Hughes, Leo, *THE EARLY CAREER OF "Farce" IN THE THEATRICAL VOCABULARY,* **Studies in English,** *20 (1940:July 8)*
Extracted from *PCI Full Text,* published by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.

# THE EARLY CAREER OF *FARCE* IN THE THEATRICAL VOCABULARY

BY LEO HUGHES

The term *farce* has had an interesting history in English.[1] Today it is restricted almost entirely to its derived sense of boisterous dramatic composition; but *farce* did not enter theatrical vocabulary until the Restoration, though the word itself was current in English soon after the Norman Conquest.

*Farce* is derived from Latin *farcire,* to stuff or fill; it seems to have been first employed by the English as a term of cookery; for medieval and renaissance cook-books speak of farcing a goose, a turkey, a pie. Even in its early history, however, *farce* was not confined to the kitchen. Chaucer, in describing his Friar, observes that his "typet" was "ay farsed ful of knyves."[2]

The next step, the figurative application, was an easy one. Again Chaucer will serve very well in supplying an example: In *The Legend of Good Women,* he speaks of "wordes farsed with plesaunce."[3] In this last sense the term was to be employed for the next two centuries and more. A few examples will suffice. In *Henry V*, the king, lamenting the heavy responsibilities and empty rewards of royalty, soliloquizes:

> I am a King that find thee; and I know
> 'Tis not the balm, the sceptre and the ball,
> The sword, the mace, the crown imperial,
> The intertissued robe of gold and pearl,
> The farced title running 'fore the king.[4]

---

[1]The *N. E. D.* must, of course, be the basis or beginning of such a study as this; I have depended on it for some of the information from pre-Restoration times. For the remainder of the materials I have gone to the original works themselves.

[2]*Prologue to the Canterbury Tales,* 1.233.

[3]1.1373.

[4]Act IV, scene i, 279–283.

Copyright (c) 2003 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) University of Texas at Austin (UTPress)

The nearest suspicion of a theatrical use of *farce* in pre-Restoration times occurs in the work of Ben Jonson, who speaks with characteristic acerbity of his opponents' using "stale apothegmes . . . to farce their Scenes withall."[5] But here the connection with the theatre is an accidental one.

The history of farce in the theatre begins in France during the Middle Ages, and, according to a well-established theory, it may be traced back to the liturgical origins of the drama itself.

> Dans le langage liturgigue, la farce fut une interpolation, une sorte de paraphrase que l'on mêlait au texte consacré de l'office canonique. On lit ainsi dans de vieux *cérémoniaux: 'Le Kyrie eleison* se chantera aux jours de fête *avec farce.'* . . . Quoiqu'on ne voie guère au premier abord quelle ressemblance il peut exister entre ces interpolations, généralement graves et sérieuses, et les farces de théâtre dont une gaiete licencieuse paraît le caractère commun et principal; il est certain néanmoins que l'origine du mot est la même dans toutes ses acceptions.[6]

The development of a vernacular religious drama in England parallels that in France, but no such close resemblance exists between the developments in the secular drama in the two countries. In France the acting of both religious and non-religious plays fell into the hands of the various amateur societies of actors; among these, particularly *les confréries joyeuses, les Basochiens,* and *les Enfants-sans-Souci,* there developed a whole host of brief, boisterous, often quite vulgar plays to which the title *farce* was attached.[7] One looks in vain, however, for a similar development in England. Whatever the cause, no such societies of amateur actors came into being, and conse-

---

[5]Introduction to *Cynthia's Revels.*

[6]L. Petit de Julleville, *La Comédie et les Moeurs en France au Moyen Age,* Paris, 1886, 52–53.

[7]L. Petit de Julleville, *Les Comédiens en France au Moyen Age,* Paris, 1885.

Copyright (c) 2003 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) University of Texas at Austin (UTPress)

quently no development of farce occurred.[8] The existence in English literature of a few isolated plays of undoubtedly farcical cast makes this general absence all the more striking. The *Secunda Pastorum* is an excellent indication of the potentialities, but it is almost wholly isolated. An even closer parallel to French farce is to be found in a much later group of plays, the interludes of John Heywood, for which parallels, if not sources, may be found in contemporary or earlier French drama.[9] Yet he invariably called his pieces *interludes*, a term which seems to have been applied with equal readiness to Heywood's lively little plays or to such pious dramas as the *Temptation of Our Lord.*

