Of Windmills and Bubbles: Harlequin Faustus on the Eighteenth-Century Stage

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ABSTRACT Plays using the Faustus plot have often been produced in response to English political crises, such as after the Stuart Restoration and during the Glorious Revolution. In the wake of the South Sea Bubble and the Atterbury Plot, Faustus returned to the stage in spectacles featuring thunder, lightning, dragons, and windmills. Faustus pantomimes came to represent the political machine, and playwrights used them to attack and defend political figures and to take sides in these two remarkable eighteenth-century scandals. In this essay, Judy A. Hayden examines allusions to these scandals in two influential examples of this tradition, Harlequin Doctor Faustus and The Necromancer, both produced in 1723.

KEYWORDS: politics in eighteenth-century British theater; John Rich; John Thurmond; Drury Lane; Lincoln's Inn Fields

'Tis a pitifull Age
And Puppet-shew Stage,
True Humour and Comedy've lost us:
Yet by Fools some still thrive
There's Punch all Alive,
A Windmill, the Devil and Faustus.¹

THE FAUSTUS PLOT in dramatic texts has often been linked with corruption, whether from external sources, such as society or politics, or internal sources, such as man’s moral, spiritual, or psychological state. In this essay, I want to explore the manner in which literary and theatrical references to Doctor Faustus have surfaced during moments of political crisis. While such links become clear at a number of historical junctures, the Faustus plot became a significant dramatic feature during the South Sea

¹. Emmet L. Avery records this satire in The London Stage, 1660–1800, Part Two: 1700–1729 (Carbondale, Ill., 1968). However, he gives no reference to its origin. The poem is listed under the entry for March 11, 1725.
Bubble and the Atterbury Plot, as Whig and Tory playwrights utilized the stage—and especially Harlequin Faustus—to promulgate their political views.

Christopher Marlowe’s *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus* established its effectiveness at conveying political subtexts or inferences in the early seventeenth century, and that efficacy continued in the Restoration and eighteenth century. In 1662, for example, Marlowe’s *Faustus* was revived on the patent stage. The version of the text published in 1663 omits one of the most controversial scenes—that in which Faustus and Mephistopheles visit the pope. This omission was perhaps an attempt to avoid any references to Catholicism, an issue of long-standing and serious concern for the Stuarts, and to redirect critical correlation between conjuring, corruption, and Catholicism. Whatever the case, a new scene was inserted, taken partly from *The Jew of Malta*, in which Faustus and Mephistopheles visit the Ottoman court of Suleiman.

In the wake of the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis, the Faustus plot adopted “party” affiliation. With the revelation of Titus Oates’s outrageous fabrication, broadsides and ballads vilified Oates and associated him not only with the devil but also with the Whigs. Their authors claimed that Oates had “conjured” with the devil to undermine the hereditary line of succession. The link between Oates and Doctor Faustus was made clear on September 10, 1681, in *The Loyal Protestant and True Domestic Intelligence*, where an anonymous author noted, “Since the Salamanca Dr’s removal into the City, the Whigs are so generous in their Supplies, that Pigs, Geese, and Capons fly in at his Windows in as great plenty as ever they did to Dr Faustus.” As a Faustus figure, Oates made the political machine dance to his tune, like the doctor, who performs such feats as silencing those he has cozened or commanding devils to drag away his enemies.

In 1688, as the reign of James II was fast crumbling, the Faustus plot returned to the stage in William Mountfort’s *The Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*. Mountfort incorporated a new feature in his Faustus play—commedia dell’arte, a “foreign” art form—at a moment when foreign political influence was undermining and threatening the disintegrating Stuart government. Using commedia dell’arte to attack the Whigs and address widespread anti-Catholic hysteria, Mountfort castigates the Dutch

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2. See, for example, *A Dialogue between a Yorkshire-Alderman and Salamanca-Doctor, at the Devil by Temple Bar about Swearing* (1683), *Oates’ Manifesto, or The Complaint of Titus Oates against the Doctor of Salamanca, and the Same Doctor Against Titus Oates* (1683), *The Occasional Doctor his Examination before a Committee of Whigg-priests* (1683), *The Tragick-Comedy of Titus Oates, who Sometime went under the Notion of the Salamanca* (1685), and *A New Plot, or The Whig and Tory United: Being a Dialogue between Titus Oats and Saxon; the Perjur’d Evidence* (1686) (all published in London).


