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Heather Ann Ladd

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Résumé de l'article

This article considers a strange, understudied work of eighteenth-century musical theatre, Thomas D'Urfey's *Wonders in the Sun* (1706). This highly intertextual, generically heterogeneous comic opera is a pastiche of literary and performative modes and ultimately a machine for generating wonder; it draws on elements from Aristophanes' *The Birds*, seventeenth-century masque and semi-opera, as well as the lunar fictions. The article situates this play not only within a history of literary wonder and stage spectacle, but within the English tradition of politicized animal fable. Discussing D'Urfey's comic opera against selections from John Gay's *Fables*, it argues that the utopian/dystopian animal in these imaginative satires reveals the period's twinned fascinations with discovery and alterity, as well as emergent discomfiture with anthro- and Eurocentric Enlightenment beliefs.

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Music, Fable, and Fantasy: Thomas D'Urfey's *Wonders in the Sun* and the Eighteenth-Century Political Animal

Heather Ann Ladd
University of Lethbridge

> That is to sey, the foules of ravyne
> Were hyest set; and than the foules smale,
> That eten as hem nature wolde enclyne,
> As worm or thing of whiche I telle no tale;
> And water-foul sat loweste in the dale;
> But foul that liveth by seed sat on the grene,
> And that so fele, that wonder was to sene.
>
> (Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Parlement of Foules*)

> Is it then a wonder, that this man of nature, the Orang Outang, should be so different from us? Or, is it not rather a wonder, that we should find in him any of our own features?
>
> (Lord James Burnet, *Of the Origin and Progress of Language*)

> All animals, except man, know that the principal business of life is to enjoy it.
>
> (Variously attributed to Thomas D'Urfey and Samuel Butler)

In April 1706, the Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket staged a wonder, an innovative—and frankly bizarre—comic opera, *Wonders in the Sun; or, The Kingdom of the Birds* by dramatist, poet, and songwriter Thomas D'Urfey, with music by Anglo-Italian composer and harpsichordist Giovanni Battista Draghi.[1] The play's action is pure fantasy: two men, a Spanish philosopher named Domingo Gonzales and his servant

1. Active in London from the 1660s until his death in 1708, Giovanni Battista Draghi is known for writing incidental music for the theatre, serving as a royal organist, and setting John Dryden's poem "Ode to St. Cecilia" to music.

Diego, are carried above the earth by a flock of "ganzas" or geese.[2] They travel through the regions of the sun, interacting with assorted solar inhabitants, including over a dozen anthropomorphized birds. Twenty-two songs loosely hang on this plot, which was clearly derived from Aristophanes' *Birds* (produced 414 BCE), elaborate court masques of the seventeenth century, and the lunar fictions still popular amongst English cultural consumers. D'Urfey's musical work, consonant with the "generically jumbled" nature of English operas and semi-operas of the seventeenth century, is a celebration of heterogeneity.[3] The title page glowingly advertises this musical work as containing a "great Variety of *Songs* in all kinds, set to Musick by several of the most Eminent Masters of the Age." Producing this play, itself a machine for generating live wonder through song and stagecraft, involved elaborate scenery, bird costumes, and a huge cast of performers. Unfortunately for both the playwright and the theatre manager, D'Urfey's dramatic hot mess was by all accounts a commercial and critical failure. Yet I would argue that the very messiness of *Wonders in the Sun*—that is, its aesthetic of excess and superfluidity—renders this piece an ideal case study for examining the facets of literary and dramatic wonder in a spectacular Age of Enlightenment. *Wonders in the Sun* is an artistic menagerie or cabinet of curiosities, a collection that excites wonder through its novelty and strangeness, two qualities emphasized by Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park in their key work on early modern wonders as objects of inquiry.[4] Within the generic chaos and pantextual intertexuality of D'Urfey's play, a palimpsest of imaginative and quasi-scientific sources of the marvellous, the wondrous animal stands out. The utopian/dystopian animality in *Wonders in the Sun*, I argue in this paper, exemplifies not only the period's continuing fascination with discovery and alterity, but an emergent discomfiture with self-identification as rational and civilized—likewise seen in the darker

2. Thomas D'Urfey, *Wonders in the Sun; or, The Kingdom of the Birds* (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson, 1706), Act 1, page 9; Eighteenth-Century Collections Online, CW112463399. All further citations of this play will be provided in-text (act and page number indicated) and refer to this edition.

3. Robert D. Hume, "The Politics of Opera in Late Seventeenth-Century London," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 10, no. 1 (1998): 16.

4. In *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park investigate the wider culture out of which the fad for curiosities and monsters emerged.

political beast fables of D'Urfey's contemporary and successor John Gay.

This paper is divided into two parts. In the first, I begin with a comprehensive survey of the cultural antecedents of D'Urfey's musical play, situating it in a longer performance history of wonder and unpacking the play's generic complexities.[5] In the second, I discuss *Wonders in the Sun* against several of John Gay's fables (from *Fables*, 1727; *Part the Second*, 1738), considering the political animal as a catalyst of the satirical wonder that challenges both Enlightenment anthropomorphism and Eurocentrism.

Recent critical perspectives on *Wonders in the Sun* are few and far between; nonetheless, this play, which thematizes wonder while being in and of itself *a wonder*—i.e. something strange and surprising—is germane to an ongoing scholarly conversation about the wondrous, recently reinvigorated by Sarah Tindal Kareem's remarkable 2014 monograph.[6] Wonder, as Kareem lucidly summarizes in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder,* "is part of a broad and shifting semantic field in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century psychology and aesthetics that at various times includes surprise, curiosity, admiration, suspense, stupor, awe, amazement, and astonishment."[7] An important trope in classical literature, and perhaps most beautifully articulated in the "wonders of man" choral hymn from Sophocles' *Antigone* (c. 441 BCE), wonder is productively examined both diachronically and synchronically.[8] Crucially, *wonder* is both a verb and a noun, a feeling and a thing, or a set of discursive and material circumstances capable of evoking that feeling.[9] Wonder is a potent theatrical affect that emerges not just out of immediate and singular

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5. For a short survey of scholarly work on D'Urfey prior to 1984, see Jack Knowles and J. M. Armistead, "Thomas D'Urfey and Three Centuries of Critical Response," *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660–1700* 8, no. 2 (Fall 1984): 72–80.

6. Sarah Tindal Kareem, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

7. Ibid., 7.

8. Stephen Greenblatt, also recognizing the importance of wonder in classical antiquity, observes that "[t]he voyages of Odysseus in particular were for centuries the occasion for aesthetic and philosophical speculations on the relation between heroism and the arousal of wonder through a representation of marvels." See Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 74.

