a lashing for pleasure. The play was Shadwell's *The Virtuoso* (1676) and Underhill acted Snarl, "an old, pettish fellow, a great admirer of the last age, and a declaimer against the vices of this, and privately very vicious himself" (*Dramatis Personae*).⁵ He is "antiquated," therefore, both in terms of his age and his adherence to old forms and fashions. His professed scorn for the libertine mores of the times, however, is blatantly hypocritical. We soon learn that he keeps a mistress and in Act 3 we see him interacting with her. The

⁵ The quarto edition of Shadwell's comedy published in 1676 does not list the actors' names. However, a manuscript cast has been preserved in the copy held at the Clark Library. Van Lennep (1965:244) gives Underhill as playing Sir Samuel, but as Langhans has pointed out, this is an incorrect transcription: Nokes acted Sir Samuel and Underhill Snarl (1973:152).

humour of the scene is enhanced as Snarl remains true to his character, lamenting the decline of old mores, and railing against the vices of the age just as he is about to indulge in them himself. His mistress Figgup wisely follows suit, exclaiming against the “impudent creatures of the town” (1997:3.2.36-37) and commending Snarl as a “discreet, sober person of the last Age” (1997:3.2.57). Figgup’s act does the trick for Snarl and, as the temperature rises, he asks for a special service which she seems reluctant to perform:

SNARL Ah poor little rogue! In sadness, I’ll bite thee by the lip,
i’faith I will. Thou hast incenst me strangely, thou hast fir’d my
blood, I can bear it no longer, i’faith I cannot. Where are the
instruments of our pleasure? Nay, prithee do not frown, by the
mass thou shalt do’t now.

FIGGUP I wonder that should please you so much, that pleases me
so little.

SNARL I was so us’d to’t at Westminster School, I could never leave
it off since. (1997:3.2.58-66)

Snarl then pulls the carpet from the table and reveals “*three or four great Rods.*” He turns to his mistress and tells her exactly what he wants: “Very well, my dear rogue. But dost hear, thou art too gentle. Do not spare thy pains. I love castigation mightily” (1997:3.2.68-69).

Shadwell’s *The Virtuoso* was a repertory piece. Van Lennep offers evidence of two performances only, in May and June 1676 (1965:244-45), but Downes notes that the comedy was “very well Acted and got the Company great Reputation” (1987:78). The fact that other comedies of the period – like Behn’s *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678) or Dufey’s *Sir Barnaby Whigg* (1681) – allude to some of its characters or episodes bears witness to its continuing popularity.⁶ Besides, the comedy was reprinted in 1691, which suggests that it had been acted recently. It is then reasonable to assume that members of the audience would recall this scene with glee when the page speaks of

⁶ In Behn’s *Sir Patient Fancy*, Sir Credulous, acted by James Nokes, exclaims “then whip slap dash, as Nokes says in the play” (1996:4.1.275); this nonsensical tag was characteristic of Sir Samuel Hearty, the character he himself had played in *The Virtuoso*. Dufey’s *Sir Barnaby Whigg* introduces a comic echo of Shadwell’s play as one character threatens to kill another, having him “dissected, anatomized like a Chichester Cock-Lobster, or so” (1681:2.2 p.23). The dissection of the Chichester lobster is one of the experiments described by the virtuoso (1997:1.1.118-19, 1.1.247-48).

“antiquated sinners” that enjoy a good flogging. Underhill’s physical presence would give the lie to Sancho when he complains against the lashing and would create a meta-theatrical joke that the spectators were bound to enjoy.

Although the use of two different actors to play the part of Sancho in Durfey’s *The Comical History of Don Quixote, Parts I and II* was certainly unusual, a close look at the circumstances surrounding the production of the plays suggests that the change was motivated by the internal disputes affecting the company in the 1693-1694 season and the patentees’ attempts to force the actors to accept cuts in their salaries: they originally chose a junior member of the company, Thomas Doggett, but replaced him with veteran Cave Underhill when Doggett attempted to negotiate better conditions. Textual evidence indicates that Durfey initially assumed that Doggett would act Sancho in both plays. However, when the role was given to Underhill in Part II he clearly was quick enough to react. He made small but effective changes in the script to adapt the character to the older comedian, taking advantage of the audience’s familiarity with Underhill’s most popular parts to introduce jokes specifically designed for him.

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