4. William Mountfort, *The Lieve [sic] and Death of Doctor Faustus, Made into a Farce, With the Humours of Harlequin and Scaramouche: As they were several times Acted By Mr. Lee and Mr. Jevon, at the Queens Theatre in Dorset Garden. Newly Revived, At the Theatre in Lincoln Inns Fields, with Songs and Dances between the Acts* (London, 1697). Some scholars have argued that Mountfort’s farce is based on a much-revised version of Marlowe’s play that was produced in May 1662 and published in 1663. See, for example, Albert S. Borgman, *Life and Death of William Mountfort* (Cambridge, Mass., 1935), 183–86.

5. Commedia dell’arte had not been widely practiced by English playwrights, even though a number of commedia troops had regularly visited England, at least as early as the Elizabethan period. French and Italian players had performed privately and had given entr’acte performances, as John Dryden observed in 1673, complaining that these actors had “quite Debauched the Stage with lewd
while reminding the audience of the destructive fear and frenzy brought about by the Popish Plot.6

In the context of this historical link between the Faustus plot and political crises, it is not surprising that, in the aftermath of the South Sea Bubble and the Atterbury Plot, Faustus again took the stage as a marker of corruption. With the development of commedia dell’arte on the Restoration and eighteenth-century stage, he found an immensely receptive audience. The collapse of the South Sea Scheme initiated panic and drew the ire of many in the country who had been caught up in the fever of speculation, a large number of whom believed the government responsible for the crisis. The Jacobites saw the potential political ramifications and took the opportunity to denigrate the Whig government for the financial collapse brought about by the Bubble. In an effort to gain support for the Jacobite cause, the Pretender issued a declaration that called for “mutual deliverance” from the current misfortune, a document widely distributed in England.7 The declaration refers to the Hanoverian monarch as “an Usurper in a strange Land” and calls on “all Christian Princes and States” to assist him, that “justice may be done an injur’d Prince.”8

During the prosecution of the Atterbury Plot, which followed shortly thereafter, contemporary pamphlet and broadsheet material claimed it was a “Jesuit plot” that arose owing to the South Sea Bubble. The connection to and dependence of the plot on the Bubble was quickly drawn in contemporary literature.9 The early literary juxtaposition of these two incidents can be seen, for example, in Cato’s Letter to the Bishop of Rochester (1723). The writer draws attention to proceedings against the “conspirators” of the South Sea affair and those in the Atterbury Plot, observing:

Then it was Patriotism, Publick Spiritedness, and Love of our Country; now, striking at Fundamentals, invading our Liberties, and destroying the Rights of the Subject. I cannot therefore do a more proper thing at this Juncture, than to review the Conduct of some of these Parracides; which will prove undeniably, that if these Arguments were good and valid against the last South Sea Directors, they are much more so against the present Conspirators; this being a much more extraordinary Occasion, and consequently require more extraordinary Rigour and Severity.10


9. See, for example, the anonymous The Plotters; A Satire. Occasion’d by the Proceedings of the Earl of Or—y; the Lord B. of R. the Lord N. and G. and Others (London, 1722).

Just as newspapers, pamphlets, broadsheets, and ballads condemned those involved in causing the economic crisis or those involved in the potential Jacobite rebellion, so, too, did the playwrights respond, attacking and defending various political figures from the stage. To do so, they turned to Faustus, but this time with pantomime.

Pantomimes provided a popular vehicle with which to provide covert political commentary. Faustus pantomimes revel in spectacle and teem with thunder, lightning, dragons, witches, flying tables, and dancing demons, but they are also infused with political allusions. While playwrights frequently denigrated farce, and particularly pantomime, as a “low” form of entertainment, even “chimerical,”11 they also understood the ability of comedy to address political issues; in fact, commedia dell’arte had been imbued from its origin with political significance, particularly through its improvisational aspect, by which the players could avoid censorship and practice their art with impunity.12 As John O’Brien has demonstrated, “pantomimes were clearly imagined as political by contemporaries who understood their popularity as indexing the state of Britain itself.”13 This is surely why, as pantomime revealed unprecedented popularity on the English stage (although Scaramouch dances and Harlequin entertainment pieces had been enjoying a popularity of their own), critics became alarmed. Not only were the political ramifications in pantomime manifest, but the audiences were witnesses to a stylized chaos that threatened the social and political order. In a parallel concern, critics complained that pantomimes contributed to the intellectual and cultural decay of the nation (see figure 1), as the anonymous author does in the satire at the start of this essay.14

Tory Fools and Puppy Kings

On November 26, 1723, John Thurmond offered at Drury Lane his pantomime Harlequin Doctor Faustus: With the Masque of the Deities (1724); less than a month later, on