9. Stephen Greenblatt and Sarah Tindal Kareem both emphasize this point.

performance, but from what Jacky Bratton calls a play's "intertheatricality": the production context, or, the particular "theatrical code shared by writers, performers and audience which consists not only of language, but of genres, conventions and memory—shared by the audience—of previous plays and scenes, previous performances, the actors' previous roles and their known personae on and off stage."[10] Likewise invested in unpacking collective and individual responses to art, Gabriela Dragnea Horvath reflects on metawonder, the transhistorical interest in wonder's relationship to thought as well as emotion, given that "[s]ince antiquity, the state of wonder has been ascertained both as an emotional response to novelty and as a suspension of reason, inviting to a new cognitive step."[11] D'Urfey's self-consciously wonderful (or more precisely, wonder-full) creation can be situated in a long tradition of literary and stage wonder, and specifically conceived of as an Enlightenment text. Like its countless imaginative predecessors, *Wonders in the Sun* foregrounds wonder as an affective, intellectual, and artistic force, but also invokes wonder as both an expression of power and of powerlessness in an age so centred on exploring and questioning the natural world.

Thomas D'Urfey's long career as an artist aligned with a period of significant social, political, and cultural developments in Europe. Nonetheless, he managed to enjoy the favour of multiple monarchs, including King Charles II, William III, and Queen Anne. Apparently, his musicality charmed these rulers, as the entry devoted to him in *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1900), drawing on anecdotal evidence, avers that: "Much of his fame was owing to his songs and to the lively manner in which he himself sang them."[12] He worked in many literary forms and genres, and certainly shaped the musical and theatrical landscape of England. His earlier plays include racy comedies in

10. Jacky Bratton, "Reading the Intertheatrical, or, the Mysterious Disappearance of Susanna Centlivre," in *Women, Theatre and Performance: New Histories, New Historiographies*, ed. Maggie B. Gale and Viv Gardner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 15.

11. Gabriela Dragnea Horvath, *Theatre, Magic and Philosophy: William Shakespeare, John Dee and the Italian Legacy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 95.

12. William H. Husk, "D'Urfey, Thomas," in *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 1., ed. George Grove (London: Macmillan and Co., 1900), 472.

the vein of William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675).[13] D'Urfey also penned an adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* (performed 1611) called *The Injured Princess* (1682).[14] He was a pioneer in the blending of music and drama on the English stage, and wrote the first theatrical adaptation of Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, a successful three-part collaboration with composer Henry Purcell.[15] Like his *Don Quixote* (1694), *Wonders in the Sun*, D'Urfey's twenty-seventh play, combines songs with comic episodes, albeit with less coherent plotting. This new play was a visually arresting, ambitious production that required a large venue designed for big musical entertainments. John Vanbrugh's Queen's Theatre, which had recently opened in 1705, was such a space. In John McVeagh's words, D'Urfey "sprang a surprise on the town in the form of his comic opera" and "[h]e may not have been meeting public taste."[16] Richard W. Bevis is more direct in calling D'Urfey's play a flop, relating that *Wonders* "provided both traditional and composed tunes in a comic framework—almost a ballad opera—but failed to catch on."[17] It likely did not return on its investment as it closed after its fifth night on Wednesday, 10 April 1706.[18] The playwright's benefit night, which unfortunately coincided with the Monday, 8 April 1706 premiere of George Farquhar's

13. See Christopher J. Wheatley's "Thomas Durfey's A *Fond Husband*, Sex Comedies of the Late 1670s and Early 1680s, and the Comic Sublime," *Studies in Philology* 90, no. 4 (1993): 371–90.

14. Scholars of the Renaissance, including Stephen Greenblatt, Tom Bishop, and Adam Max Cohen, have explored the thematics of wonder in Shakespeare's drama, particularly the late comedies like *Cymbeline*, a play that flaunts its unreality like D'Urfey's *Wonders in the Sun*.

15. The first two parts of *The Comical History of Don Quixote* were staged in 1694, the third in 1696.

16. John McVeagh, *Thomas Durfey and Restoration Drama: The Work of a Forgotten Writer* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 37.

17. Richard W. Bevis, *English Drama: Restoration and Eighteenth Century, 1660–1789* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 181.

18. Although D'Urfey's play closed that night, its music was reprised, as the singing at the Queen's Theatre on Friday, 26 April 1706 consisted of "Comical Songs and Dances from *Wonders in the Sun*: Particularly a Song by Mrs. Willis, representing one of Queen Elizabeth's Dames of Honour." On Tuesday, 30 April 1706, the mainpiece of *The True and Antient History of King Lear* was followed by: "Comical Songs and Dialogues from *Wonders in the Sun*," including one with a clear satirical edge: "a Comical Dialogue perform'd by Pack and Bowman, representing a vain promising Courtier and a Sycophant." See *The London Stage, 1660–1800*, vol. 1, pt. 2 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), 124.

The Recruiting Officer at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, was poorly attended.[19]

John Dryden had not thought highly of D'Urfey's dramatic abilities, apparently remarking in a choice anecdotal burn to a gentleman who had just seen—and despised—one of D'Urfey's plays: "[Y]ou don't know my friend Tom as well as I do: I'll answer for him he will write worse yet."[20] Dryden could be responding to any number of artistic flaws in his fellow playwright's works, the most glaring being the random and gratuitously frequent interludes of song that rob *Wonders in the Sun* of dramatic unity. This aesthetics of surfeit, a kind of Rabelaisian plenitude, pushes D'Urfey's play into the territory of sublime farce while simultaneously grounding it in the cultural ecology of Restoration and eighteenth-century opera. Excess, as Michael Burden cogently argues, was the calling card of the period's opera, even as operatic performances and performers often did not actually live up to their touted and regularly censured extravagance.[21] Operatic luxury, like other inessential goods and services, was alternately connected to foreignness and to national prosperity. The Italian-imported castrato was a particular kind of wonder-object: a celebrity. D'Urfey's opera, sung in English, did not feature these controversial performers, but it still attempted to capitalize on the desires and tensions aroused by a praxis of extravagance.

Although performed in the early eighteenth century, *Wonders in the Sun* can be considered a late Restoration piece, generically in line with a slightly earlier experimental field: the English musical entertainments of the four decades following Charles II's coronation in 1660. Bevis regards D'Urfey's 1706 work as a revival of the Restoration semi-opera. Plays classified as semi-operas included spoken portions, musical interludes, dances, and impressive stagecraft, and these were produced commercially rather than in court theatres.[22] Serving as

19. Anecdotes about this theatrical rivalry indicate that D'Urfey and his supporters directed their ire at the manager of Drury Lane, Christopher Rich, accusing him of machinating the failure of *Wonders in the Sun*.

20. John Watkins, *Characteristic Anecdotes of Men of Learning and Genius, Natives of Great-Britain and Ireland, during the Three Last Centuries* (London: Printed for James Cundee, 1808), 314.

21. Michael Burden, "Opera, Excess, and the Discourse of Luxury in Eighteenth-Century England," *XVII–XVIII* 71 (2014): 232–48.