It is curious to find a different story in Scotland. Considerably closer in spirit to the French, the Scotch borrowed the term *farce* and used it with some frequency to describe dramatic performances. That the type of play indicated by this word (in all its protean manifestations of Scotch orthography) was identical with the French farce, there is every reason to doubt. Miss Mill suggests that in Scotland *farce* referred to the machine-play rather than to rough, homely comedy.[10] Certainly the little comic interim called "The Puir Man and the Pardoner," which Sir David Lyndsay inserted between two more elevated parts of his *Thrie Estaitis,* would come very near fitting the characteristics for farce, in the broad modern sense at least; yet Lyndsay called it an "interlude," using the English term. Not that Lyndsay himself did not know or

---

[8]"There is nothing in England corresponding to the plentiful production of farces by amateur associations of every kind which characterized fifteenth century France. . . . The early suppression of the Feast of Fools and the strict control kept over the Boy Bishop afforded no starting-point for *sociétés joyeuses,* while the late development of English as a literary language did not lend itself to the formation of *puys.*" E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage,* Oxford, 1903, II, 197–198.

[9]Karl Young, "The Influence of French Farce upon the Plays of John Heywood," *Modern Philology,* II (1904), 97–124.

[10]Anna Jean Mill, *Mediaeval Plays in Scotland,* Edinburgh, 1927.

Copyright (c) 2003 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) University of Texas at Austin (UTPress)

use the French word. In his *Testament of Papyngo* (1530) he speaks of "ballattis, farses, and . . . plesand playis." Moreover, a sixteenth century editor of Lyndsay's works refers to him as the author of "Fairsis and publict Playis,"[11] whatever the writer had in mind. All this is not to insist that the Scotch had a definite dramatic *genre* unknown in the England of that day, but to suggest that the Scotch were under a greater obligation to the French than the English were—for a term if not for a dramatic form.

The English were not affected by any desire to borrow either name or use from their neighbors, and apparently remained impervious throughout the first two Stuart reigns. So far as I have been able to ascertain, the first use of the word in England to describe a dramatic performance occurs in 1629, and under very interesting circumstances. A French troupe came to London in that year, doubtless at the personal invitation of the French queen of Charles I, and played for several days. In the records of Sir Henry Herbert, the Master of Revels, one finds under November 4: "For the allowinge of a French company to playe a farse at Blackfryers . . . 2 *l*."[12] Whether or not the performance which Herbert records was actually a farce would be hard to say. Certainly the French troupe had serious plays in its repertory, but there is nothing to prevent their having played a farce. Their chances of succeeding with a less subtle type of play certainly must have been better than if they had played a more profound one, and on this occasion they must have been driven to every resource to please.[13] The 1629 record seems to be unique; neither word nor dramatic form (if the French troupe presented it) stuck.

---

[11]Henry Charteris, cited by Miss Mill, *op. cit.*, 78.

[12]J. Q. Adams, *The Dramatic Records of Sir Henry Herbert*, New Haven, 1917, 59; note that Brande and Prynne (quoted by Adams) use "comedye" and "play" in referring to the performance.

[13]Adams, *loc. cit.*, quotes Thomas Brande's remark, which shows that the French troupe was none too warmly received: "Glad I am to saye they were hissed, hooted, and pippen-pelted from the stage, so as I do not thinke they will soon be ready to try the same againe."

Copyright (c) 2003 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) University of Texas at Austin (UTPress)

With the Restoration the history of *farce* is no longer so easy to trace. No longer was the word used, on rare occasions, to mean merely to stuff, to pad, to inflate, as in the days of Shakespeare and Jonson. That meaning was kept, to be sure. The important thing here, however, is the adoption of the word into the dramatic terminology, in imitation of the French. How accurately the English used *farce,* and what it meant to Restoration critics and commentators, must be ascertained; but before attacking the problem directly, I should like to speak briefly about another—and, to the English, new—figurative use of the term. From using *farce* to apply to a theatrical performance, the object of which is to arouse laughter, it is an easy step to using the word to describe anything ridiculous. Such an opportunity was not long neglected. In a revival of Jonson's *Silent Woman,* at Whitehall, in November, 1660, in the prologue the term "Farse" is used to describe the government which has just been forced to abdicate.[14] The analogy to the theatre is kept throughout. Here is an example not only of the strong animosity of the powers of the day toward the preceding rulers, but also an example of how the word *farce* could be used as a term of opprobrium, a cudgel with which to belabor an opponent—an opponent in the government or in the theatre.