14. For example, in The British Journal for Saturday, February 29, 1724, one poet asks, “Now in the Name of Reason where is fled / British Genius?” This complaint is echoed by another anonymous author, who asks, “I cannot therefore, with any patience see a Harlequin, or Scaramouch usurp that Stage, where I have been so often delighted with the Distresses of othello and jaffier”; A Letter to My Lord ***** on the present diversions of the town with the true reason for the decay of our dramatic entertainments (London, 1725), 17. Similar objections appeared in William Hogarth’s print Masquerades and Operas (1723/24) and John Spence’s Essay on Pope’s Odyssey (London, 1726). Spence suggests that, should the theater managers again stage classic plays, “Poor Doctor Faustus, and his Dragon, would no longer be the highest Entertainment of the Beaux Esprits of this Age” (44). See also John O’Brien, Harlequin Britain: Pantomime and Entertainment, 1690–1760 (Baltimore, 2004), 41.
December 20, John Rich responded in kind with *The Necromancer; or Harlequin, Doctor Faustus* at Lincoln’s Inn Fields. Pantomime’s popularity exploded, and the art form became a main stage feature as “choreographers searched mythology and commedia dell’arte themes for plots” and spectacles. The Harlequin Faustus plot proved so popular that Thurmond’s and Rich’s texts were followed by Lewis Theobald’s *Harlequin a Sorcerer: With the Loves of Pluto and Proserpine* (1725), produced at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, and the anonymous *Arlequin Doctor Faustus*, produced on March 8, 1725, at the Little Haymarket Theatre, although left unpublished.

Thurmond’s *Harlequin Doctor Faustus*, the first of these pantomimes, opens with Faustus in his study, perusing a contract, which he signs. Immediately thereafter, “Mephostophilus” flies down on a fire-spewing dragon and gives Faustus a wand by which to effect his magical powers. What follows is a sequence of events in which Faustus tells fortunes, conjures Helen, purchases courtesans, cuckold young husbands, taunts clothiers, tricks countrymen, and sets fire to a barn to escape a mob determined to wreak revenge for his pranks.

In the final scene, Faustus is back in his study. While the music plays “a tune of horror,” the clock strikes one, the hour of Faustus’s death. Time enters with a scythe and an hourglass, pronouncing: “Mortal, thy dreadful Hour is come, / Thy Days are past, thy Glass is run” (13). Death enters and sings a response, followed by lightning and thunder. Two fiends seize Faustus, and, as he descends into hell, other devils tear him limb from limb, rejoicing as they fly upward with his mangled pieces. Here the music alters suddenly and the scene is transformed to the heavens for the Masque of the Deities, where a number of gods and goddesses express their joy over Faustus’s death, since he had usurped power from the heavens and held sway over the sun, moon, and seasons.

While Thurmond’s *Harlequin* may have brought the house down with laughter, another Harlequin was brought to the public’s attention in the trial for Atterbury’s part in the Jacobite plot. Lord Mar, a major player in the plot to bring the pretender James III to the English throne, had sent the Atterburys a small spotted dog named Harlequin. Mar, who lived in France at the time, intended the dog for “Mrs. Illington,” the code name for Atterbury’s wife. The dog played an important role in the Atterbury trial, helping to identify the bishop of Rochester as one of the correspondents in the letters between the Jacobite plotters, and the newspapers were quick to seize on the incident. On August 16, 1723, the London paper *Pasquin* published a derogatory poem that emphasized this correlation between a dog, the Jacobites, and the Atterbury Plot:

Yes, you Jacobites listen, whilst yet you wear Ears,  
Let your B—p of Billingsgate add to your Fears,  
That have startled and starved you these Thirty odd Years.

Let the Tory Fools laugh, and of Harlequin sing,  
But a four-legg’d Ambassador’s no such strange thing  
To be sent from a Court where a Puppy’s a King.  
Mean while let his Cullies continue their Game,  
For Jacobite Treason will still be the same,  
And like Mrs. Illington’s Lap-Dog prove lame.

