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CHAPTER ONE

French *À la Mode*

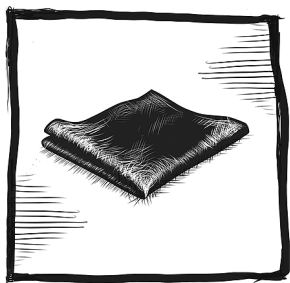
à la mode, *adv.*, *adj.*, *n.*, and *prep.*

Origin: A borrowing from French.

—OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY

There is likewise a manifest rotation and Circling of words,
which goe in and out like the mode and fashion.

—JOHN EVELYN



PERHAPS NO PHRASE captures more succinctly the fascination in the English-speaking world with all things French. *À la mode* features in English both as a conspicuous example of that fascination and as its perfect linguistic vehicle. Riding the crest of wave after wave of French fashion across all areas of culture for the last five hundred years, *à la mode* has repeatedly brought home the perception that fashion is French, that these two go—as it were—hand in (this season's) glove.

That perception is by no means confined to the English-speaking world: from the early eighteenth century, people across continental Europe declared France to have a monopoly

on fashionable culture, giving the country a reputation it enjoys all over the world to this day.¹ The English were not alone in borrowing, from the French, their *à la mode*. The Germans got there first: from the 1620s, their language features *alamode* as adjective and adverb, and German works of the same period feature other controversially modish French terms that stand out typographically from the Gothic-script text that surrounds them. Forms of the same phrase also appear in Italian and Dutch in the course of the seventeenth century. The feminine French noun at the heart of the phrase—*mode* (‘fashion’)—travelled, meanwhile, into all of these languages as well as Spanish, Portuguese, Danish, and Swedish. English can therefore lay claim to a mere share of the global phenomenon that is French *à la mode*.²

Yet the English share contains specificities. The most revealing of these may be the peculiar fear and loathing that accompanied the fascination with all things French at a time when, in British culture and society, being French was synonymous with being foreign. Several seventeenth-century English lexicographers record of *Frenchman* that, as Edward Phillips puts it in his dictionary, the term was ‘anciently us’d to signify every Foreigner or Outlandish Man’. That perception of foreignness not only defined English attitudes towards France and the French but, as we will see, shaped questions of collective identity central to English culture and society.³

I will explore these developments in the company of *à la mode*. Historians of French *à la mode* in English have to consider centuries of relations across the English Channel. Yet they need, also, to explore contact with French in English-speaking cultures and societies in other parts of the world. That history would be incomplete, for example, without the episode in which French *à la mode* travels to North America in the late nineteenth century, finds employment selling ice cream as an

accompaniment to apple pie, and meets with such success that to this day, in the United States and Canada, *à la mode* means ‘served with ice cream’. North Americans use the phrase on countless occasions every day without registering any residual sense of its Frenchness. Their adoption of *à la mode* is a conspicuous instance of the phrase’s wider history of migration and cultural mixing.

That history will be at the heart of both this and the following chapter. It begins in the second half of the seventeenth century, in England, as *à la mode* rose to the height of linguistic fashion in English. As it did so, its three constituent words were rolled into one, and the resulting noun—*alamode*—named, among other things, a light, glossy silk fabric, usually black, used for handkerchiefs, headscarves, hoods, and the like. This sartorial accompaniment was every bit as desirable to the dressier English as ice cream became to pie-eating North Americans: the nineteenth-century historian of England Thomas Macaulay described ‘regular exchange of the fleeces of Cotswold for the alamodes of Lyons’.⁴ The *alamode* was a finely wrought, floaty thing of nothing, a conspicuous and ubiquitous fashion accessory, designed to lend to every outfit the elusive seductiveness of the foreign. It thus makes the perfect emblem for *à la mode*. The fascinations it conveys and the fear and loathing it inspires along the way are all held in the folds of its silky fabric.

It is a clear sign that a word is starting to fascinate arbiters of linguistic fashion when they, like guests at a *soirée*, find an occasion to sport the latest accessory. They often do this, for example, by placing the word in the title of a work and lending it the status of a topic around which an entire discourse can be organized. This is precisely what happened to *à la mode* in the second half of the seventeenth century in England. English translators of France’s leading comic dramatist, Molière, led

the way: in his play, *The Damoiselles À la Mode* (1667), Richard Flecknoe gathered together elements from three of Molière's comedies under a fashionably Frenchified title; while Tom Rawlins translated Molière's *Le Cocu imaginaire* (1660) as *Tom Essence: or, The Modish Wife* (1677).⁵ More prominently still, England's poet laureate, John Dryden, wrote *Marriage À-la-Mode* (1673), a comedy featuring a rich woman-about-town, Melantha, who—in the hope of making it at court—learns each day new French words with which to season her conversation. Dryden's fellow playwright George Etherege (c. 1636–c. 1692) then satirized Melantha's fictional male counterpart, the Frenchified fop, in *The Man of Mode, or, Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676). Dryden's *Marriage À-la-Mode* and Etherege's *Man of Mode* were immediate successes and, as we shall see, have established themselves since as classics of Restoration drama with continuing afterlives on stage and screen as well as on the page. They bear eloquent witness to the modalities of French *à la mode* and the moods it provoked in late seventeenth-century England.