This use of the term to indicate the activity of a political antagonist occurs again during the period, as in Crowne's *English Friar* (1690), where the "Popish" activities of the priests during the reign of James II are spoken of as "farce." Somewhat different, but suggestive of the same type of thing, is the savage satire on the fugitive king, written in the same year and called *The Royal Flight: or, The Conquest of Ireland. A New Farce.* Dryden used the expression in his epilogue recited at the initial performance of the united company, November,

[14]Quoted by A. G. Noyes, *Ben Jonson on the English Stage,* Cambridge, Mass., 1935, 176.

Copyright (c) 2003 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) University of Texas at Austin (UTPress)

1682, to refer to the noisy rabble of fops in the pit who made it difficult for an attentive playgoer to enjoy the performance—

> These noisy Sirs so loud their Parts rehearse,
> That oft the Play is silenc'd by the Farce.[15]

Though *farce* is used ordinarily to describe or refer to a scene or bit of action, it may be applied to a character. In D'Avenant's *The Rivals* (1664) Leucilla calls Cunopes a "farse."[16] One of the characters in Ravenscroft's *Careless Lovers* (1673) refers to another as "a meer Farce!"[17] Twenty years later the word is applied to a figure beyond, or outside the world of the theatre, in Robert Gould's poem "The Corruption of the Times by Money. A Satyr" (1693), in which a young fop parading the streets in all his sartorial finery is referred to as "a farce."

It would be a mistake, of course, to leave the impression that *farce* was used more often figuratively than as a designation of a theatrical *genre*. Quite the contrary, it was immediately adopted into the stage vocabulary after the Restoration, and used with great abandon to describe a confusing array of things. It was, for example, employed throughout the entire period from 1660 to 1700 to label any piece of comic action—preferably involving trickery or practical jokes—on the stage. In Lacy's *Old Troop* (1665) the Lieutenant calls Raggou's choice of hanging or of marrying the old *femme de guerre*, Doll, a farce which might turn out as a tragedy or a comedy.[18] Antonio invites Marcello, in Maidwell's *Loving Enemies* (1670), to see his farce of putting Circumstantio into the pillory because of his penchant for bombast.[19] Mrs. Behn uses

---

[15]Montague Summers, *The Works of Thomas Otway*, London, 1926, I, 234.

[16]Act. II.

[17]Act II, scene i.

[18]Act V.

[19]Act I, scene i.

Copyright (c) 2003 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) University of Texas at Austin (UTPress)

the term similarly in two of her comedies[20] to describe a bit of stage trickery wherein gullible old men are fooled. The contemporary use of the term is confusing if one trusts implicitly in the accuracy of the user. The word may be applied to a scene in a play which could never be described as farcical—for that matter, to a scene which is not farcical in itself. This hazy kind of usage occurs several times in the last decade of the century, in Congreve's *Love for Love* (1695), where Valentine calls his playing sick a farce;[21] or, again, in Cibber's *Woman's Wit* (1696), where the term is used on two different occasions to apply to parts of the intrigue which could hardly with any accuracy be termed farcical.[22]

The same lack of definiteness is shown in the application of *farce* to a type of dramatic production which we should now designate as burlesque or travesty. Langbaine applies the word, in speaking of D'Avenant's *Play-House to be Lett* (1662), not only to the second act, the adaptation of *Sganarelle,* but to the travestied *Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra* which forms the fifth act.[23] The famous *Rehearsal* was almost invariably called *farce* during the Restoration period. The same appellation was used to refer to Duffett's burlesques of the spectacular productions of Settle and Shadwell in the rival theatre of the Duke's company; *The Empress of Morocco* was printed, in 1674, with the descriptive term "A Farce" on the title page.

In a slightly different category are certain plays—unacted, and very likely not designed for the stage—which Allerdyce Nicoll, in his "Handlist," designates as "political pamphlets written in the form of plays" but which were printed as "farces."[24] *Pluto Furens & Vinctus* (1669)—which I have been unable to examine—is called "A Modern

[20]*False Count,* Act IV, scene ii; *Emperor of the Moon,* Act I.
[21]Act IV.
[22]Act II, scene v.
[23]*An Account of the English Dramatick Poets,* London, 1691, 110.
[24]*A History of Restoration Drama,* Cambridge, 1928, 348 ff.