17. *Harlequin Doctor Faustus: With the Masque of the Deities. Compos’d by John Thurmond, Dancing-Master. With Additions and Alterations* (London, 1724). There are no formal scene markings or line numbers in this play. References in the text are to page numbers.
The references correlating Atterbury with Harlequin and his antics soon mushroomed. For example, a comedy entitled *The Metamorphosis, or Harlequin Cato, a Comedy, as it is to be acted with very great Applause* was published in issue number 242 of *The Weekly Journal, or Saturday’s Post*, dated Saturday, June 15, 1723. The “Dramatis Personae” lists Cato as “Harlequin Cato, a Man of the Times,” with again a reference to dogs and bishops. In the “play,” Cato is easily bribed with a considerable sum of money to become a creature of Myn Heer Van Tickleburgh, a “High German Doctor.” As a part of the bribe, Cato dresses in a Harlequin outfit. In return for the money the doctor has given him, Cato is to betray his party, abuse the clergy, and sell the doctor a good reputation:

**cato:** O, Pox, that’s more than I have myself;—but I’ll tell you what I can do for you, Seignior Doctor.—I’ll steal you one.—I’ll rob some honest Gentleman, or some Bishop, (for I hate Clergy), ay, I’ll rob some Bishop of his good Name, and give it to you.

**doc.:** But perhaps it won’t fit . . .

**cato:** I’ll sell you one of the very newest, Dog-cheap.19

While Harlequin Faustus in Thurmond’s pantomime is indeed a cunning trickster, he is also a dissolute womanizer. Faustus uses the power of the wand Mephostophilus has given him for womanizing, stealing two wives from their husbands, whom he cuckold, as shown by the horns he conjures on their heads (6).20 Contemporary satire of Atterbury highlights his philandering. The newspaper *Pasquin*, for example, published two letters in April of 1723, purportedly between “Sally Salisbury” (the name taken by the notorious prostitute Sarah Prydden) and “Frank Rig” (a name used in the Jacobite ciphers for Atterbury). In a letter dated April 19, 1723, Frank observes to Sally, “I have long had the Reputation of being a very cunning long-headed Fellow, and even not inferior to those ancient Magi, Friar Bacon and Doctor Faustus” (1). Later in the letter, Frank complains that “being outwitted by a Cabal of Whigs, is a far greater Punishment than any can inflict upon me” (1–2).

Sally’s letter to “Frank Rig” in *Pasquin*, dated April 8, 1723, refers pointedly to Frank’s questionable ethics. “As we have both been oblig’d to appear in promiscuous [indiscriminate] Company, and show often in publrick, it was necessary to have some exterior graces,” she remarks (2). Unfortunately, she continues, the world has come to

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19. Issue number 249 of the *Weekly Journal, or Saturday’s Post*, dated August 3, 1723, begins with another play, this one intended to offer a “delicate Satyr and clean Reflections . . . [to] give the Reader as agreeable a Diversion . . . at this dull Time of Action” (1). In the play, *Timon Misanthrope: Or, The Man-Hater*, Timon, who appears to be in self-exile, has Jupiter turn his ass into a human because the ass “follows him in his Adversity” and is “the only instance of Sincerity I have met with” (1). The ass, of course, becomes Harlequin, who, in issue number 250, dated Saturday, August 10, 1723, demands money from Timon. Timon refuses, observing that “thus I use you because I love you” (2).

20. If the wand here were meant to suggest a bishop’s rod or staff (crozier), the satire becomes even more biting in the context of the accusations against Atterbury. Unfortunately, I have not found any description of Faustus’s wand.
believe that their “Outside is the best part” of them. She likens both of their occupations to prostitution, noting that “You and I have been two of the Greatest Bites of the Age in our several Callings”; but though he is the elder of the two “Bites,” she adds, “[I]t would puzzle a good Arithmetician to tell which of us has made the most Bubbles in our several Ways of Life” (1–2). Later she likens Rig to a fallen woman, as she observes, “I do not mention this to reproach you, but only to remind you that when a Woman falls from her Modesty, and a B____ from his Virtue, the Faith and Sincerity of Both are much alike” (2). The references to women in Thurmond’s pantomime re-surface when Harlequin Faustus borrows money from a usurer, giving his right leg as surety. Although Mephostophilus offers Faustus a variety of replacement legs, Faustus insists on a woman’s leg (7–8).

While in Marlowe’s well-known tragedy, the horse courser desires revenge for the trick the conjurer played on him, the leg incident here has resonances not only with Atterbury’s purported womanizing but also with the dog that linked Atterbury to the Jacobite plot. The dog Harlequin apparently had a broken leg and was cared for by Mrs. Barnes, the landlady of Atterbury’s secretary, George Kelly. It was Barnes who, during questioning, had inadvertently revealed to investigators that Mrs. Atterbury was the recipient of the dog. The barn in which Faustus and his cronies attempt to hide from the angry, pursuing mob may well be a covert reference to Barnes, who, in pointing out the owner of the dog during the trial, failed to grant “refuge” to the plotters, just as the threshers refuse protection to Faustus by refusing him entry to the barn. Thurmond makes a further reference to dogs in a scene that takes place in Faustus’s study, where the pedestal of a statue, a “clockwork engine,” is changed into a chariot drawn by dogs (9).