The Restoration Moment

The new fashion for French *à la mode* in late seventeenth-century England coincides with the period, known as the Restoration (1660–85), when Charles II of England—after spending many of the Civil War and Commonwealth years in exile in France along with many displaced English royalists—returned to England in 1660 and 'restored' its Stuart monarchy. Charles II, a cousin of Louis XIV of France, brought a highly Frenchified court culture back to England. There was, of course, nothing new about this: if Frenchification may be deemed to include Normanization, as early modern commentators certainly thought it could, then Frenchification had reached English

culture and society in waves since at least 1066. The Restoration constituted, nonetheless, a high-water mark.

The accession, in 1603, of James VI of Scotland (1566–1625) to the throne of the kingdom of England and its incorporated Principality of Wales—and, with it, the Kingdom of Ireland—considerably strengthened the links of the three kingdoms with France. French was widely spoken at the court of James. James's son, Charles I (1600–49), married a French Catholic princess, Henrietta Maria (1609–69), a daughter of Henri IV of France. Henrietta Maria moved to England in 1625 and brought with her many aspects of contemporary French courtly culture. The Civil War in England, which culminated in the execution of Charles I in 1649, saw the children of Charles and Henrietta Maria exiled in France. Charles II, after his return to England at the Restoration, never dispelled the suspicion among some of his subjects that he included adherence to Catholicism among his Frenchified manners. But exposure to French language and culture cut across confessional lines as well as the social hierarchy of early modern England. Puritan as well as royalist families evacuated their children to France during the years of Civil War in England. The foreign travel of wealthy and privileged English men and women enabled not only them, but also less socially privileged members of their entourage, to become conversant in modern foreign languages, particularly French, and *au fait* with French manners. Foreign trade required English people of varying social conditions, such as sailors, merchants, and diplomats, to learn other tongues: this was a time—so different from our own—when few people born outside the three kingdoms could speak or understand English.⁶

Foreign settlers in the British isles were exceptions to that rule. Many French visited or settled in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland during the seventeenth century. They crossed the Channel and the Irish Sea to find work as merchants,

domestic servants, chefs, and tailors. Political exiles from the court of Louis XIV, among them the writer Charles de Saint-Evremond (1613–1703), joined them. Many French settlers were Protestants. England had, since the Reformation, been receiving Protestants escaping persecution from countries across Catholic Europe. The Huguenot (French Protestant) community grew substantially at the end of the Restoration period, after Louis XIV signalled a policy of increased intolerance towards Huguenots in France by revoking, in 1685, the Edict of Nantes of 1598, through which his predecessor Henry IV had instituted freedom of conscience, full civil rights, and a wide degree of freedom of cult for Huguenots. Somewhere between fifty and seventy thousand French Huguenots are estimated to have sought refuge in England at that time alone, and around a further ten thousand in Ireland. Fewer travelled to Scotland.⁷

The two groups of people just identified—Francophiles in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland and the French living in those realms—brought French fashions to bear on all aspects of Restoration culture, including the English language, which continued to receive wave upon wave of French foreign borrowings. Surfing in on the crest of one such wave was *à la mode*, of course, and it was joined by many other such émigrés. Dryden's female Francomaniac Melantha, having 'drain'd all the French Plays and Romances' of their words, needs more if she is to continue sporting glamorous foreign linguistic accessories in the right company. She orders her serving woman, Philotis, to furnish her with fresh supplies. Philotis is a fictional equivalent of the low-born servants who acquired working knowledge of foreign languages in the entourage of their masters and mistresses. She knows more French than Melantha and, in Act 3 Scene 1 of *Marriage À-la-Mode*, she provides her mistress with a list that runs as follows: *sottises*, *figure*, *naïve* and *naïveté*,

foible, chagrin, grimace, embarrasse, double entendre, équivoque, éclaircissement, suite, bévüe, façon, penchant, coup d'étourdi, and ridicule. To that list Melantha will add, in the following scenes, *caprice*.⁸

These words amount to nothing more than a drop in the ocean of the French-derived words found in *Marriage À-la-Mode*. That ocean can seem bottomless, because it is on occasions difficult to be certain which of the words are the newly arrived French foreignisms, and which are erstwhile borrowings now absorbed into English. The first conversation that Melantha has with the man she will eventually marry, Palamede, illustrates the point. Palamede, who knows of her *penchant* for French, immediately flirts with Melantha by telling her he looks for her favour (in love) to 'render' him 'accomplished'. He introduces into his English syntactical structures, as well as lexical choices, from French. Melantha replies in kind: 'A Gentleman, Sir, that understands the *Grand mond* so well, who has ha[u]nted the best conversations, and who (in short) has voyag'd, may pretend to the good graces of any Lady.' Palamede then comments on Melantha's reply in an aside as follows: 'Hay day! *Grand mond! conversation! voyag'd!* and *good graces!* I find my Mistris is one of those that run mad in new French words.'⁹