Copyright (c) 2003 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) University of Texas at Austin (UTPress)

Farse."[25] A work which I have examined, and which I presume to be much in the manner of *Pluto*, is *The Royal Flight* (1690), mentioned above. It is similarly described on the title page as "A New Farce," although it is really nothing more than a savage satire of the type current in the 1680's. Again, the anonymous satire upon the Lord Mayor, *The Puritanical Justice*, printed in 1698, is described on the title page as being "By Way of Farce."[26]

By the end of the Restoration period, *farce* is used to describe almost any kind of stage performance which does not meet with the approval of the devotees or supporters of literary drama, as, for example, when the author of *A Comparison between Two Stages* calls the singing-and-dancing acts which had grown so popular near the turn of the century "one of the pleasantest Farces they have."[27] In short, there are many evidences that *farce* was used indiscriminately as a word-of-all-work, a handy label to describe something which did not meet with the user's approval, and it was used more than once by bitter rivals as a means of dismissing with a scornful gesture the literary works of an enemy.[28]

Something should be said, however, of the more accurate use of the term, in the years following 1660, to describe comic business, the "stuffings" of the stage. A striking example of this occurs in the account of the printing of *The Wits, or Sport upon Sport.* I have not been able to examine the *Actaeon and Diana* of 1655–6, but I am told by Dr. J. J. Elson, editor of the Cox-Kirkman-Marsh farrago, that *farce* was not applied to any of the pieces

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] I have not seen this piece; it is listed by Montague Summers in his *Bibliography of the Restoration Drama*, London, n.d., 136.

[27] P. 45; see also Pepys's description of the little boy's part in Shadwell's *Sullen Lovers*—"A little boy, for a farce, do dance Polichinelli." May 2, 1668.

[28] Shadwell, in *The Medal of John Bayes*, blusters at Dryden:

> How low thy Farce! And thy blank Verse how mean!
> How poor, how naked did appear each Scene!

Copyright (c) 2003 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) University of Texas at Austin (UTPress)

therein. Yet in the 1662 edition of *The Wits,* Marsh describes four of the five independent "drolls" as farces, using such expressions as: "Argument needless. It being a Thorow Farce, and very well known," or "A continued Farce," or "an ancient Farce, and generally known." In the 1673 edition of *The Wits,* by Kirkman, the title-page for the whole collection designates the contents as "a curious Collection of several Drols and Farces," whereas Marsh had been content to describe his 1662 edition as "Select Pieces of Drollery," applying *farce* to the four independent pieces only.

That this word was a newcomer to the language is borne out by a little scene from D'Avenant's hodge-podge, *The Play-House to be Lett,* which Allardyce Nicoll supposes to have been played in 1662, the same year that Marsh produced his full collection of drolls. In Act I the House-Keeper, the Tire-Woman, and an English Player are approached by a Monsieur who wishes to rent the theatre during the vacation now in progress.

> *House-K.* What would you do in't? we must like your trade
> Before we let our shop, lest we should ride
> With John Dory to Paris to seek rent.
> *Mons.* Mi vil make presentation of de farce.
> *Tire-W.* Farces, what be those? New French bobs for ladies?
> *Play.* Pray, peace! I understand the gentleman.
> Your farces are a kind of mongrel plays.
> But, sir, I believe all French farces are
> Prohibited commodities, and will
> Not pass current in England.
> *Mons.* Sir, pardon me! de Engelis be more
> Fantastique den de Fransh. De farce
> Bi also very fantastique and vil passe.
> *Play.* The Monsieur's in the right for we have found
> Our customers of late exceeding humorous.
> *Mons.* De vise nation bi for tings heroique
> And de fantistique, vor de farce!
> *Tire-W.* I like not that these French pardonney moys
> Should make so bold with old England.
> *House-K.* Peace, woman! We'll let the house, and get money,
> *Play.* But how will your French farce be understood?

Copyright (c) 2003 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) University of Texas at Austin (UTPress)

For all our travell'd customers are gone
To take the air with their own wives, beyond
Hide-Park a great way; a homely country mode
Of their fore-fathers.
*Tire-W.* With grief we speak it;
They may be asham'd to leave their poor mistresses
And us behind 'em without customers.
*Play.* Pray save your tears for our next tragedy.
The Monsieur's all for merry farces, but,
As I said, sir, how shall we understand 'em?
*Mons.* Me have a troop of French Comoediens
Dat speak a little very good Engelis.
*Tire-W.* Bless us! a troop?
*Play.* Woman, thou art no linguist; they in France
Call a company of players, a troop.
*Tire-W.* I thought he had ta'en our long Tennis-Court
For a stable.
*Play.* And you are shelling beans for his horses.