The final scene of Thurmond’s pantomime is a masque. With the destructive powers of Harlequin Faustus now absent, harmony is restored. In the masque, the gods and goddesses sit on either side of the stage, designed as a poetical heaven (13), which again leaves an open space for discussion of Whig ideals, for the position of the stage characters seems evocative of a Parliament. A number of “lesser” gods, including Flora, Iris, Mars, Mercury, and Diana, come forward to dance individually, concluding events on a note of harmony and peace. This harmony, however, comes not from the supreme ruling entity, for neither Jupiter (or Jove) nor Juno appear, but rather from the dance of these lesser gods. We will see how quickly Rich’s Tory pantomime responds to Thurmond’s Whig ideal of the supremacy of Parliament.

I want to return briefly to the dragon on which Mephostophilus first enters the play, for the dragon offers further significant references to the Atterbury affair and its

21. A “bite” is a reference to money and fraud, particularly to illegally obtained funds. To “bite” also means to sell something. Sally is a prostitute who sells her wares, so her claim that they are both “bites” has sexual implications. Note also that the term “bite” was used in this historical period in the familiar context of love-bite, an understanding that provides further sexual connotation here.

22. For a contemporary discussion of the trial, see An Historical Narrative of the Tryals of Mr. George Kelly, and of Dr. Francis Atterbury; (Late) Lord Bishop of Rochester &c. &c. (London, 1727). During the trial, Kelly claimed the dog was his, given him by a surgeon in Paris (p. 18), while Atterbury denied any knowledge of the dog (pp. 60–61).
Jacobite association. In an edition of The Tea-Table dated March 23, 1724, Eliza Haywood published a drawing in which Harlequin, a copy of The Tea-Table in hand, climbs into the mouth of a dragon. This image, she claims, some may believe “has relation to the late Bishop of Rochester’s reasonable Correspondencies abroad” or “to his confinement in the Tower” (2). The figure of the dragon had a timely and significant reference to the Jacobite plot, for when the Atterbury Plot began to unfold, Walpole sent a ship named The Dragon to seize another named the Revolution, and “its crew of ‘traitors and rebels to the king.’”23 The Revolution had sailed to Genoa, where the Pretender had also gone. Walpole rightly suspected that the crew of the Revolution was involved in the Jacobite plot, although nothing against the crew could be proved.

The dragon had long been linked with Roman Catholicism as well, and thus in this manner Thurmond’s Harlequin Doctor Faustus may suggest the Catholic Pretender behind the Atterbury Plot. But perhaps another influential source for Thurmond’s dragon was an earlier English ballad entitled A True Relation of the Dreadful Combate Between More of More-hall, and the Dragon of Wantley (1685).24 Of the dragon, the anonymous author notes: “Some say this Dragon was a Witch; / Some say he was the Devil.” Whatever the case, the ballad references an event that purportedly occurred in the sixteenth century, when George Talbot, sixth Earl of Shrewsbury, attempted to take the proceeds of the excess of rental lands of Sheffield.25 These funds had long been designated by trust to be used in part to support the parish church. A man named More of More-Hall, described in the ballad as a knight, brought suit, and the resulting legal battle is configured as a combat between the knight, who fights “Like a valiant Son of Mars,” and a dragon. Whether these events are in fact true, and although Talbot was certainly not a bishop, the story and the ballad nevertheless again present a correlation between a dragon and the church.

The ballad and its tune would have been well known to Thurmond’s audience. The Wantley ballad was not only reprinted in the eighteenth century, but its tune had also been used for another anonymous broadside, The Seizure, or the Sack and the Gauger. To the tune of the Dragon of Wantly (1719). The association of ecclesiastics and dragons also appears in Edward Ward’s verse satire Pulpit-war: or Dr. S-ll, the High Church trumpet, and Mr. H-ly, the Low Church drum, engaged. By way of dialogue between the fiery dragon, and aspiring grasshopper (1710).26