Palamede singles out, in Melantha's sentence, words whose status as French seems clearly marked by their remaining either unadapted to their new English linguistic environment (as in the case of *grand mond*) or half adapted (as in the case of *good graces*, for example, a literal translation of the French *bonnes grâces*). By contrast, the inclusion of *conversation* and *voyag'd* in Palamede's aside is surprising to my twenty-first-century ear, because both words have by now been fully adapted to English pronunciation and usage. The same observations might be made of Philotis's list of French borrowings: some of

its items (such as *éclaircissement*) remain unadapted in English, others (such as *naïveté*) strike me as falling somewhere in the middle of the spectrum, and others still (such as *ridicule*) have been wholly adapted. The first audiences and readers of *Marriage À-la-Mode* may have pronounced these words in a variety of ways depending on their level of acquaintance with French, their attitude towards it and other foreign languages, and other sociolinguistic considerations. While concrete evidence about early modern English pronunciation is scarce, we can infer from Palamede's qualification of all these words as 'new' and 'French' that he was to pronounce them in an unnaturalized way on stage, since otherwise his satirical aside would make no sense to the audience. The comic inference for all to draw from Melantha and Palamede's exchange was clear. English was folding French in the ambivalent embrace of a new *à la mode* marriage.

Some of the new arrivals from France were clearly perceived to be more *à la mode* than others. Melantha hopes that fashionable Palamede, with his contacts abroad, will bring home to her everything that is, as she puts it, 'fine, I mean all that's delicate, and *bien tourné*'. There were modes within modes. That this is so is amply demonstrated by Sir Fopling Flutter, in Etherege's *The Man of Mode*, a play that offers us—among other things—a useful means of cross-checking Melantha's list of new French words. Unlike Melantha, Sir Fopling has no need to gather his fashionable language from books or other people, being reported at the beginning of the play to be 'lately arrived piping hot from Paris'. When he makes his first and much awaited appearance on stage, it is in a swirl of modish French trappings, linguistic as well as sartorial.¹⁰

These trappings confirm their wearer as the extravagant flutter of a Frenchified fopling that his name promises. However, in his use of gallicisms, Sir Fopling in fact differs only in

degree from his peers. He and other characters in *The Man of Mode* use as many French-derived words as are found in *Marriage À-la-Mode*. Some of these émigrés—*embarras* being one such—occur in both plays. Others that do so include *billet doux*, *doux yeux*, *éclaircissement*, *fierté*, *galanterie*, *galèche*, *grand ballet*, and *intrigue*. These gallicisms amount to a veritable ABC of flirting, trysting, and other courtly comings-and-goings, including the latest carriage from France in which to do all of the above in style, the *calèche* (which travels into seventeenth-century English as *galèche* or *gallesh*).

The obsession with gallicisms that Melantha and Sir Fopling indulge offers a precious snapshot of a precise moment in the unfolding and inexorable process of language change whereby successive imports of French words have entered modern English. This is the Restoration moment. French was all the rage among the British aristocracy and the rising middle classes who affected aristocratic manners. The works of Dryden and Etherege show that moment of language contact and change taking place within the context of social hierarchy. ‘A Town-Lady, without any relation to the Court’, Melantha mixes new French words into her English in the hope of being accepted among the nobility and gentry. She seeks to achieve this acceptance by out-courting the court in its setting of fashion. Like her counterpart in Etherege’s play, Sir Fopling Flutter, Melantha complains of the ‘rudeness of our Court’ and presents Frenchification as the best way to improve civility at court.¹¹ She presents herself, indeed, as the speaking embodiment of that Frenchification. Her story is one of social elevation by marriage to Palamede, a gentleman who—in transactional terms—brings her the place at court she so craves, in return for her dowry. In Etherege’s play, by contrast, social hierarchy shapes conflicts over civility among members of the urban nobility and gentry. Sir Fopling, who is already a member of the

gentry, overtly mimics French in his English because he thinks that to do so will earn him a place among the London ultrafashionables.

Both plays treat language as part of a wider culture of civility that saw the British import, along with the words to convey them, many French commodities. These included, most palpably, the material consumables of everyday life such as clothing, food and drink, and books. In all three kingdoms, Huguenots and other French settlers were central from the sixteenth century onwards to many professions and trades, including the teaching of French as a foreign language and the book trade, as well as haute cuisine and fashion. Melantha devours her French plays and romances, while Sir Fopling, dressed to the nines in this season's Parisian offerings, celebrates in song the sparkingly restorative powers of the latest French pick-me-up: champagne.¹² Impalpable but equally important French imports included structures of feeling, models of social behaviour, and forms and institutions of cultural activity. Some of these imports are visible within the play-worlds of *Marriage À-la-Mode* and *The Man of Mode*. Etherege's Sir Fopling courts the ladies with a French dance. Dryden's Palamede serenades Melantha with a French song. The ladies and their gallants in both plays do their trysting in parks, gardens, and urban spaces—such as St James's Park (in *The Man of Mode*)—laid out according to French designs.¹³

Some of these social and cultural French imports shaped the very design of English Restoration dramas. Melantha drains French plays and romances of their modish words, for example, only because her creator had found in the same plays and romances the materials with which to construct the fiction that contains her. Dryden devised a double-plotted structure for *Marriage À-la-Mode*. Melantha and Palamede belong to the play's comic plot alongside a second couple, Rhodophil and

