

GLOSSARY: WHAT THE BUTLER SAW

Consistent with the philosophy of both Goethe and Emerson, that originality is essentially a matter of reassembling elements drawn from other sources, this glossary was created by and culled from various print and online sources by Susan Myer Siltan and Kathryn Wahlberg, sometimes with a bit of whimsy and liberty of opinion.

TITLE

What the Butler Saw: The title of a popular erotic film made for viewing in the Mutoscope machine, later referred to as a “What the Butler Saw Machine”.

The Mutoscope was a peep show-style movie viewer that was patented by Herman Casler on November 21, 1894 and first manufactured by the American Mutoscope Company (later the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company). It is notable for being one of the first means by which motion pictures were exhibited.

It did not project on a screen, and provided viewing to only one person at a time. Working on the same principle as the "flip book", the individual image frames were conventional black-and-white, silver-based photographic prints on tough, flexible opaque cards. The cards were attached to a circular core, rather like a huge Rolodex. The patron turned a crank to viewed the cards through a single lens enclosed by a hood.

Mutoscopes were coin-operated. Each machine held only a single reel and was dedicated to the presentation of a single short subject, described by a poster affixed to the machine.



ACT I

Page numbers are from the Samuel French script

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Station Hotel: a building of small architectural merit built for some unknown purpose at the turn of the century. It was converted to a hotel by public subscription. Among its famous guests have been Dr. Prentice, the head of an exclusive, private psychiatric clinic in London, and his wife.

If you prefer an alternate definition, there is a Station Hotel in London, located in a residential part of London near two train stations, Hither Green and Lewisham Station. I emailed them to ask about their history, and they haven't yet replied.

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Sir Winston Churchill: Sir Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill, (30 November 1874 – 24 January 1965) was a British politician who was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1940 to 1945 and again from 1951 to 1955. Widely regarded as one of the greatest wartime leaders of the 20th century, Churchill was also an officer in the British Army, a historian, a writer, and a gifted amateur painter.

“recently erected statue of Sir Winston Churchill”: the [statue](#) most recently erected at the time the play was first produced was done by David McFall, a Scottish sculptor, and installed at Woodford, an affluent suburban town in northeast London, England.



You tell me – does this not look like Alfred Hitchcock? And, does this not look like those missing parts were missing before the explosion?

Special medal: In the Grove Press version, this medal is identified as the

George Medal (GM), which is the second level civil decoration of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth. The GM was instituted on 24 September 1940 by King George VI. The medal is presented to those performing acts of bravery in, or meriting recognition by, the United Kingdom.

Shorthand speed: a method of rapid writing by means of abbreviations and symbols, used especially for taking dictation. It was developed and first introduced in 1837 by the Englishman Sir Isaac Pitman. John R. Gregg, an Irishman, devised another system in 1888. Geraldine claims to “manage 20 words per minute with ease”. This is quite slow: Average shorthand WPM, or words per minute, is around 215 WPM. Someone new to shorthand can be expected to write about 80 WPM. The fastest speed ever recorded as of 2012 was 350 WPM, by Nathan Behrin in 1922.

As a young boy, Joe Orton decorated his bedroom walls with colorful Pitman shorthand characters. At that time, he also wrote entries in an early diary in shorthand.

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Febrile condition of the calves: The medical definition of febrile is “marked or caused by fever; feverish”. In common usage, it is an adjective that means flushed, hot, red, burning, or even delirious. A little projection there, Doctor?

Coven: a group of witches

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Nymphomaniac: a woman who has excessive sexual desire

Holy Grail: generally considered to be the cup from which Christ drank at the Last Supper and the one used by Joseph of Arimathea to catch his blood as he hung on the cross. This significance was introduced into the Arthurian legends by Robert de Boron in his verse romance *Joseph d'Arimathie* (sometimes also called *Le Roman de l'Estoire dou Graal*), which was probably written in the last decade of the twelfth century or the first couple of years of the thirteenth. In many versions, the legends begin when the wounded king of a famished land sees a procession of objects including a bleeding lance and a bejewelled cup. In earlier sources and in some later ones, the grail is something very different. Throughout time and literature, it has taken on many forms, but the one constant is that it is the object of awe and of a holy quest, which is often undertaken by a young man.

In light of its legendary elements in Christianity, to say that Mrs. Prentice is “ardently sought after by young men” for sex is consistent with the irreverent tone of the play. It also provides a salacious and sacrilegious visual comparison of Mrs. Prentice’s sought-after vagina to the “cup” (the Grail).

However, when Jessie L. Weston traced the Grail's origins back to pagan times in her 1920 book *From Ritual to Romance*, she found that the Christianity-based Grail stories had no existence outside literature. It was the creation of romance, and had no genuine tradition. Weston discovered that the Grail was part of ancient fertility rites – with the lance and the cup serving as sexual symbols. Therefore, Dr. Prentice is not far off the mark

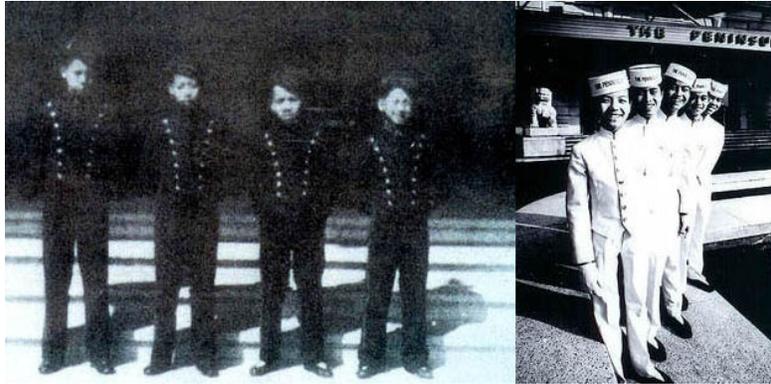
Mental aberration: a lapse in control of one's mental faculties

