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0521848091 - *Gentility and the Comic Theatre of Late Stuart London*  
Mark S. Dawson  
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## Gentility and the Comic Theatre of Late Stuart London

When Adam delved and Eve span  
Who was then the gentleman?

Mark S. Dawson's approach to this riddle is not to study the lives of those said to belong to early modern England's gentry. He suggests we remain sceptical of all answers to this question and consider what was at stake whenever it was posed. We should conceive of gentility as a mutable process of social delineation. Gentility was a matter of power and language, cultural definition and social domination. Neither consistently defined nor applied to particular social groups, gentility was about identifying society's elite.

The book examines how claims of gentility were staged at London's theatres (1660–1725). Employing a rich assembly of sources, comedies with their cits and fops, periodicals, correspondence of theatre patrons and polemic from its detractors, Dawson revises several of social history's conclusions about the gentry and offers new interpretations to students of late Stuart drama.

MARK S. DAWSON completed postgraduate studies at the universities of Auckland (New Zealand) and Cambridge. He is currently associate lecturer in early modern history at the Australian National University, Canberra.

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Mark S. Dawson

*Australian National University, Canberra*



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For Holly, *in memoriam*

Both because she was a breed apart and because the author cannot trump Hogarth's memento of his own companion in the attempt to capture London life.

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## Acknowledgements

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In keeping a weather eye on a broad range of material while at the same time trying to maintain a close focus on a group of texts that historians are (still) not given many opportunities to consider, there are bound to be moments of critical astigmatism. Here I acknowledge the people who have done their very best to help me see clearly, though, at the same time, I accept full responsibility for any errors and misconceptions that remain.

For richer or poorer, the present study is a product of dualities of form, place, time and academic discipline. It has now had two incarnations, as this book and as a doctoral dissertation (with principal funding in the form of a Prince of Wales Cambridge Commonwealth Trust scholarship), and been worked on, and lived with, in different hemispheres since mid-1998. That it has not succumbed to the fatigue of these transitions, and still may have something worth saying to both socio-cultural historians and critics of early modern drama, is due largely to its having two mentors who guided and encouraged my work in different but always complementary ways. That they have both continued in these roles, so long after the research for this particular book was done, also deserves special mention. Sincerest appreciation, then, to Keith Wrightson as supervisor at Cambridge and now editor from New Haven; Barry Reay as advisor and, once again, commentator in Auckland.

In crossing disciplinary boundaries, as well as datelines over an extended period of time, it is a pleasure to recall the names of various people who offered encouragement, suggestions and constructive criticism of various kinds along the way: Donna Andrew, Helen Berry, David Cressy, Howard Erskine-Hill, Erin Griffey, Tim Hitchcock, Mac Jackson, Larry Klein, Michael Neill, Steve Snobelen and Sophie Tomlinson. From different perspectives, four anonymous readers as well as the editors for Cambridge University Press also offered valuable advice on extending a dissertation into a book.

Every effort has been made to secure permission from the authors of doctoral dissertations to refer to their unpublished work. I thank those who not only responded, but also were interested in my own research and were willing to entertain contrasting interpretations. For taking the time to help with certain references and queries, I am also grateful to several 'virtual' colleagues:

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Even if they were not quite sure what I was researching or why, my research in these different locales would not have progressed very far at all were it not for the reassurance and support of family and friends in New Zealand.

## Abbreviations and note on the text

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<i>ELH</i>	<i>English Literary History</i>
<i>ELR</i>	<i>English Literary Renaissance</i>
<i>Evelyn</i>	E. S. de Beer (ed.), <i>The Diary of John Evelyn</i> , 6 vols. (Oxford, 1955)
<i>HMC</i>	Historic Manuscripts Commission (London)
<i>HWJ</i>	<i>History Workshop Journal</i>
<i>Pepys</i>	R. C. Latham and W. Matthews (eds.), <i>The Diary of Samuel Pepys 1660–1669</i> , 11 vols. (London, 1970–83, reprint 1995)
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association</i>
<i>PP</i>	<i>Past &amp; Present</i>
<i>RES</i>	<i>Review of English Studies</i>
<i>SEL</i>	<i>Studies in English Literature</i>
<i>Spectator</i>	D. F. Bond (ed.), <i>The Spectator</i> , 5 vols. (Oxford, 1965)
<i>Tatler</i>	D. F. Bond (ed.), <i>The Tatler</i> , 3 vols. (Oxford, 1987)

### Dates

Years are ‘new style’, understood to begin on 1 January. However, days and months will be those used by diarists and correspondents themselves. Most, written in England, will therefore be ‘old style’.

### Newspapers and periodicals

Where these carry no systematic pagination, in either their original or modern editions, I refer to the first page recto of each issue as ‘[1]’, what was technically the verso as ‘[2]’, and so on. Pertinent details of changed titles and interrupted sequences are explained in the relevant section of the bibliography.

### Plays

I have departed from standard dramatic citation practices in several respects. When quoting dialogue, I have given the speaker’s name in full to avoid any confusion that might have resulted from using the original abbreviations found in some first editions. I reference by act and page number only. So ‘ii, 3’ would refer to act ii, page 3, of the playbook in question.

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xvi      Abbreviations and note on the text

I have refrained from citation by scene and line number for two reasons. First, the first editions consulted usually make no systematic attempt to mark their scripts, particularly the line numbers, in this way. Any attempt to do so on my part would not have been productive. Second, many of these first editions are now available as searchable digital transcripts. The active reader can easily pinpoint a particular citation and its context by entering a key phrase into the database, *Literature Online*. I have used first editions whenever possible. Later editions have been consulted when they compensate for lacunae in the originals and are footnoted accordingly. Readers should also bear in mind that the year of a playbook's publication does not necessarily match the date of its first performance.

### **Serial publications**

For long-lived organizations (for example, the Camden Society) that have published several 'series', every effort has been made to retain consistent numeration of individual volumes. However, in the event of discrepancy, readers should refer to the year of publication.