SCENIC SCHEME
—a formulated system of stylised representation on the Restoration stage

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In Farquhar's *Love and a Bottle*, Act II SCENE [i] Lovewell’s Lodgings (69-78):1

*Roebuck. ... Come, come, a Wench, a Wench! a soft, white, easy, consenting Creature!—*

*Prithee Ned Leave Minseness, and shew me the Varities of the Town.*

*Lovewell. A Wench is the least Varity—Lookout—See what a numerous Train trip along the street there—*

*(Pointing outwards.)*

*Roebuck. Oh Venus! all these fine stately Creatures! Fair you well, Ned.—(Runs out; Lovewell catches him, and pulls him back.) Prithee let me go: ‘Tis a deed of Charity; I’m quite twinkling.—...*

Lovewell promises to help Roebuck if he would renounce his loose courses and lead a sober life, that is, if he would court an honourable lady and live like a gentleman (though this turns out to be a case of using Roebuck to try out his lover, Lucinda’s chastity). Instead, Roebuck asks to see the ‘varieties’ of the town. To answer this, Lovewell points ‘outwards’, where they ‘see’ ‘a numerous Train trip along the street’.

Most of us would interpret the moment as a scene with the dramatic function of depicting Roebuck as being rakish; ‘a numerous Train trip along the street’ would be a kind of ‘verbal scenery’; when Lovewell points ‘outwards’, he is pointing in no particular direction.

I would like to argue later that these lines are not there just to depict Roebuck as being rakish; ‘a numerous Train trip along the street’ is not a kind of ‘verbal scenery’—on the contrary, I believe there is actually ‘a numerous Train’ of ‘fine stately Creatures’ ‘tripping’ on the stage; when Lovewell points ‘outwards’, he is pointing in a particular direction—in this case it is the back part of the stage where the scenery is set up to be ‘the Park’.

To reach this understanding, we need to decode the text at two different levels: the segmentation of the text, and the segmentation conventions of presentation on the stage. The former is superimposed on the latter, and the criteria of the latter differ from one kind of theatre to another and from one period to another. What were the signals and conventions for segmentation in presentation practised on the Restoration stage? How did they correlate with the signals for segmentation in a Restoration dramatic text? These are the questions I would like to answer.

My first task seems unfortunately hopeless since the information about either the playhouses or the mechanical devices is scarce. But it is not the factual details that I am after. If we can not know the playhouses themselves, we will search for the idea of the playhouses instead. From the result of a good study of the development of the playhouse after the Restoration (Chapter One), we
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The Restoration stage was the first stage in the history of British Theatre that had changeable scenery. The significance of this was not just in matters concerning new mechanical devices of scenic-representation, but the segmentation of a play into visible units of scenes. Because the view presented was changeable, the scenery began to gain the capacity to divide the play visually into parts. That is, the modern idea of a scene as a perceived segment of a dramatic text only began to come into existence at the time of the Restoration theatre. But the old Elizabethan law of segmentation into scenes, through a total change of configuration, still ruled. That is, the Shakespearean conception of a scene as a conceived segment of dramatic text remains as the essence of segmentation.

During this transitional period, some dramatists used old rules to construct his plays, some used new rules, and some combined both. When a scene is a segment by the definition of a total change of configuration, it is a conceived segment rather than a perceived one, and it may contain several locales, the representation of which, on the other hand, is a perceived segment. When the new rule comes first, we will find that within a perceived segment of scene, there can be several conceived segments of scene by the definition of a total change of configuration. When these two rules cooperate, the case becomes: one single locale for the segment of scene by the definition of a total change of configuration. When a play is not originally written for the Restoration stage, such as Shakespeare's plays, it has to be translated spatially. In cases like this, we often find a kind of semantic segment, which may contain several segments of scenes by the old segmentation. Because of the French influence, particularly in the Restoration time, the word scene can be a segment by the definition of 'the part of an Act which brings any change upon the Stage, by the change of Actors', as Heselin points out in his The Whole Art of the Stage (1684).

The object of this paper is to propose a hypothesis about the system of representation on the Restoration stage for decoding the textual signals of segmentation of this period.