22. Bevis, *English Drama*, 181.

rehearsal director at the Queen's Theatre, Thomas Betterton worked to produce not only *Wonders in the Sun* but also another semi-opera or extravaganza staged that very same spring, George Granville's *The British Enchanters* (1706).[23] Some years before, he had penned the libretto of Henry Purcell's Shakespearean semi-opera *The Fairy-Queen* (1692). Robert D. Hume reflects on the "multi-media spectaculars" that constituted English opera in the seventeenth century, astutely observing that "the key to the genre is clearly production, not content."[24] He uses the adjective "flashy" to describe both *Wonders in the Sun* and *The British Enchanters*.[25] Provocatively, he takes issue with scholars reading covert and politically specific meaning into the allegorical content of late seventeenth-century opera.[26] Indeed, it is challenging—but not impossible—to identify pointed critiques of the English and French court in *Wonders in the Sun*, which, like its English musical brethren, allegorizes stock political roles and ideologies. More concretely, however, D'Urfey's comic opera shares with other semi-operas an insistence on featuring non-human characters, notably animals, and scenes of transformation and dance, described in evocative stage directions. In the final act of *The Fairy-Queen*, it is indicated that "*Six Monkeys come from between the Trees, and Dance.*"[27] While Michael Burden makes a persuasive case that a troupe of real monkeys was used in performance, costuming could also have produced the visual surprise of this scene.[28] Metamorphosis is regularly incorporated into these wondrous animal dances, as in an earlier act when symphonic music plays while two swans swim to a riverbank and are changed into fairies; swans also feature in Purcell and Betterton's *Dioclesian* (1670), which includes the extraordinary spectacle of an architectural structure transformed by the wave of the prophetess's magic wand into a "Dance

23. I owe thanks to Michael Burden for confirming Thomas Betterton's position as rehearsal director for plays staged at the Queen's Theatre during his time.

24. Hume, "The Politics of Opera in Late Seventeenth-Century London," 38.

25. Ibid., 18.

26. Ibid., 38.

27. Henry Purcell, *The Fairy-Queen* (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson, 1692), Act 5, 50.

28. Michael Burden, "Dancing Monkeys at Dorset Garden," *Theatre Notebook: A Journal of the History and Technique of the British Theatre* 57, no. 3 (2003): 119–35.

of Butterflies" that Dioclesian deems "miraculous."[29] Act One of Elkanah Settle's operatic *The World in the Moon* (printed in 1697) ends with a wondrous comingling of natural and supernatural: "A Dance of Four Swans," followed by a dance of "Green Men."[30] The birds of *Wonders in the Sun* likewise entertain lookers-on within the story-world of a generically mixed semi-opera that blends music and magic, the ordinary and the fantastic, humans and non-humans.

D'Urfey's animals are part of a much longer dramatic story, however, as both the subtitle and the staging of *Wonders in the Sun*; *or, the Kingdom of the Birds* establish the play's indebtedness to Aristophanes' *Birds*. The scene of D'Urfey's play is "a Luminous Country, adorn'd with Gorgeous Rays of the Sun" and the solar inhabitants are represented by both actors in bird costumes and "Painted figures belonging to the Kingdom of the Birds" (n.p.). The setting of the Old Comedy ancestor to *Wonders in the Sun* is also a fanciful aviary world (often translated from Greek to English as "Cloud-cuckoo-land"). Both plays turn on a comic duo's interactions with a bird race and combine fantasy with satire.[31] D'Urfey's play begins with an "Introduction to the Prologue" that is presented by "the *Satyr*," a mythological creature, half-man, half-beast who announces that "*Satyr's the Theme, but yet so nicely shewn, / 'Mongst all the Faults scarse one will see his own*" (n.p.). The action of *Birds* is initiated by the escapist impulses of two Athenians, but quickly becomes about issues of power and governance, as the protagonist, Peisetairos, turns Cloud-cuckoo-land into a mighty city-state, a dystopian utopia in which "a vision of peace and plenty coincides with a reign of limitless imperial desire."[32] Aristophanes, influenced by another genre of the ancient world, the beast fable, uses

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29. Betterton Thomas, *The Prophetess: or, The History of Dioclesian* (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson, 1690), Act 4, 47.

30. Elkanah Settle, *The World in the Moon* (London: Printed for Abel Roper, 1697), Act 1, 7. My sincerest thanks to Michael Burden for generously sending me this article and for helping me compile this list of animal dances in the period's opera.

31. Heath notes the ubiquity of talking animals in ancient literature, observing that beasts "speak in comedy and satire, both on stage and in mock-epics, such as the *Battle of Frogs and Mice*. But they are most famously garrulous in fables, where they converse with gods, humans, inanimate objects, and each other." See John Heath, *The Talking Greeks: Speech, Animals, and the Other in Homer, Aeschylus, and Plato* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 14.

32. David Konstan, "A City in the Air: Aristophanes' *Birds*," *Arethusa* 23, no. 2 (Fall 1990): 185.

his animal chorus in *Birds* (as well as in *Frogs* and *Wasps*) to critique human nature and the political and social conditions of his day.[33] An exchange between Athenian and bird (whose master is a man-turned-Hoopoe) demonstrates the difference between animals and humans:

> PEISETAIROS. What kind of beast are you, in Heaven's name?
> SERVANT. A servile bird.
> …
> PEISETAIROS. So birds require attendants too, like us?
> SERVANT. Well this one does, because he'd once been human.[34]

D'Urfey's play haphazardly follows through on its stated Aristophanic intention to satirize politics and fashion, but still makes strange human practices and beliefs vis-à-vis bird characters who oscillate between being radically like and unlike their European counterparts.

The educated son of a Huguenot Frenchman, D'Urfey, who studied the law for a short time, may have read works by Aristophanes that had survived to his day, though many ancient Greek plays remained untranslated during his lifetime. Scholars like Matthew J. Kinservik and Matthew Steggle have convincingly challenged the long-held critical view that Aristophanes was forgotten until the nineteenth century, the former scholar interested in the Greek comic playwright's influence on Renaissance comedy and the latter focusing on several brands of Aristophanic satire in eighteenth-century England.[35] D'Urfey may have been aware of prior dramatic engagements with Aristophanes in the seventeenth century, such as James Shirley's *The Triumph of Peace* (1633), which is an ornate masque—a species of elite musical dramatic entertainment popular in the English court of Charles I and Henrietta Maria. Staged at Whitehall Palace on a set designed by Inigo

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33. For more on this generic relationship, see Kenneth S. Rothwell, "Aristophanes' *Wasps* and the Sociopolitics of Aesop's Fables," *The Classical Journal* 90, no. 3 (Feb.–Mar. 1995): 233–254. Also, Sonia Pertsinidis, "The Fabulist Aristophanes," *Fabula* 50, nos. 3/4 (Nov. 2009): 208–26.

34. Aristophanes, *Birds*, in "*Birds*," "*Lysistrata*," "*Assembly-Women*," "*Wealth*," ed. Stephen Halliwell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), l.69–70 and 76–77.

35. See Matthew J. Kinservik, "The 'English Aristophanes': Fielding, Foote, and Debates Over Literary Satire," in *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Aristophanes*, ed. Phillip Walsh (Boston: Brill, 2016), 109–28; and Matthew Steggle, "Aristophanes in Early Modern England," in *Aristophanes in Performance 421 BCE–AD 2007: Peace, Birds, and Frogs*, ed. Edith Hall and Amanda Wrigley (Oxford: Legenda, 2007), 52–65.