This scene, which may refer to the visit in 1661 of Channouveau and his company, tells of a new dispensation for the English stage, a modification of comic practice, or at least a willingness to recognize (and to name) a *tertium quid* which had really always accompanied English tragedy and comedy but which was now to become far more important in the fare of theatregoers. There is every evidence that the French visit of 1661 is an all-important event in the history of *farce,* that is, in the use of the word. Plays of unquestionably farcical tone had been published at a time just previous to this, but had not been described as farces. Cokain brought out his *Trappolin* in 1658, but, although he admitted having taken it from a comedy he had seen in Venice (most likely a *commedia dell'arte* performance),[29] he called it "an Italian Trage-Comedy"; and even in the prologue and epilogue which he wrote, possibly with a hope that his play might some day see the stage, he failed to use the term *farce.* Even in 1661 Francis Kirkman, who was to publish a collection of "Drols and Farces" some twelve years later,

[29]Kathleen M. Lea "Sir Aston Cokayne and the 'Comedia dell'arte,' " *Modern Language Review,* XXIII (1928), 47 ff.

Copyright (c) 2003 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) University of Texas at Austin (UTPress)

called the farce-interlude *Tom Tyler* merely *play.* Then came the French comedians and set a new fashion.

Pepys evidently did not encounter the same difficulties which troubled D'Avenant's Tire-Woman in *The Play-House to be Lett.* When he went to see the troupe of Frenchmen perform, he came away with no great fondness for what he had seen; yet he seems not to have been without the proper word to describe the foreign novelty, for he comments that "there being nothing pleasant but the foolery of the farce, we went home."[30] Too little is known about the Frenchmen's repertory for one to be certain what "the farce" was, but I am inclined to think that it was a brief afterpiece, such as the farce Molière is said to have played after *Nicomede,* at his initial appearance before Louis XIV on October 24, 1658.[31] Pepy's use of the term, however, leaves much to be desired. His use of *farce* to describe the "Polichinelli" dance in *The Sullen Lovers* is certainly very loose. Possibly somewhat more elaborate was Lacy's entertainment between the acts of *Horace,* January 19, 1669. "Lacy hath made a farce of several dances—between each act one: but his words are but silly, and invention not extraordinary, as to the dances; only some Dutchmen come out of the mouth and tail of a Hamburgh sow." Alongside this delicate bit of Lacy's may be set Dryden's extremely popular adaptation of *L'Etourdi, Sir Martin Mar-all,* which Pepys saw more than a year earlier.[32] This piece, he thought, was

> the most entire piece of mirth, a complete farce from one end to the other that certainly ever was writ. I never laughed so in all my life. I laughed till my head ached all the evening and night with the laughing; and at very good wit therein, not fooling.

That Pepys approved of Dryden's adaptation whole-heartedly is attested by his nine recorded trips to the play, with

---

[30]August 30, 1661.
[31]See the *Grands Ecrivains* edition by Despois-Mesnard, I, 3 ff.
[32]August 16, 1667.

Copyright (c) 2003 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) University of Texas at Austin (UTPress)

ever-increasing enthusiasm. Why then did he call it "farce" on his first trip and "undoubtedly the best comedy ever . . . wrote" on his last? Yet his use of the term is typical of his period, since *farce* could mean a great many things in the first few decades after the Restoration.

Something should be said, finally, about the treatment *farce* received at the hands of the lexicographers of the period. Here, as might be suspected, the account is a similar one though much briefer to render. Postponing for a moment the study of English dictionaries, I should like to call attention to scattered examples of bilingual or polyglot dictionaries. In none of the English-Latin lexicons[33] of the period before 1660 is *farce* defined in terms of the theatre. Such authorities as Thomas Thomas, Thomas Cooper, and John Rider or his reviser, Francis Holyoke, are in virtually complete agreement in defining the word as "stuff, cram," etc. Nor does *farce* occur in any of the definitions of theatrical terms: *interludium, exodium, pantomimus,* and the like, in the Latin-English divisions of these works. With the Restoration, however, Adam Littleton and Elisha Coles found it necessary to expand the vocabularies of their Latin dictionaries to allow room for additional definitions of the English *farce* or the Latin *exodium,* though none of these later renditions of the word are full or accurate enough to aid in fixing the limits of the *genre.*