24. A True Relation of the Dreadful Combate Between More of More-Hall, and the Dragon of Wantley (London, 1685). The year of this publication is important as it was also when the Catholic James II came to the throne, which may in itself have something to do with the construction of this ballad.
25. The trust was established in 1297; “the value of the land and properties held by the ’free tenants’ of Sheffield increased, and income from rentals, over and above that paid to the Lord of the Manor, was devoted to community purposes, especially for the work of the Parish Church.” See the ”History“ page of the Sheffield Church Burgesses Trust website, http://www.sheffieldchurchburgesses.org.uk/history-of-sheffield-church-burgesses-trust.htm.
26. Henry Carey turned The Dragon of Wantley in 1737 into an extremely popular burlesque opera, which was reprinted numerous times; see The Dragon of Wantley: A Burlesque Opera. The Musick by Mr. John-Frederick Lampe, and performed at the Theatre-Royal in Covent-Garden. Moderniz’d from the Old Ballad after the Italian Manner, by Sig. Carini, 2nd ed. (London, 1737). Carey followed up his
Unperforming Ghosts and Ministers from Hell

John Loftis has noted Thurmond’s Whig values, while also pointing out that, after Walpole’s rise to power and his deft handling of the resolution of the Atterbury Plot, a clear distinction came about between the political sympathies of the theaters, Lincoln’s Inn Fields with the Tories and Drury Lane with the Whigs. The Tories maligned the Whigs relentlessly when the South Sea scheme collapsed, and the Whigs responded in kind during the Atterbury Plot. John Rich countered the Whig sympathy in Thurmond’s *Harlequin Doctor Faustus* with his Tory-aligned *The Necromancer: or, Harlequin, Doctor Faustus* (1724). In fact, a writer in *Pasquin*, on January 21, 1723/24, claims that he had a strong reason to suspect the manager of the new house as being tainted with Jacobitism (1).

Rich’s *The Necromancer*, performed at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, is complete with the mandatory dragon, but it also contains a new element: a windmill. The windmill is a key symbol in this play because it points to the Bubble crisis, which Tories viewed as a Whig plot. Whether Rich simply had Tory sympathies or did indeed lean toward Jacobitism, his Faustus pantomime appears to rebut Thurmond’s critique of the Jacobite conspiracy behind the Atterbury plot by charging the Whigs with the economic crisis brought about by the South Sea Bubble.

Rich’s pantomime opens with Faustus in his study, the Good and Bad Spirits offering their advice. Faustus makes motions and an Infernal Spirit rises holding a paper and bidding the doctor to sign his consent (figure 2) as “Ten thousand Demons stand prepared . . . to execute thy Will” (4). The Infernal Spirit offers gold, crowns, and scepters, but it is not until he makes Helen appear that Faustus becomes interested. Once Faustus signs the contract, however, the spirit cheats him, taking Helen with him as he sinks from the stage laughing.

Rich’s production centers less on Faustus’s magic than on his “talents,” that is, duplicity, theft, and forgery, and, importantly, talents in the sense of money, specifically his ability to enrich himself through the property of others. In emphasizing Faustus’s contract with the devil, Rich may have been attempting to draw attention to the paper notes issued by banks and the stocks bought and sold by stockjobbers, as well as to the duplicity and theft with which many charged the Whigs. With the collapse of the South Sea Bubble, “hundreds of thousands of pounds’ worth of . . . notes,” issued by the banks . . .

28. A Dramatick Entertainment, Call’d The Necromancer: or, Harlequin, Doctor Faustus, As Perform’d at the Theatre Royal In Lincoln’s-Inn-Fields. To which is Prefix’d, a short Account of Doctor Faustus; and how he came to be reputed a Magician (London, 1724). References in the text are to page number.
29. Rich had renovated the theater in 1714, redecorating the interior in the summer of 1723 and staging elaborate performances.
30. In fairness, however, while the Whigs may well have had the dominant share of the stock market trade, they certainly did not have a monopoly. See Bruce G. Carruthers, “Trading on the London Stockmarket,” in *Great Bubbles*, ed. Ross B. Emmett, 3 vols. (London, 2000), 3:72.
31 Much of what happens in this pantomime involves money and conning or “bubbling.” For example, in the scenes that follow, while Faustus taunts haymakers and seduces two country girls, he also forces two men to dance on their hands for having refused to pay him for fortune-telling. In scene 4, an extravagant spectacle is set before a windmill, where Faustus attempts to seduce a miller’s wife and engages in a hilarious chase scene with the miller. When the miller becomes entangled in the sails, Faustus abandons the game, only to return as a dancing giant, who does not stop dancing even though the miller and his assistant cut off his arms and head. Eventually, Faustus jumps out of the belly of the giant, fights off the miller and his assistant, and absconds gleefully with the miller’s wife and his grain. The miller loses everything.