Jones, *The Triumph of Peace* "mingled several features that Shirley (an accomplished Greek scholar) may have acquired from knowledge of Aristophanes, especially the elaborate bird costumes."[36]

Wonders in the Sun also features such costuming, and more generally possesses the baroque aesthetic of wonder embedded in these earlier court masques, many of which were penned by Ben Jonson.[37] As masques were characterized by expensive stagecraft, playwrights sought to communicate the singular glory of the dynasty in spectacles that would—and did, as comments in contemporaneous journals and letters confirm—produce amazed admiration among their viewers. The centrality of transformation (of courtiers into actors, actors into characters) is literalized in the masque, a genre inseparable from the political, cultural, and economic might of the royal court.[38] D'Urfey's play is cluttered with a surplus of the kind of personifications that appeared in the masque and in masque scenes of later drama. His walking abstractions include: Honour, Courtship, Industry, Profuseness, Lewdness, Sport, Ignorance, and Housewifery. Such allegorical and emblematic content was another mechanism for wonder; Jerzy Limon observes that in courtly entertainments from the Stuart period, allegories were often puzzlingly intricate and necessitated explanations in their printed forms, as "much contemporary evidence indicates that many spectators did not understand the meaning of the stage design."[39] Confusion, which reinforced the atmosphere of wonder of the masque-in-performance, has similarly been a consistent critical response to *Wonders in the Sun*, which, decentred from the royal court, moved even further from ontological certainty and towards the disorder of novelty-privileging commercial entertainment like Samuel Johnson of Cheshire's *Hurlothrumbo* (1729), the artistic nadir

36. Edith Hall, "The English-Speaking Aristophanes, 1650–1914," in *Aristophanes in Performance 421 BCE–AD 2007*, cited above, 68.

37. See Corburn Gum, *The Aristophanic Comedies of Ben Jonson: A Comparative Study of Jonson and Aristophanes* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1969).

38. Martin Butler, in an article published on the British Library website, clearly summarizes this dynamic: "[s]uch masques, danced by courtiers in honour of the prince, were home-grown examples of the political power of wonder, adapting modern technology to celebrate the dignity of the state" ("*The Tempest* and the Literature of Wonder," 15 March 2016; https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/the-tempest-and-the-literature-of-wonder, accessed 15 June 2019).

39. Jerzy Limon, *The Masque of Stuart Culture* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1990), 38.

of this trend. D'Urfey anticipates aspects of this later nonsense drama, his characters not only switching between spoken dialogue and song, but between words and inarticulate sounds. The animal characters do not just sing but also voice animal sounds, and Lord Cockerel is given the line "Cockadoodle doo" with the stage direction "*Crowing*" (1.57); they converse in their own incomprehensible solar language or "Plaguy Sun Giberish" (1.17), which is actually spoken in the playtext, e.g. "*Garzockta blowzin minger*" (1.17).

In the sheer number of songs, characters, and stage effects collected in this comic opera, D'Urfey's work resembles the "wonder rooms" or "cabinets of curiosities" that "served as symbols of power and enlightenment for European gentlemen."[40] Indeed, its sibling play of 1706, Granville's *The British Enchanters*, concludes with an epilogue that would have the audience see the performance as an animated treasure chest, by which "*to please your wand'ring Eyes, / Bright Objects disappear and brighter rise*."[41] Yet individually, many of the objects in the period's *wunderkammern* remained mysterious items even to their possessors, which suggests the essentially oppositional relationship between knowledge and wonder posited by scholars. Wondrous obscurity also distinguishes D'Urfey's comic opera from its more lucid operatic forerunners—that is Henry Purcell's more enduringly popular creations. Hume's assessment of *Wonders in the Sun* emphasizes this apparent opacity: "[D'Urfey]'s peculiar piece is manifestly allegorical, but rather like Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules* it has stubbornly defied exegesis."[42] Case in point: another scholar essentially gives up finding meaning in the play's lengthy "Prologue," which is a multivocal affair featuring several figures from Greek mythology: a satyr, Apollo and Calliope, and Orpheus and Euridice.[43] Nevertheless, as this internal performance involves the gods interacting as mortals, I interpret this divine slumming as anticipating the play's main plot of human characters acting like animals, and animals acting like humans. Orpheus

40. Vaughn Scribner, "'Such Monsters Do Exist in Nature': Mermaids, Tritons, and the Science of Wonder in Eighteenth-Century Europe," *Itinerario* 41, no. 3 (Dec. 2017): 514.

41. [George Granville], *The British Enchanters: or, No Magick Like Love* (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson, 1706), n.p.

42. Hume, "The Politics of Opera in Late Seventeenth-Century London," 38.

43. McVeagh, *Thomas Durfey and Restoration Drama*, 138.

and Euridice behave like an old bickering married couple, as the god of music folksily reconciles himself to his connubial situation: "All Men know, a Wife's a Wife" ("Prologue," 6). The comic—and wondrous—mixing of divine and human, low and high art forms, is part of the period's transgeneric and transmedial zeal for topsy-turvy entertainments.[44]

Despite the prologue's cast of Greco-Roman deities and the appearance of the Dæmon of Socrates in the main plot, *Wonders in the Sun* reflects what many scholars acknowledge as the early modern period's movement, however non-linear and inconsistent, towards secular marvels and away from the "enchantments" of medieval superstition and Catholicism. Horvath distinguishes between a divinely-originated miracle and wonder, the latter belonging "to the sphere of imagination and human creativity."[45] Learned men and women articulated their own wonder—a realistic response to the extraordinary—in writing about the discovery of "new" worlds and their own scientific, and often specifically astronomical, revelations.[46] Music—perennially associated with wonder for its ability to arrest the mind—became the aural correlative of these neoteric varieties of human magic. Shakespeare's plays presaged some of these shifts, for in the Renaissance, "wonder might imply, on one hand, primitive incomprehension or, on the other, an engagement with the truly marvellous."[47] In *The Tempest*, Caliban's "poetics of wonder" either humanize Prospero's slave or underscore, by implicit contrast, the barbarity of his violent designs on Miranda, the other wonderer within the play. Jonathan P. A. Sell suggests that wonder, sometimes negatively valenced in Shakespeare, is "contrived" and "abused" by Prospero; this critic reads *The Tempest* as an indictment of political trickery, or "the arts of power, which accounts for the play's obsessive interest with spectacle, drama and the production of

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44. See Ian Donaldson, *The World Upside-Down: Comedy from Jonson to Fielding* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

45. Horvath, *Theatre, Magic and Philosophy*, 112.

46. See Mary Baine Campbell, *Wonder and Science: Imagining Worlds in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).

47. R.J.W. Evans, "Preface," in *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. R.J.W. Evans and Alexander Marr (Abington, U.K. and New York: Routledge, 2016), xv.

wonder."[48] D'Urfey's comic opera likewise makes control over the marvellous coterminous with temporal power, this connection an effect of a culture increasingly invested not only in the new sciences and empirical experimentation catalyzed by curiosity, but also in escalating colonial conquest and dominion, as well as in nascent capitalism, another emergent system of Western modernity with an underlying attitude of "more is more."