The modern language dictionaries of the period are more interesting than the classical, since it was from seventeenth century French that the term was introduced. Furthermore, the French, the Italians, and the Spanish had all used a form of Latin *farcire* in the theatres for

[33]I have consulted the following editions: Thomas Cooper, *Thesaurus linguae Romanae & Britannicae,* London, 1565; Thomas Thomas, *Dictionarium linguae latinae et anglicanae, Cantabrigiae,* 1589; Francis Holyoke, *Dictionarium Etymologicum Latinum,* London, 1639; Adam Littleton, *Linguae Latinae Liber Dictionarius Quadripartitus,* London, 1678, 1703; Elisha Coles, *A Dictionary, English-Latin, and Latin-English,* London, 1736.

Copyright (c) 2003 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) University of Texas at Austin (UTPress)

generations, and lexicographers had to render the term into some appropriate English form. What, then, was that English form? The standard Spanish dictionary of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the Percivale-Minsheu *Dictionarie in Spanish and English* of 1599 and 1623, is eloquently brief: *Farça* or *Farsa* means "a play, an enterlude"; the plural form seems to mean a little more: "playes, enterludes, comedies or tragedies acted." The Italian equivalents are given in Florio's *World of Words* of 1598 and 1611, revised in 1659 by Giovanni Torriano. Florio's loose definition of Italian *farsa (farza)* as "a merry tale, a pleasant discourse[,] Also an enterlude or stage play" is expanded by a slight but significant phrase by Torriano on the eve of the Restoration. "A merry tale," etc., may also mean "a lame Comedy." The French dictionaries[34] tell much of the same story: the terms *farce, farcer, farceur,* etc., are rendered as "play or enterlude," "to mock, deride," "a maker of Plays, a deviser of ieasts," etc. The standard French-English dictionary by Randle Cotgrave goes beyond all these definitions. Even in the first edition of 1611, *farce* is defined as "a (fond and dissolute) Play, Comedie, or Enterlude; also, the Jyg at the end of an Enterlude, wherein some prete knaverie is acted. . . ." In the English-French dictionary by Robert Sherwood, which was added to Cotgrave's work in 1632, the word *farce* nowhere appears. Such an omission is, of course, easy to understand; what is difficult to explain, on the other hand, is that in the issues of this double work after the Restoration the gap was not filled. A satisfactory explanation would seem to be that the later editions were mere reprints, not revisions.

With the account of the purely English dictionaries[35] the story may be brought to a close. In the works which pre-

---

[34]I have been able to use only the Cotgrave dictionary, in these editions: 1611, 1632, 1650, 1673.

[35]The few polyglot dictionaries which I have consulted—Baret's *Alvearie*, 1573 and 1580, Minsheu's *Guide into the Tongues*, 1617,

Copyright (c) 2003 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) University of Texas at Austin (UTPress)

ceded 1660, the dictionaries of Cockeram, Blount, and Phillips, *farce* received short shrift indeed: "stuffed, full" was the laconic definition of Cockeram in 1650, a definition which was echoed in Blount's first *Glossographia* of 1656, and in Phillips' *New World of English Words* two years later. Cockeram's definition remained the same in subsequent editions, as did Phillips' until eighteen years after the Restoration. In Blount, however, we have a man whose ear was peculiarly receptive to neologisms, as has been pointed out elsewhere.[36] When *Glossographia* appeared in a second edition in the year following Charles's return from France the vocabulary was expanded enough to permit a new term to enter. Besides the venerable usage reserved to the kitchen comes the new one: "a fond and dissolute Play, or Comedy; also the Jig at the end of an Interlude, wherein some pretty Knavery is acted. . . ." Perhaps new is not the right term, as a glance at the early edition of Cotgrave's French dictionary will reveal the source of Blount's definition. Whaever his source, it is evident that the compiler of *Glossographia* was alert enough to catch a new form which in the space of a year or two had caught hold and which in a few more years was to be employed freely in the English theatre.

---

and Howell's *Lexicon Tetraglotton,* 1660—give much the same account as the bilingual works and, as might be supposed, in briefer form. Where Spanish, French, or Italian calls for some form of *farcire,* the English equivalent is *enterlude, jest,* etc.

[36]D. T. Starnes, "English Dictionaries of the Seventeenth Century," *University of Texas Studies in English,* XVII (July, 1937), 33 ff.

Copyright (c) 2003 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) University of Texas at Austin (UTPress)