In the wake of the South Sea Bubble, wind and windmills came to demonstrate the emptiness or worthlessness of the stocks for which the shareholders had paid outrageous prices. Jonathan Swift remarks on such “wind” in his poem The Bubble: “The
Nation too too late will find, / . . . / Directors Promises but Wind.” 32 Frans DeBruyn has explored Dutch speculative activity, or windhandel, as it became known, in the collection of engravings known as Het groote tafereel der dwaasheid (The great picture [scene] of folly), which DeBruyn claims first appeared in Amsterdam at the end of 1720. 33 Wind and windmills (as well as Harlequin) figure prominently throughout these engravings, such as in the print entitled De wind coopers met wind betaald, or de laaste sal blyven hangen (The wind-buyers paid in wind, or those who are last will remain hanging on) and Arlquyn actionist (Harlequin stockholder). 34 In William Hogarth’s The Lottery (1721), Wantonness, who draws numbers from a large lottery wheel, is depicted with a windmill in hand (figure 3). 35

In his Necromancer, then, Rich responds to Thurmond’s Whig anti-Jacobite text with a “Tory” accusation of a “Whig” cheat in the South Sea Bubble. Certainly Swift charged the Whigs with this in The Bubble, noting that the Whigs will claim the disastrous results of the debacle “are factious Lyes, / From some malicious Tory’s Brain; / For, where Directors get a Prize, / The Swiss and Dutch whole Millions drain.” 36

In scenes 5 and 6 of Rich’s pantomime, two scholars visit Faustus and, seated on either side of the stage, watch while Faustus waves his wand. The spirits of Hero and Leander appear and begin a discourse on love, but Charon rises shortly thereafter and complains that he is being kept waiting by the whining of these lovesick fools. At the end of a brief song, Hero, Leander, and Charon vanish. Faustus waves his wand again and the scene becomes a wood in which a monstrous dragon descends. Male demons drop from each of its claws while four female demons arise from several locations on stage, and together they join in a dance. As they revel in their merriment, the clock strikes; Faustus is seized by the spirits and given to the dragon, who devours him before taking flight. The demons rejoice with, “Now triumph Hell, and Fiends be gay, / The Sorc’rer is become our Prey” (15).

Hero and Leander in Rich’s pantomime are undoubtedly a derisive response to the masque of gods and goddesses in Thurmond’s Harlequin Doctor Faustus. The heavenly music of Thurmond’s masque is opposed in Rich’s text to the lovers Hero and Leander, who arise at Faustus’s bidding and exchange a discourse permeated with passion, as they celebrate their “Eternity of Bliss” (15). But the lovers’ exaggerated discourse is derided by Charon’s derogatory description of the couple as “whining and pining.” Charon complains to Leander of his “Cant of Flames, —and Darts,— / and

34. Prints from Het groote tafereel der dwaasheid can be viewed online at the website of the South Sea Bubble Collection at the Baker Library, Harvard Business School, http://www.library.hbs.edu/hc/ssb/recreationandarts/tafereel.html.
streaming Eyes, —and bleeding Hearts? / Give o’er this stuff. —Why, what the Devil” (17). To Hero he asks bawdily what “Transports” could she possibly find in “a thin, unperforming Ghost” (18). The alignment of the mythical gods and goddesses with Parliament that Thurmond puts forward in his Harlequin Doctor Faustus is comically confined to the underworld in Rich’s Necromancer, where Charon, who has the last word, claims that the Stygian Lake is the destination for statesmen, lawyers, courtiers, and “Knaves and Fools of ev’ry Class” (19).

Lewis Theobald, who collaborated on pantomimes with John Rich, wrote an afterpiece, A Dramatick Entertainment, call’d Harlequin a Sorcerer: With the Loves of Pluto and Proserpine (1725), also produced at Lincoln’s Inn Fields.37 This brief afterpiece incorporates singing and dancing as the main feature, and the dragon of Thurmond’s and Rich’s pantomimes is replaced by witches. The entertainment opens with four witches who gather to meet their master’s “new contracted son,” Harlequin (1–2). In the next scene, a “Flock” of witches flies across the stage, with Harlequin following in a post chaise (2). The image of Harlequin in a post chaise may be a derivation of the chariot of speculation driven by Folly, an image from plate 1 of Bernard Picart’s

37. Lewis Theobald, A Dramatick Entertainment, call’d Harlequin a Sorcerer: With the Loves of Pluto and Proserpine. As perform’d at the Theatre Royal in Lincoln’s-Inn-Fields (London, 1725). The entertainment has no scene or line numbers; references in the text are to page number.
well-known print *Monument Consacré a la Posterité*, a drawing Paulson suggests might have served as a model for Hogarth’s own Bubble prints.39