D'Urfey's play can also be placed in critical dialogue with a musical adaptation of *The Tempest*, a Restoration collaboration between John Dryden and William Davenant. John Shanahan discusses this semi-opera as a "science play" that illuminates the intersecting "boundaries of theatricality, empirical experimentation, natural magic, and wonder display."[49] While this Shakespearean adaptation idealizes "a new political rationality," Shanahan acknowledges the underlying "spectre of anarchy" that still haunts this version of *The Tempest*, particularly through its low plot lines.[50] This tendency is more pronounced in *Wonders in the Sun*, for McVeagh avers that "it is not articulate, rational satire which produced this fantastic, semi-controlled extravaganza" but a more "anarchic" impulse.[51] The profusion that characterizes D'Urfey's intertextuality accounts for this perceptible disorder within *Wonders in the Sun*, which draws on multiple texts of quixotic travel, a popular narrative arc within late seventeenth-century fiction and drama. Scholars point to a multitude of possible source texts for D'Urfey's comic opera, sometimes called a sequel to Settle's *The World in the Moon* and mentioned in relation to many other works of early utopic science fiction influenced by Lucian's second-century lunar travel narrative: Ben Jonson's *News from the New World Discovered in the Moon* (1630); Francis Godwin's *The Man in the Moon* (1638); John Wilkins' *A World in the Moon* (1640); Cyrano de Bergerac's *Voyage to the Moon* (1657); and French author Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle's *Discovery of New Worlds*, translated by Aphra Behn in 1688. As David

48. Jonathan P. A. Sell, *Rhetoric and Wonder in English Travel Writing, 1560–1613* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 184.

49. John Shanahan, "The Dryden-Davenant *Tempest*, Wonder Production, and the State of Natural Philosophy in 1667," *The Eighteenth Century* 54, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 93.

50. Ibid., 104 and 106.

51. McVeagh, *Thomas Durfey and Restoration Drama*, 138.

Cressy acknowledges, there is serious purpose within these extra-terrestrial adventures.[52] In Behn's version of Fontenelle's text, there is a defense of the Copernican concept of the solar system as well as a claim that other planets are inhabited, which uses the discovery of New France as an example of the progress of knowledge.[53] D'Urfey's variant on these speculative works aligns with the period's "interest in the plurality of planetary worlds" that Cressy explains as the product of "the near similarity or overlap of this voyaging literature with the new discoveries of astronomy."[54] D'Urfey transforms the lunar voyages of his immediate literary processors into a solar journey—possibly drawing on another text of creative Enlightenment wonder: Cyrano de Bergerac's *The Comical History of the States and Empires of the Sun* (1662).[55] A tone of scientific confidence is ironically voiced in many of these imaginary travelogues, for as the putative Europeans widen their field of vision, they are regularly unsettled in their feelings of superiority; their positionality changes as *they* become wonders, objectified, or, like Jonathan Swift's Lemuel Gulliver, studied, collected, and even mislabelled. In Bergerac's fictive lunar journey, the narrator recalls that he cannot understand or be understood by the People in the Moon, who thus "only took [him] for an Animal, in the highest class of the Category of Bruits."[56] D'Urfey's human characters also lose their species privilege—a common occurrence in the beast fables of Aesop and his descendants—when the virtuoso Domingo

52. David Cressy, "Early Modern Space Travel and the English Man in the Moon," *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 4 (Oct. 2006): 961–82.

53. Likewise, in Cyrano de Bergerac's *A Voyage to the Moon*, the narrator argues for the revolution of planets around the sun, persuasively asserting that "it would be as ridiculous to think, that that vast luminous Body turned about a point that it has not the least need of; as to imagine, that when we see a roasted Lark, that the Kitchin-fire must have turned round it." *Project Gutenberg EBook*: Cyrano de Bergerac, *A Voyage to the Moon*, trans. Archibald Lovell (New York: Doubleday and McClure Co., 1899), chapter 3.

54. Cressy, "Early Modern Space Travel and the English Man in the Moon," 980.

55. European colonisation of the sun is fictionally represented in Bergerac's early book, *A Voyage to the Moon*, sometimes published with *The Comical History of the States and Empires of the Sun*. In the former volume, a native to the sun explains that he is living on the moon because the sun became overpopulated, thus compelling magistrates to "send Colonies into the neighbouring Worlds" (ed. cited above, chapter 7).

56. Bergerac, *A Voyage to the Moon*, ed. cited above, chapter 8.

and his man Diego enter the hierarchical kingdom of talking birds ruled by King Dove.[57]

The predicament of D'Urfey's heroes, who are rendered pitiable and ridiculous during their solar sojourn, illustrates a key idea within the fabular tradition: man is in fact *no wonder*, an idea grounded in philosophical realism rather than idealism. Instead, in both *Wonders in the Sun* and many fables, wonder lies in the unexpected parallels between animal and human worlds, as fables didactically undermine the "arrogant delusion that the humblest animal is *wholly* unlike man in its activities and aptitudes."[58] Indeed, the congruences as well as the incongruences between human and animal have perennially been used by moralizing writers to figuratively discourse on public and private virtue and vice. Thus, a consideration of D'Urfey's "wondrous" animals in the literary context of the fable is the focus of this last major section of this paper. I examine "political animals" (animals that behave politically and their implicit correlative: animalistic politicians) in *Wonders in the Sun* alongside selections from John Gay's two volumes of modern fables, which are emblematic of a wider European "golden age of fable" ushered in by the publication of Jean de La Fontaine's twelve books of French fables between 1668 and 1694. The tales of the eighteenth-century fabular tradition are wonders of "Enlightenment enchantment"—simultaneously entertaining and educating readers as topical epistemological games.[59] Gay's talking animals have, of course, their ancestors in the works of Greek fabulist Aesop, and their more immediate predecessors in the literary creations of John Dryden, who published his *Fables, Ancient and Modern* in 1700. Gay's satirical verse tales employ humans-as-animals to forward an anti-Walpole agenda and more generally comment on the follies and felonies to which power-seekers become prey.

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57. Frank Palmeri, analyzing Jean de La Fontaine's fable "The Wolf and the Fox," raises the possibility that "this fable calls into doubt the presumption of human moral superiority over predatory animals," as the deception of a hungry fox is implicitly compared to disguise within the supposedly heroic context of war. See Frank Palmeri, "The Autocritique of Fables," in *Humans and Other Animals in Eighteenth-Century British Culture: Representation, Hybridity, Ethics*, ed. Frank Palmeri (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 88.

58. Johann Gottfried Herder, *Selected Writings on Aesthetics*, trans. and ed. Gregory Moore (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 368.