Doralice, with the salt provided by the fact that Rhodophil is amorously involved with the woman his friend Palamede is meant to marry—the Francomaniac Melantha—while Palamede plays similarly fast and loose with Rhodophil's witty wife Doralice (fig. 1). The initial dissonance of this situation is eventually dispelled in a comic ending of marriage and reconciliation. The heroic plot of *Marriage À-la-Mode*, meanwhile, tells the story of Leonidas and Palmyra. Separated from their parents at birth and brought up together away from the court, Leonidas is in fact son to the rightful king and his beloved Palmyra is the daughter of the king's usurper, Polydamas. Leonidas, once he knows his true identity, overthrows Polydamas the usurper. He and Palmyra are now free to marry. Marriage is fully *à la mode* by the ending of the play, then, since it resolves both plots. These take place at different (but interrelated) levels of society in the same island setting of Sicily, a sun-soaked proxy for contemporary England, insofar as it is presented as ripe for a Restoration of the true monarchy (in the heroic plot) and in the grip of a Francophilia that is taken to feverish excess by its social climbers (in the comic plot).

In both plots Dryden recycled material from the French literature of his day. He took as his source for the heroic plot the story of Sesostris and Timarete as told in the course of Madeleine de Scudéry's highly successful episodic romance *Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus*, published first in French in 1649–53 and thereafter in a 1653 English translation (*Artamenes, or The Grand Cyrus*). Sesostris becomes Leonidas in Dryden's play, and Timarete, Palmyra. Melantha, meanwhile, owes her affectation of language and preciousness of romantic sentiment to Magdelon and Cathos, the female leads that Molière sent up in *Les Précieuses ridicules* (*The Conceited Ladies*) of 1659, one of the three plays of his that Richard Flecknoe drew on in *The Damoiselles À la Mode* (1667). The song with which Palamede



FIG. 1. Rhodophil surprises Doralice and Palamede, in John Dryden's *Marriage À-la-Mode*, Act 5 Scene 1. Gerard van der Gucht after Hubert-François Gravelot, illustration to *The Dramatick Works of John Dryden* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1735), vol. 3, 195. Etching on paper. Used with the permission of the Provost and Fellows of The Queen's College, Oxford.

serenades Melantha comes from Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (*The Cit Turned Gentleman*) of 1670. The mingling, in one play, of Scudéry and Molière, French romance and comedy, was Dryden's doing. In the literary design of his play as much as in the play's themes, then, he made marriage his mode of operation.¹⁴

In *Marriage À-la-Mode* we see, writ small, the creative processes of mixing and matching, of importation and adaptation, that brought so many elements of French society and culture across the Channel. Dryden, like Etherege, not only reflected the Restoration fashion for French but sought to intervene in that fashion by tracing a middle way between a foppish mimicry of French culture he viewed as servile and an insular rejection of it he viewed as barbarous. In the process, he imported and adapted words and ideas from France, some of which—including the new words that Melantha acquires from her maid—went on to establish themselves as lasting elements in the vocabulary of English.

These processes of mixing and matching did not always come to fruition as successfully as they did in Dryden's play. Throughout the Restoration, for example, Dryden was involved in attempts to translate to Britain that most famous state-sponsored French venture in the institutional management of language and culture, the Académie française. Founded by Richelieu in 1635 on the model of the Accademia della Crusca in Florence, the Académie française comprised forty members (elected for life) whose main task it was to establish and codify French as a language worthy of France's new status as a political and cultural superpower in Europe, and to make the French language eloquent in the service of all arts and sciences. The French state asked its academicians to produce, to that end, a normative French dictionary, grammar, rhetoric, and poetics.

Nearly sixty years later, in 1694, the academicians produced the first dictionary of the Académie française.¹⁵

Many intellectuals in England wanted to follow suit. The Royal Society, indeed, actively concerned itself, within two years of its foundation (in 1662), with the question of how to improve the English language. A committee of twenty-two members was formed in late 1664. One of the members was Dryden. Earlier that year, in the printed Dedication of his play *The Rival Ladies*, Dryden had made plain his view that the founding of an English Academy after the French model was much needed and would offer him and his fellow writers a ‘more certain Measure’ of the English language. The undertaking of the committee—as another of its members, John Evelyn, was, years later, to put it in a letter of 1689 to Samuel Pepys—‘crumbl’d away and came to Nothing’.¹⁶

Dryden revived the idea of an English Academy when, in 1679, he dedicated the published version of his play *Troilus and Cressida* to the Earl of Sunderland. Sunderland had just returned from being the English ambassador in Paris to become Charles II’s secretary of state. Dryden urged Sunderland to emulate Richelieu’s example in making English a language ‘which foreigners may not disdain to learn’: ‘The genius of the nation seems to call you out, as it were by name, to polish and adorn your native language, and to take from it the reproach of its barbarity.’ Dryden made his appeal in vain. By 1693, when addressing his ‘Discourse on the Origin and Progress of Satire’ to the Earl of Dorset, he was blaming successive governments in England for failing to purify the tongue.¹⁷

The novelists Daniel Defoe (1660–1731) and Jonathan Swift (1667–1745) were among those leading writers of English in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries who called, after Dryden, for the founding of an Academy after the manner

of the French. The idea continued to come to nothing. When a British Academy was eventually founded, in 1902, its aims were conceived differently: to promote historical, philosophical, and philological studies in Britain as a complement to the work of the Royal Society in the natural sciences. The overt linguistic purism and imperialism of Richelieu's Académie française were, by then, no longer in fashion.