While playwrights may have developed these Faustus pantomimes as a means of promulgating support for or inveighing against parties or particular ministers of state, even the rabble, as Thomas Shadwell refers to them, would have enjoyed the political commentary, and particularly the spectacle and the laughter of farce. That these classes would not have understood at least in a limited way the dramatic jousts between the Whigs and Tories can be discredited by contemporary comment. We might look back at Haywood’s issue number 10 of *The Tea-Table*, for example, in which she refers to a general contemporary understanding of Harlequin and the dragon, writing: “As for Harlequin’s leaping into the Mouth of the Dragon, there is not a Servant Wench, or Shoe-cleaner from St. Giles’ Pound to Wapping, but will be able to understand the literal and obvious meaning of it” (2). Apparently, the general public had a very good understanding of the political reference.

The Legacy of Harlequin Faustus
In spite of the frequent criticism about the decay of the British stage, Faustus pantomimes enjoyed much popularity and were far from short-lived. The general audience clearly loved them. From the date of its first production until 1747, Thurmond’s *Harlequin Doctor Faustus* was produced on 156 occasions. The *Daily Post* for November 30, 1723, notes:

*Harlequin Doctor Faustus* . . . meets with universal Approbation. The Incidents are taken from the old History of the Doctor and several Tricks supposed to be done by the Power of the Black Art, are executed in a very surprising Manner, and the last Grand Scene is superior in Magnificence to any thing that has ever yet appeared on the British Stage.40

Rich’s *The Necromancer* was produced an incredible 291 times in this short period, while *Harlequin a Sorcerer* netted seventy-nine performances.41 The *Daily Journal* for January 9, 1724, notes:

The Concourse of People to see it [*The Necromancer*] was so exceeding great, that many hundreds were obliged to go back again, as not being able to gain Admittance; the Entertainment was wonderful satisfactory to the Audience, as exceeding all the Legerdemain that has hitherto been performed on the Stage.42

42. Avery, *London Stage*, 754.
Between 1747 and 1779, *Harlequin a Sorcerer* was produced 335 times, while *The Necromancer* enjoyed 125 performances.43

The elaborate pantomime spectacles were so popular that the anonymous author of *An Exact Description of the Two Fam'd Entertainments of Harlequin Doctor Faustus . . . and the Necromancer* (1724) observed that “there are scarce any in the Country, especially young People, who have had but a bare mention of it, that do not long as much for the Sight of the Doctor, as a French Head, or a new Suit of Cloaths.”44 That the Harlequin Faustus pantomimes continued to charm audiences throughout the eighteenth century, David Thomas and Arnold Hare claim, was owing perhaps to the “pleasing aesthetic combination of virtuoso dancing, attractive music and visual spectacle . . . a popular down-to-earth form” of the seventeenth-century masque.45 But in fact, while “Faustus entertainments . . . would become one of the most popular productions of any kind” in the eighteenth century,46 we must not forget the nature and function of their development. The ability of Harlequin Faustus to provide political commentary has a history that requires further study. Certainly the political nature of farce and commedia dell’arte is made manifest by playwrights whose Harlequin pantomimes, as discussed above, significantly articulated political sentiment.

By the 1730s, John O’Brien observes, stage entertainments clearly “seemed to provide models for political practice, and to figure the operations of state power.”47 While this is certainly true, I would argue that Harlequin Faustus had served this purpose earlier, at least as early as William Mountfort’s *The Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*. The South Sea Bubble and the Atterbury Plot heightened political rivalry between Thurmond and Rich, and the Drury Lane and Lincoln’s Inn theater productions, and this rivalry brought the Harlequin Faustus form to a new level. Tucked within the exploits and antics of Faustus, played by the comical Harlequin, and creased and folded within the lines of the demons, dragons, and windmills that make up the spectacle, the political debate unfolds. And while such pantomimes were surely appealing across the wide political and economic divide, we must remember that “no laughter-inducing device” presented us by playwright or actor alike, even by our “new contracted son,” is ever “innocent.”48

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44. *An Exact Description of the Two Fam'd Entertainments of Harlequin Doctor Faustus; With The Grand Masque of the Heathen Deities: and the Necromancer, or Harlequin Doctor Faustus. As now Perform'd, in the Grotesque Characters, at both Theatres. Containing The particular Tricks, Incidents, Songs, Dances, Alterations, and Additions, throughout both Performances. Regularly adjusted into distinct Scenes. With the Names of the Persons of both Dramas* (London, 1724); the preface pages are unnumbered.
47. Ibid., 191.
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