59. Kareem, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder*, 18.

D'Urfey's satire is ballast to his escapist fantasy—anchoring, however lightly, his chimerical world to early eighteenth-century power dynamics; the similarities and differences between his two kingdoms (earth and sun) defamiliarize English values and practices, thus opening them up to necessary critique. Unlike many of the fictional and semi-fictional explorers in the early modern literatures of wonder, these travellers are less would-be colonizers than awed—even disoriented—subordinates within a foreign clime. The commercial, political, or even scientific conquest of new worlds by taxonomic impulse, seen in later works like Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), is largely absent from D'Urfey's play, which is rather a playground of aesthetic pleasures, including the pleasures of surprise, ambiguity, and transformation, key elements of wonder in this period's dramatic entertainments.[60] Upon first landing on the sun, Diego responds with knee-jerk superstition to this new world: "Ooons the Country is all Inchanted; Nature is betwitch'd here, and all things contrary to their seeming" (1.9). Yet the travellers do not just stupidly gawk at "this Sunny World" (1.9), as D'Urfey explores another function of wonder in *Wonders in the Sun*: to not only astonish but to stimulate skepticism, a key aspect of Kareem's conception of eighteenth-century wonder. Thus, the characters in D'Urfey's play—like spectating playgoers—are constantly negotiating the real and artificial; their senses are fooled by seemingly "fine tempting Cerries" that upon closer inspection, prove "brittle Berries of red Glass, made on purpose to decoy silly Birds, and more silly Phylosophers" (1.10). This wonderful realm poses opportunities for learning, for escape, and for transformation. Growing on the surface of the sun, grapes, full of "sprightly Juice whose charming Vertue would make a Man a God" (1.12), symbolize the possibilities of metamorphosis offered by realms beyond the quotidian: spaces that include both the playhouse and the Americas. Yet ironically, the identity-confounding that *does* occur within D'Urfey's play is less that of man and god (though a human actor plays the Greek god Apollo in the prologue) than man and beast. Animal imagery is rife in the lines of the play that satirize human imperfections. Gonzales, for

60. Kareem riffs on wonder as it is produced by enjoyable uncertainties, considering as she does "enchanted moments"—episodes in eighteenth-century fiction in which "the "real's virtual qualities become a source less of epistemological anxiety and more emphatically of aesthetic pleasure" (ibid., 103).

example, condemns the "young Coxcombs" who act "like *Magpies*, [and] Chatter without thinking" (2.31).

Similarly, as projections of the sociopolitical climate of England under the rule of Queen Anne and her Georgian successors, "civilized" animals in the eighteenth-century fable are tools of Juvenalian satire. In Gay's Fable 11, "The Peacock, the Turkey, and the Goose" (1727), a peacock feeds with "poultry" who jealously revile the lovelier bird. In the last stanza, Gay clarifies the actual (i.e. human) target of his satire, the toxic social dynamics of the *beau monde*, concluding:

> Thus in Assemblies have I seen
> A nymph of brightest charms and mien
> Wake envy in each ugly face;
> And buzzing scandal fills the place. (l.39–42)

To both writers, bad behaviour in high society is symptomatic of serious underlying political ills. Even before the bird people appear in D'Urfey's play, other solar inhabitants impose their ways and principles on the visitors; they dehumanize the terrestrial duo, who are subjected as animalized humans to the arbitrary dystopian rule of a powerful Brahmin named Bellygorge. Domingo Gonzales and Diego are bridled like beasts of burden, the sidekick taking "some comfort" that "th' Astrologer is made a Mule on first," but then expressing concern when he sees the sun beings, whom he refers to as "Devils" with "Whips and Spurs too" (1.27). The servant fears he will be treated with cruelty, as countless domesticated animals were in the Age of Reason, a period that eventually ushered in an understanding of animals-as-wonders: as special companions and as feeling creatures akin in many ways to their human counterparts.[61] Also, in terming the prospective "Mule"-torturers "Devils," D'Urfey is implicitly channelling another contemporaneous idea: that cruelty to animals is morally degrading to human perpetrators.[62] In this same episode, D'Urfey's main charac-

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61. For more on Enlightenment pet-keeping and the evolving status of animals, see Ingrid H. Tague, *Animal Companions: Pets and Social Change in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017).

62. See James A. Steintrager, *Cruel Delight: Enlightenment Culture and the Inhuman* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). Also, Heather Ladd, "'This Sport of Tormenting': Cruel Children and their Animals in British Literature, 1750–1800," in *Cruel Children in Popular Texts and Cultures*, ed. Monica Flegel and Christopher Parkes (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 17–40.

ters are not only treated as animals, but ontologically destabilized as "human." Diego is called "an Ostrich, and without Feathers" (2.28)—a false identity imposed on the outsider by a tyrant ruler who dehumanizes his subjects. Bellygorge, the anti-Enlightenment religious authority, wants control over knowledge and absurdly reprimands Diego for pretending too much to Science and Knowledge "for an Ostrich" (2.29). The human characters are forced into subject positions as animals/slaves, alluding to what has been discussed as the dark side of the Enlightenment, namely the damaging nationalistic colonial projects that subjugated so-called primitive peoples in the name of progress.[63]

Species boundaries are also blurred when the heroes travel to the region of the sun populated and ruled by birds. D'Urfey's political animals are anthropomorphic beings who, resembling the beasts in John Gay's *Fables* (1727) and *Fables, Part the Second* (1738), act like humans. The fable can be a conservative genre operating "to present social distinctions and political relations in animal dress—to picture politics as nothing other than the order of nature."[64] Fables do not always promote acceptance of this allegorized status quo, however; some are even progressive—satiric wonder, generated by that which disturbs, unsettles, and critiques, tipping the balance towards subversion. Hierarchy, whether maintained or challenged, is a central element of fabular literature and an organizing principle within the bird world D'Urfey conjures up in his *Dramatis Personae*. There, his avian characters are described by their personal and public relationship to the king, which determines their place in a court characterized by benevolent favouritism: for example, "Plumply Lord Pheasant: *A Prince of the Blood and nearly related to K[ing] Dove*"; and "Sir Pratler Parrot: *Favorite and Historian to the King*" (*Dramatis Personae*, n.p.). In Act Four, the playwright constructs a political allegory by separating the avian court into "two great Parties" (4.57), which mirror English party politics and the major divisions within the Church of England. Instead of Whig and Tory or High and Low Church, the birds are either "High-

63. This issue is conscientiously treated in *Enlightened Colonialism: Civilization Narratives and Imperial Politics in the Age of Reason*, ed. Damien Tricoire (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

64. Heather Keenleyside, *Animals and Other People: Literary Forms and Living Beings in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 118.

Flyers" or "Low" (4.57). Species of birds have specific functions within this government that align with their folk culture attributes. Types like the Raven—canny and devious—have their tacit equivalents among the English ruling class during the reign of Queen Anne; in the lead-up to the War of Spanish Succession (1701–1714), for example, Anne grew increasingly displeased with her manipulative Whig advisors and dismissed many from office in 1710.