Restoration proposals for an English Academy suggest, by contrast, that the period's leading intellectuals and scholars wished not only to see the English language welcome words from the French but to have the entire government of the tongue remodelled on French lines. The most powerful statement of this view came from John Evelyn. A polymath and man of letters, Evelyn was a Fellow of the Royal Society, nominated by Charles II, and a member of the Society's committee for improving the English language. As a young royalist living in self-imposed exile, he had travelled widely in Italy and France in the mid-1640s, meeting and marrying in Paris the daughter of the royalist ambassador Sir Richard Browne, Mary, who counted fluency in French among her many accomplishments. During this period, Evelyn encountered continental European learning and practice in the many areas of human endeavour—including gardening, urban planning, landscape architecture, fashion, trade, writing, and the collecting of books, medals, and other artifacts—that would interest him for the rest of his life. On his return home, he set about improving British society and culture by bringing European ideas to the attention of his compatriots. Helped by Mary, he translated several important works from French, including Nicholas de Bonnefons's *Jardinier françois* (as *The French Gardiner*) in 1658 and Gabriel Naudé's work on building a library in 1661, a year in which he also published an essay on the sartorial fashions of Charles II's Frenchified court.¹⁸

Evelyn had a wide range of experience and expertise to offer the Royal Society's committee for improving the English language. But he was a busy man. That a record of his contribution to the committee's deliberations has been preserved we owe to his inability to attend the scheduled meetings. In a letter of 20 June 1665 to the committee's chairman, Sir Peter Wyche (1628–c. 1699), Evelyn excuses himself from attending these meetings: he is not available on Tuesday afternoons. He will offer, instead, his thoughts in writing.

He proposes, in essence, that the best contribution to the improvement of English that the committee could make would be that of compiling a dictionary, establishing a grammar, and offering a guide to rhetoric in the language. These were, of course, the chief tasks that had been assigned to the Académie française. Evelyn reveals that he has the French model in mind at the end of his letter. The dictionary that Evelyn proposes is to include, among other things, technical terms, accurate equivalences of weights and measures, foreign terms and phrases, English regionalisms, and those 'Courtly expressions [. . .] in which the French, Italians, and Spanyards have a kind of natural grace and talent'. The dictionary, thus constituted, will provide evidence on the basis of which it will be possible to improve the language by stripping out words and phrases that are obsolete and actively borrowing from foreign languages those that are missing in English. 'For example,' Evelyn observes, 'we have hardly any words that do so fully expresse the French *clinquant*, *naïfaetie*, *Ennüii*, *bizarre*, *concert*, *façoniere*, *Chicaneries*, *Consumme*, *Emotion*, *Defer*, *effort*, *shocque*, *entouree*, *défaute*: or the Italian *Vagezze*, *garbato*, *Svelto croopo* [*sic*], etc.' Evelyn pictures English, in its current state, as a merry-go-round of 'words which goe in and out like the mode and fashion'. He argues that the committee of which he is a member needs to manage that inconstant process of language

change by producing a dictionary, grammar, and rhetoric for the language. It must consult books, decide which areas in the landscape would benefit from weeding and replanting and which new plants might thrive in these areas, and then ensure that they do.¹⁹

Evelyn here no longer imagines language as a fashion parade. He views it as a garden, as did his sixteenth-century Franco-Italian predecessors, and as did, also, the constant gardener that Evelyn himself was.²⁰ The garden of the English language, as Evelyn here conceives it, will be improved by good design and an ambitious programme of transplantation. Evelyn is well aware that there is a politics to transplantation. If the English language is a garden, it is a public garden within the English urban landscape, and it needs to offer a welcoming environment to incoming plants. In order to express that need, Evelyn abruptly introduces a new metaphor into his proposal, which now presents foreign words as people rather than plants: 'Let us therefore (as the Romans did the Greeke) make as many of those do homage, as are like to prove good citizens.' He suggests, here, that English speakers, in their handling of foreign words, should imitate the Roman empire in its treatment of Greek settlers: they should offer rights of citizenship and a warm welcome to those deserving of entry.²¹

The particular foreignisms that Evelyn lists as desirable additions to English did indeed, for the most part, make the journey across the Channel. Only three of his chosen French words—*choc* ('shock'), *façonner* ('mannered', 'over-refined'), and *entour* ('surrounding')—are nowhere to be seen in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*). The others, by contrast, are all present and correct in the same dictionary (which lists, in several cases, Evelyn's letter as one example of the word's early usage). They have, indeed, proved themselves to be good citizens of the English-speaking world. They have undergone, like

Melantha's 'new French words', varying degrees of adaptation to their changed linguistic environment. Some—*bizarre*, *concert*, *defer*, *emotion*, and *effort*—have been so wholly adapted to English usage that they have become part of the furniture: it is hard to imagine them as the new arrivals from abroad that Evelyn wished to offer the committee. Others, while achieving and maintaining their currency in English settings, remain only partially adapted to the language—as in the case of *naïveté* and *ennui*—or, indeed, unadapted. Towards the unadapted end of the spectrum are to be found *clinqant* ('glittering', 'spangly'), and *consommé* ('clear soup' and, by figurative extension, 'condensation'). The Italian *svelto* ('slim', 'willowy'), meanwhile, eventually established itself in common English parlance in its French form *svelte*. It seems to have found favour, in other words, by adapting to the English fashion for French elegance.

Cross-Channel Gallantries

The Anglophone characters in plays such as Dryden's *Marriage À-la-Mode* and Etherege's *The Man of Mode* behave in the same way. They import their language of civility from the Continent. The foreign-derived words that Dryden's Royal Society colleague John Evelyn recommended for the enrichment of English were chosen, similarly, to remedy one important respect in which he found the language to be 'infinitely defective': namely, in 'civil Addresses, excuses, and formes'.²² English lacked the elegant conversational accessories of socially polite and culturally polished interaction, Evelyn felt, and he suggested the civilizing addition of French, Italian, and Spanish words as the remedy. One French word in the field of politeness stands out above others. This is *galanterie*. It denotes the model of elegant social and cultural interaction that seventeenth-century France

invented as a national myth and exported elsewhere in Europe, including England, where writers like Dryden and Etherege adopted it as an *émigré*.²³

Galanterie combines courtly grace of manner with seductive charm. It is an art which consists of concealing that art. It has Italian precedents, formulated in Renaissance treatises on courtly civility, the most influential on *galanterie* being Baldassare Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano* (*The Book of the Courtier*) of 1528. Seventeenth-century French writers disagreed with each other as to whether or not it could be cultivated by those who did not possess it by birthright. Nicolas Faret, who borrowed heavily from Castiglione in a work of 1630, argued that it could. This meritocratic emphasis was crucial to the development of French *galanterie* from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards. The politician Nicolas Fouquet (1615–80), a wealthy member of the professionally trained minor French nobility, gathered around him other minor nobles and bourgeois in support of the monarchist cause during the civil disturbances of the Fronde (1648–53). They were rewarded for their support: Louis XIV's chief minister Cardinal Mazarin (1602–61) made Fouquet minister of finance in 1653, and Fouquet and his circle acquired cultural capital as well as power and wealth. They set about fashioning a social and cultural identity for themselves that would emphasize accomplishments of manner over circumstances of birth. They created, in *galanterie*, the model they needed. Writers of both sexes—such as Madeleine de Scudéry, Molière, and the poet Jean de La Fontaine (1621–95)—portrayed it as an elegant ideal. It became, over the following decades, a modern literary and artistic form in its own right.

The charm of *galanterie* came in various guises. Madeleine de Scudéry, whose romances provided Dryden with plots and Dryden's *Melantha* with words, claimed that it could be

deployed, albeit differently, by both men and women.²⁴ The advice generally offered to the aspiring male courtier of the period was to acquire that charm in the company of alpha females at court and then to practise it upon them in order to gain their grace and favour. These alpha females would be well placed to put in a good word for their *galant* to the powerful men of their entourage. The calculation for women—who had no prospect of winning direct access to political power in this period—was different. Discreetly attracting and keeping the attention of the alpha males at court constituted a form of social distinction in itself for women, and might also offer them, if the circumstances were right, indirect influence over the male exercise of privilege and power.

The discreet charms of *galanterie* were never far away from frankly sexual forms of behaviour and expression. Quite which favours ladies actually dispensed to their *galants* was a matter of endless interest and gossip. It formed the subject of scandalous publications, such as the *Histoire amoureuse des Gaules* (*The Amorous History of the Gauls*) of 1665 by Bussy-Rabutin, who is mentioned in *The Man of Mode*.²⁵ Bussy-Rabutin's text joined a well-established tradition of bawdy, indecent, and even obscene writing which became associated with *galanterie* in the seventeenth century.

This meant that there were in effect, as the French cultural historian Alain Viala has shown, two *galanteries*: the decorous and the libertine.²⁶ La Fontaine, who was as attuned as anyone to the taste of the age, alternated between decorous and libertine *galanterie* in his poetic output. His *Contes et nouvelles* (*Tales*), the first instalment of which was published in 1665, expressed *galanterie* in a libertine mode. The *Contes* sold like hot cakes, but the 1674 collection was censored by the authorities in France, and this surrounded La Fontaine with a whiff of scandal that he found difficult to dispel. His *Fables* (1668)

slowly put him back into better odour. They performed *galanterie* in a decorous mode. Their success was immediate and lasting. La Fontaine used that success, in time, to develop the fable into a remarkably supple and capacious form, capable of smuggling within its flanks a cohort of poetic modes and moods, including even—in the 1694 edition of the *Fables*—two of his 1682 *Contes*. The decorous *Fables* and the licentious *Contes*, then, were two sides of the same coin.