D'Urfey and Gay were likely aware of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* (written late fourteenth century), perhaps the most significant literary use of birds in the English language; in this medieval poem and its eighteenth-century literary progeny, the animal court stands in for an extradiegetic human one in the real world.[65] Birds are ranked and visually grouped in ways suggestive of the pervasive stratifications within human society—a social order organized by gender, class, politics, religion, nationality, race, wealth, and similar markers of identity. One of D'Urfey's stage directions establishes the hierarchy of his bird kingdom, using a simile comparing its order to that of a courtroom, a space where people are physically arranged according to their role in the proceedings: "Scene *discovers a pleasant large Grove with number of all sorts of Birds upon Trees, and Rank'd in order like a Court of Judicature*" (4.60).[66]

Gay's Fable 4, "The Eagle, and the Assembly of Animals" (1727), envisions such a court of animals, specifically ranks of "Ungrateful creatures,"[67] who each complain to Jove's Eagle about their lot in life:

> The fishes wish'd to graze the plain,
> The beasts to skim beneath the main.
> Thus, envious of another's state,
> Each blam'd the partial hand of Fate. (l.37–40)

The rational eagle passes judgement on this envious menagerie and, in the final lines of the verse fable, advises the lot: "Be happy then, and

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65. In *From Aesop to Reynard: Beast Literature in Medieval Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), Jill Mann explains the ubiquity of birds in English literature, observing "that of all animals, birds come nearest to imitating or spontaneously reproducing human speech" (193).

66. Chaucer's birds of prey are at the top in the avian grouping around personified Nature, the seed-eating birds positioned beneath their sharp-taloned superiors.

67. John Gay, *Poetry and Prose*, ed. Vinton A. Dearing, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), l.13. All subsequent citations will be provided in-text.

learn content. / Nor imitate the restless mind, / And proud ambition of mankind" (l.48–50). These animals in Gay's satiric fable—as most badly-behaving beasts in fabular writing—have debased their essential natures, though on the surface they seem to be displaying the qualities folklore has ascribed to them. Instead, they have, according to this Georgian satirist, corrupted their native innocence with the passions of human society, and the wonder is that ambition should fire such irrational and indeed unnatural desires for what they do not need.

Fable 2 of the second volume of Gay's *Fables* broadcasts the poet's dark view of court culture. In "The Vultur[e], the Sparrow, and other Birds" (1738), the avian speaker rejects the court, which is anthropomorphically enacted by other birds, an array of "servile creatures" (l.67) who represent their human counterparts in Georgian England:

> A greedy Vultur, skill'd in game,
> Inur'd to guilt, unaw'd by shame,
> Approach'd the throne in evil hour,
> And step by step intrudes to pow'r: (l.77–80)

The vulture gains the "royal eagle's ear" and then appoints his own feathered friends as ministers of state: "The nightingale was set aside: / A forward daw his room supply'd" (l.81; 89–90). Gay is allegorizing the shady forces in motion within King George II's court, specifically the machinations of Prime Minister Robert Walpole and his cronies. Thus, political decisions are presented by the fable-writer as motivated by baser impulses and instincts than reason, that hallmark of eighteenth-century conceptions of civilization. The sparrow who has delineated the ills of the avian court rejects this nepotism and chooses a private life in the country; this apolitical animal (the sparrow), returns to the natural world, while the political animals (statesmen figured as animals) continue to jockey for power in ways that betray their *human* qualities rather than their animal ones.

Nevertheless, D'Urfey's kingdom of politic birds, structured as a royal court around the monarch King Dove, is by-and-large functional, and in that sense seems to reflect Anne's long and relatively stable rule from 1702 to 1714. An exchange between Gonzales and the Dæmon of Socrates—who appears as a "bright vision" (1.11) in Act One—clarifies a significant ideological disparity between utopian and real wielding of political power. Gonzales assumes "the Eagle always had the

Soveraignty" (4.59), but the philosopher spirit responds: "Oh, that suits with the Judgment of your own World still, to suffer Tyranny from the Greatest, Strongest and most Cruel; but the Politiques here are quite different: for a chosen Committee of the wisest Birds here, elect the Mildest and most Peaceable for their King" (4.59). This rule by the meek, possibly an allegory of Queen Anne's reign, but so unlike the dominant European political-ethical principal of "might is right," is a marvel to the human duo.[68]

Elsewhere in Gay's work, anthropomorphized animals are presented as superior to humans in the purity with which they exemplify prosocial, and apparently cross-species, qualities. In the Introduction to *Fables* (1727), entitled "The Shepherd and the Philosopher" and unusual within the oeuvre of Gay's fables for taking the form of a conversation between two people, the former title character tells the latter one:

> In constancy, and nuptial love
> I learn my duty from the dove.
> The hen, who from the chilly air
> With pious wing protects her care,
> And ev'ry fowl that flies at large
> Instructs me in a parent's charge. (l.45–50)

Ironically, animals create a template for civil society and model for their human counterparts' interpersonal virtues such as marital and maternal affection. In *Wonders in the Sun*, personal and political relationships—between husbands and wives, monarchs and courtesans, etc.—are critiqued, unfavorably compared to equivalent versions in the animal world. For example, Diego, drawing on longstanding cultural stereotypes, sings of the pains of wedlock, namely how swiftly couples descend into strife. He complains that "No longer do we Cooe and Bill" (4.66) and instead discordantly "Jangle" (4.66). The Dæmon of Socrates in D'Urfey's play announces a performance that combines satire with wondrous transformation by: "a *Blackbird*, the Emblem of

68. D'Urfey's meek avian monarch might be a compliment to Queen Anne, who was shy by temperament. Historians Bucholz and Key describe her as "quiet, shy, and of average intelligence," adding that she "had none of the star quality of Elizabeth I or even Mary II." See Robert Bucholz and Newton Key, *Early Modern England 1485–1714: A Narrative History*, 2nd ed. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 333.

Jollity and Contentment, who by his Genius also assuming a human Figure, descants on his own Freedom and Happiness here in the Region of the *Sun*, and satyrically rallies on the Vices of your under World" (4.66–67).[69] This blackbird, played by a human actor, sings about political unrest, taxes, religious discord, and commercial avarice, as well as the contrasting simple pleasures of avian life.

Gay's Fable 15, "The Philosopher and the Pheasants" (1727), takes criticism of humanity further by including a direct indictment of the human exploitation of the natural world. A wandering philosopher overhears a pheasant mother warning her vulnerable offspring: "Sooner the hawk or vulture trust / Than man; of animals the worst" (l.25–26). She complains about "ingratitude" towards the creatures whom humankind—who "takes the quills and eats the goose" (l.42)—harms for its own profit and pleasure. A bird speaks directly to the human character in Gay's Fable 37, "The Farmer's Wife and the Raven" (1727). After the farmer's wife blames an accident on a nearby raven and curses his ill-betiding croak, the bird corrects the superstitious woman, judiciously explaining why her basket of wares overturned and chiding her for unfairly blaming him. Here, the raven is the wonder, not simply for being a talking beast, but for possessing far more reason than his human accuser.