The example of La Fontaine's poetic output encapsulates a wider truth about French *galanterie*. Its decorous and libertine modes were not radically opposed, but went together, often hand in hand. This enabled the practitioners of *galanterie* in society and culture to exercise their subtle charms of seduction in varying ways. By the same token, it offered undeniable opportunities to the opponents of *galanterie*, who could—and frequently did—denounce its decorous mode either as a grotesque parade of affectation or as the public face of an indecent libertinism, or, indeed, as both of those things. One person's elegance was another's affectation, in other words, just as one person's civility was another's scurrility.

Galanterie came to feature in seventeenth-century English as a kind of linguistic *consommé* of elegant civility mixed, after the French mode, with seductive appeal. That mixture would by itself have made it controversial as a social and cultural model in the English-speaking world, just as it was in France; but the French provenance of English *galanterie* offered an additional reason for some across the Channel to love and others to loathe it. Some welcomed it as light from an external source; others shunned it as a delusion; still others adapted it, either overtly or covertly, to the environment in which they were operating. All of this comes through in the language. *Galanterie*, in its early modern Anglophone reception, occupies a middling place on the spectrum of adaptation. It settled in

two forms, *galanterie* and *gallantry*, marking either end of that spectrum in respect of spelling, pronunciation, and connotation. It met, along the way, with varying degrees of receptivity and resistance.

The enthusiasts, like their decriers, reveal the currency of the word in Restoration England. Shortly after meeting Palamede, the man she will eventually marry, Dryden's Melantha confides to the audience of *Marriage À-la-Mode*, in her characteristic Franglais, that 'he has the ayre of a gallant *homme*'. An anonymous three-part poem, *Gallantry À-la-Mode* (1674), not only picks up the keywords of Dryden's play, but reworks its central themes, satirizing the decorous and libertine tendencies of London fashionables. Vincent and Dekker describe, in *The Young Gallant's Academy* (also 1674), the everyday rounds of the Frenchified Englishman in London: these include a visit to one of the French establishments where he displays his mastery of the spoken language or—failing that—gathers together 'some fragments of *French* or small parcels of *Italian* to fling about the table'. A gallant of this kind was often called an English *monsieur*—as is the case of the tellingly named lead character, Frenchlove, in James Howard's early Restoration comedy *The English Mounsieur* (1663)—or a *beau*. Sir Fopling decides, meanwhile, to 'have a gallantry with some of our English ladies'. Women in England, not to be outdone by their *beaux*, coveted *galanterie* for themselves: in a 1662 diary entry Samuel Pepys observed of one Lady Batten that 'she would fain be a gallant'.²⁷

The *galanterie* to which some Restoration men and women aspired continues to feature in English as a French émigré. The *OED* quotes a 2005 article in the British newspaper *The Observer* claiming that the art of seduction has disappeared from contemporary Britain and asking whether this is because,

‘along with the art of *galanterie*, seduction is considered a sexist con.’ Gallants of the United Kingdom, male and female, take note. . . . That same question about *galanterie* remains, meanwhile, the subject of a long-running controversy, chiefly conducted in France, among feminists of differing persuasions who have included Julia Kristeva, Mona Ozouf, and Joan Scott. The controversy has subsequently resurfaced in the context of French responses to the worldwide #MeToo movement and—as Alain Viala has observed—continues to place *galanterie* at the heart of debates in France about French national identity. On both sides of the Channel, then, it seems that *galanterie* maintains to this day its status as a defining and controversial model of Frenchness.²⁸

Even as the language of *galanterie* was able to retain its French aura in Restoration English, meeting receptivity and resistance in the process, it was also undergoing processes of adaptation to its new environment. Its most obvious adapted form was the English noun *gallantry*, of course, but there were others: one such was *politeness* (French *politesse*). The English reception of seventeenth-century French *galanterie* also contributed to the development of that quintessentially British character, the gentleman, who is either born or schooled into the ‘chivalrous instincts and fine feelings’ that define him (as the *OED* puts it). This development explains why, when the French Huguenot and cultural entrepreneur Peter Anthony (Pierre Antoine) Motteux decided to create, in 1692, the first periodical in England, he modelled his publication on the *Mercurie galant*—that arbiter of fashionable French *galanterie* since 1672—and chose to call it *The Gentleman’s Journal*.²⁹

Galanterie in fact found itself variously translated or re-described. Treated as controversial, the word became a site of conflicting definitions, as writers and other language users

sought to establish their own meanings of the word and to discredit the meanings of others in preferring one mode of gallantry to another.

One such controversy took place in two anonymous pamphlets published in 1673. The first was entitled *Remarques on the Humours and Conversation of the Town*. Its anonymous author, stung by the satire of the English country gentleman found in contemporary English theatre, mounts a counter-attack on the wits of London, above all on the city's playwrights, in particular for their immoral treatment of women, their belittling of marriage, and their Frenchified manners and language. The rejoinder, *Remarks upon Remarques*, was published in the same year: it identifies as the principal target of the *Remarques* Dryden—whose satirical *Marriage À-la-Mode*, we remember, was in 1673 a recent success in the London theatres—and it defends him and other London wits from the attacks mounted against them.

The author of the *Remarques* makes gallantry central to those attacks. He complains that the 'life of a young Gentleman' in London is 'not only degenerated below the precepts of ancient gallantry and generosity; but beneath that prudence, sobriety, and discretion which ought to be found in all who pretend to man-hood'. He blames the wits and fops of London for debasing the true gallantry of the English country gentleman: it is they, he says, 'who think, that the modish nonsense which they bring from *London*, should be more valued than the civility and agreeableness of rural conversation. But we shall find enough of this sort of Gallantry, in examining the pleasures and entertainments of the Town.' Gallantry of the sort he has in mind and the modish nonsense that dominate London life are, of course, French in provenance: 'As much as we have studied to Ape the *French*,' says the author in a stinging rebuke, 'we have yet only reach'd that perfection as to be ridiculous'.³⁰

Another such controversy—about who and what is truly gallant—takes place in Etherege's *Man of Mode*. Sir Fopling Flutter is the main vehicle for this controversy. The first thing the audience is told about him, after his arrival from France has been announced, is that, as young Bellair wryly puts it, 'He thinks himself the pattern of modern gallantry.' Of course he does, we might reflect, since *galanterie* is a fashionable French mode and Sir Fopling mimics fashionable French modes. Yet to mimic *galanterie* is to fall from its graces. Man-about-town Dorimant, rake to the fop that is Flutter, meets Young Bellair's comment about Sir Fopling with a retort: 'He is indeed the pattern of modern foppery.' Dorimant manages here, in one pithy sentence, both to redescribe Flutter's version of gallantry as an excessively Frenchified counterfeit and to leave hanging the suggestion that an authentic form of modern gallantry is to be found elsewhere. Dorimant is not harking back to the old-school version that reactionary members of the older generation, such as Lady Woodvill and Old Bellair, cherish: of chivalric attention paid by knights to ladies in a world where the children of the nobility have dynastic marriages arranged for them. The world, as Dorimant well appreciates, has changed. The 'freedoms of the present', as he calls them, mean that men and women can use their seductive charms on one another to choose their partners and make their way in society. This is modern gallantry in elite London society.³¹

The play explores this form of gallantry in two modes, the decorous and the libertine, each represented by a pair of well-born and fashionable lovers. The (revealingly named) Young Bellair and his beloved Emilia win each other's hands in the decorous mode. They remove the obstacles that the older generation have put in their way and thus add sweetness to the play's well-seasoned comic ending. Dorimant and Harriet,

whose witty courtship adds the salt, operate in the libertine mode. We watch the rake dallying with several mistresses before he finds his way to the 'wild, witty, lovesome, beautiful, and young' Harriet.³²

Dorimant and Harriet end the play on the brink of an uncertain future in which, having given up the freedoms they have variously enjoyed, they will need to find a new mode of living. Modern gallantry in its various modes needs to be carefully handled, as we have seen, if it is not to veer towards the empty social posturing adopted by fops or the sexual manipulation exercised by rakes. Etherege's *Man of Mode* explores all this in its clear-sighted comedy of social manners. It asks whether modern gallantry is truly possible in Restoration Britain, and how it may be used to engineer a happy and stylish ending. It peers beyond its own ending to ask what, besides courting, fashionable Stuart gentlemen and gentlewomen should do with the wit and other talents they possess. It asks, too, how many of these people really possess such talents or, put another way, how many of them in fact resemble Sir Fopling and his female admirers more closely than they do Dorimant and Harriet or Young Bellair and Emilia.

It even finds a way, thanks to Etherege's friend Dryden, of putting these questions, at the last, directly to the audience. Dryden's verse Epilogue to the play, which was most probably spoken by the actress in the role of Harriet, presents the figure of Sir Fopling as central to the play's ability to provoke in its audience—just as Molière's comedies do—a form of laughter that turns back on and includes the audience in its scope. Dryden suggests that characterization is the key to successful satirical implication of this kind. Most playwrights exaggerate foolishness in their characters beyond recognition, making them asses fit only for farce, whereas Etherege depicts altogether more substantial fools:

Something of man must be exposed to view,
That, gallants, they may more resemble you.

Dryden here turns the spotlight on the men in the audience. They, just as much as the Sir Fopling they have been laughing at, may mistake foppery for gallantry. But the women are no less implicated in the fashion for foppery:

Sir Fopling is a fool so nicely writ,
The ladies would mistake him for a wit,
And when he sings, talks loud, and cocks, would cry:
‘I vow, methinks, he’s pretty company—
So brisk, so gay, so travelled, so refined!’

The speaker of the Epilogue insists that the character of Sir Fopling—admired by the women and curiously resembling their gallants—is drawn from no single person in real life. He is a composite who ‘represents ye all’, Dryden asserts, before clinching the point:

From each he meets, he culls whate’er he can:
Legion’s his name, a people in a man.³³

Dryden here adds a further and final epithet to those that Sir Fopling Flutter has been accumulating from the title of *Etherege’s* play onwards. Flutter is the man of mode, the pattern of modern foppery, and—most disturbingly for his compatriots—he is a people in a man.

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As elsewhere in the book, I italicize in this index words that are discussed primarily as words, while adopting in all other situations the type face—either roman or italic—standardly used for the word in English (as per *OED*). Some entries list instances where the main entry word is treated as a word alongside instances where it is treated in other ways. In such cases, the main entry word is set in the type face—either roman or italic—standardly used for that word, and subentries are used to distinguish the various treatments it receives.

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