D'Urfey's birds also prove themselves wiser and better than humans in their institutional practices. Gonzales is accused of murder for hunting game birds, at first glance absurd, but a reasonable criminal charge in a place where pheasants are sentient. Significantly, the legal process in King Dove's realm gives prominent place to art as a source of moral influence. It is their custom to have performed a "charming Entertainment before Tryals of Life and Death" (4.60), not simply a frivolous interstitial diversion, but a purposeful prelude to serious matters. Art serves as a compassion-building bridge between crime and judgement, aiming "to soften the Minds, and disarm the Prejudice of the Prisoners['] Adversaries" (4.60). This long interlude of musical amusement begins with Diego singing the "Pig's March," and continues with performances by allegorical characters such as

69. Also, in *Wonders in the Sun*, "two *Turtles*" are supposedly transformed by "*Genii*" into humans and "order'd to Sing a Musical Satyr … against Mankind in general" (4.60). These human-birds sing about the mercenary world below, contrasting humans' unhappiness and dissension with the joy and peace among the animals.

Sport, Innocence, and Maturity. This entertainment fails to lighten the sentence, as the "Revengeful *Crane*" (3.55)—an anthropomorphic representative of the pitilessness of human law—is obdurate. But Diego and Gonzales are treated to a last-minute acquittal, which their guide, the Daemon of Socrates, announces in the moments before the humans are to become "*Hawk's* Meat" (4.64). The Dæmon of Socrates tells them that Gonzales's family pet interceded for them: "Have you forgot your old Acquaintance *Cazar*, your Brother[']s Parrot in your World, who every Day you us'd to feed and Play with; and for which kind Act he has now got your Pardon of his Master King *Dove*, in spite of your Enemies" (4.65). Gonzales's considerate treatment of an animal is rewarded by the loyal creature who secures clemency for his former caretaker and playmate. In a general sense, the animal kingdom aligns with the human world insofar as its justice is subjective and unevenly administered, but diverges in its utopian cultivation of compassion. Within this stage fantasy of Enlightenment excess, the animal world is either similar, or superior, to the human realm, as D'Urfey, like many fable writers, leans towards theriophily, a philosophical position—cynically immortalized in "A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind" by John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester—founded on animal appreciation.[70] A rejection of the longstanding European view of human pre-eminence, this anti-anthropocentric attitude privileges instinct over reason and nature over art, and recognizes innate animal capacity as well as human limitation.

Wonders in the Sun—a piece of cultural ephemera ever-brimming with surprises—ends with one of the strangest epilogues in English drama, first "Begun by Mrs. *Porter*, the Parrot standing by" ("Epilogue," [70]). Almost halfway through this speech, the actress "[t]akes off the Parrot's Head Covering, and then a young Girl shews her Face" ("Epilogue," [70]) and assumes control of the epilogue. The wonder of transformation—central to the English semi-opera and the satiric fable, the latter genre predicated on figuring animals as humans and exposing humans as animals—is at the heart of dramatic performance, nowhere more so than in such scripted moments. This final

70. See Nathaniel Wolloch, *The Enlightenment's Animals: Changing Conceptions of Animals in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019).

speech of the play thematizes wonder, the first speaker boasting of the transformation wrought by the playwright and performers who, "*To raise your Pleasures do mirac'lous things*: / Owls *we great* Lawyers *make, and* Pidgeons, Kings" ("Epilogue," [70]). The second speaker, "A *prattling Parrot turn'd into a Maid*," is a marvel, not simply for this metamorphosis, but for her present virginal state: "*That's thought a Wonder, here too, as times go*," alluding to the debauchery of modern society ("Epilogue," [70]). D'Urfey's epilogue points to satire as a transformative tool allowing audience members to see themselves, stage directions indicating that the Maid looks into different parts of the theatre (the gallery and the boxes), and identifies the various "birds" (i.e. human types) sitting there. The play's last words, "*whether* Birds *or* Men" ("Epilogue," [71]), which refer to the audience members, gesture to the interchangeability of animal and human so vital to the fantasy—as well as the satiric import—of *Wonders in the Sun*.

Although it would be easy to dismiss *Wonders in the Sun* as a slight work by a minor playwright, D'Urfey's sometimes baffling comic opera—with its speaking, singing, and dancing animals and its generic plenitude—aligns in interesting ways with earlier kinds of wonder literature, such as Old Comedy and the seventeenth-century masque, and with the politicized animal fables of the long eighteenth century. D'Urfey created a musical dramatic work that looks backwards as far as ancient Greece and forwards to English works that satirically distort the lines between human and animal. In the epistolary dedication of *The Recruiting Officer*, Farquhar admits to deliberately giving his characters avian names and boasts his rival play to be: "a *Wonder* as any *in the Sun*."[71] Yet Farquhar's confidence was not unfounded, as there are several modern editions of his plays, as well as a recent biography of the Anglo-Irish playwright. Meanwhile, most of D'Urfey's theatrical contributions have been ignored and no modern edition yet exists of *Wonders in the Sun*. D'Urfey is remembered principally as a songwriter for his large collection of over a thousand songs, *Wit and Mirth: Or, Pills to Purge Melancholy* (1698–1720), which included ten songs that John Gay used in his runaway hit of 1728, *The Beggar's*

71. Quoted in David Roberts, *George Farquhar: A Migrant Life Reversed* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 68.

Opera.[72] Indeed, David Nokes and others have identified *Wonders in the Sun* as a possible precursor to Gay's ballad opera, a similarly striking mixture of song and speech, low and high, romance and realism.[73] Not all scholars would accept this direct generic link between D'Urfey and Gay, however. Regardless, *Wonders in the Sun* is—in and of itself—a wonder, a curious, varied thing that startles by its strangeness and obscurity of meaning. D'Urfey's work embodies the enlightened enchantment, that "taut suspension between knowing and resistance to knowing," so central to Kareem's book.[74] The political animals "peopling" D'Urfey's play are fabular marvels, as the playwright, like his successor Gay, encourages a double vision. They are like and unlike us: on one hand, they are oddities, on the other, ordinary types within systems of modern human governance; we can watch them enact (un)familiar power relationships and see our own faults and follies through these animals, for, as one of Henry Fielding's characters sings in *The Author's Farce* (1730): *"All Men are Birds by Nature, Sir."*[75] The similarities between human and animal in *Wonders in the Sun*, alongside its generic, intertextual, and intertheatrical intricacies, render this work of musical fantasy a wondrously strange collection of rarities: in short, a dramatic *wunderkammern* worthy of being re-opened by scholars of eighteenth-century wonder.

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72. The plethora of allusions to birds in this ballad opera suggests to several critics that Gay might have drawn further on D'Urfey's work, specifically *Wonders in the Sun*. For more on Gay's use of avian imagery, see Heather Ladd, "John Gay's Urban Aviary: Pastoral and Fabular Birds in *The Beggar's Opera*," *Literary Imagination* 19, no. 2 (July 2017): 93–106.

73. See David Nokes, *John Gay: A Profession of Friendship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

74. Kareem, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder*, 18.

75. Henry Fielding, *"The Author's Farce (1730)*," in *Plays*, vol. 1: 1728–1731, ed. Thomas Lockwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Act 3, 275.