New contraceptive device: there were no new contraceptive devices in the 1960s for males. The condom had been around for ages. The pill, which isn't a device per se, was introduced in 1960 and made available to married women in the UK in 1961 and unmarried women in 1964. Abortion became legal in 1967. Dr. Prentice may be trying to entice Geraldine with the liberating and desirable prospect of sex without fear of pregnancy. She could even make history as one of the first to test something that could possibly be more revolutionary than the pill. Dr. Prentice implies that he's the inventor of the device and Geraldine believes him. She automatically assigns credibility to him as an authority figure and is immediately willing to "help in any way".

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Tess of the d'Urbervilles: a novel by Thomas Hardy, it is known as *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented*. It is also known as *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* or just *Tess*. The heroine, Tess, endures many injustices, ending with her hanging for the murder of the man who destroyed her life. As the story progresses, she endures rape and is subjugated because of her gender and social status. She is condemned under sexual double standards and becomes impoverished. Quite the favorite novel.

Hotel Page and page boy's uniform: a hotel page is a uniformed male worker in a hotel, usually young, who runs errands, opens doors, and is generally available for service tasks outside of those performed by bellhops, ushers, receptionists, concierges, and other hotel personnel. The page boy's uniform is usually the most simple of the other hotel uniforms and consists of a short jacket, matching slacks, and a brimless cap. Pictured below are the Hong Kong Peninsula Hotel Page Boys' uniforms from the 1930s on the left and the 1950s on the right. I stayed at the Peninsula Hotel in Bangkok about eight years ago and the uniforms were quite similar to the ones from the 50s.



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“a hundred for the negatives”: in the Grove Press version, Nick asks a hundred quid for the photos of him and Mrs. Prentice, “quid” being slang for the Pound Sterling. He later asks for a hundred pounds. That amount now would be at least £1,500 or \$2,475.

Member of Parliament: in the play, this would be the Parliament of the United Kingdom, with members elected to the (lower) House of Commons, referred to as Members of Parliament, abbreviated to MP.

hard boyhood: Nick asks for a “worthwhile job” because he “had a hard boyhood”. This could refer to a tough upbringing, but implies an early involvement with the sexual underground, probably as a rent boy. Her again is an example of the double entendre throughout the play, where Orton takes standard English idioms and clichés and infuses them with sexual dimension. Later, when Prentice asks Nick to remove his clothing in order to disguise him as Geraldine, Nick asks if he is going to “fool around” with him. Dr. Prentice asks him if that’s what usually happens when men ask him to take his clothes off, and Nick tells him it is, and that they usually give him money.

Lobelia-growing classes: Lobelias are a genus of flowering plants comprising 415 species, grown primarily in tropical to warm temperate regions of the world. The implication here is that people of a certain class have the money and leisure to maintain homes in warmer climates, where they can grow lobelia. “Lobelia” also sounds like “labia”, another example of how Orton brings the audience into the sexual double entendre of words, phrases, actions, and visual imagery of the play.

Eugenics: the belief, practice and social philosophy advocating the improvement of human genetic traits through the promotion of higher reproduction of people with desired traits (positive eugenics), and reduced reproduction of people with less-desired or undesired traits (negative eugenics).

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A bottle of Yardley's: Dr. Prentice is referring to Yardley's perfume. Yardley London is famous throughout the world as purveyors of quality fragrances, soaps and a line of cosmetics. The House of Yardley first began in 1620, when a young man bearing the Yardley name paid King Charles I a large sum to gain the concession for providing all the soap for the City of London. The company and its products became prominent in the 1960s when they merged with one of the top five British companies, British-American Tobacco. This helped expand them into the American market and provided large sums of money for a new marketing campaign, which was fronted by Jean Shrimpton and Twiggy, both popular models. In the sixties, Yardley perfume became one of the most popular perfumes among young women in the UK and the US.

At £1 for a four-ounce bottle in 1960 (today's equivalent of £15, or \$25), it was a cheap bonus for "working overtime"; certainly less expensive than the silk suits and Alfa Romeos that Dr. Prentice speculates a "young fellow" would require if he had "so much as breathed on him".



Alfa Romeos: cars manufactured by Alfa Romeo Automobiles S.p.A. Founded as A.L.F.A. (Anonima Lombarda Fabbrica Automobili) on June 24, 1910, in Milan, the company has been involved in car racing since 1911, and has a reputation for building expensive sports cars.

The rewards for the exchange of sexual favors are not comparable: a young woman at that time had likely been conditioned by society to suffer her male boss's advances as a common happenstance, whereas a young man could expect to be rewarded in proportion to the consequences his boss would face were his homosexual proclivities exposed.

Transvestism: (aka transvestitism) is the practice of dressing and acting in a style or manner traditionally associated with another gender. Mrs. Prentice remarks that her husband's transvestism would cause their marriage to teeter on "the edge of fashion", a rather sophisticated reaction that might indicate her amenity to alternative sexual practices.

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Consulting room: a room in which a doctor sees his patients.

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Dispensary: an office in a school, hospital or other organization that dispenses medications and medical supplies.

Wards: large rooms in a hospital or medical institution for the accommodation of several patients.

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Certification: psychiatric determination if a patient can be legally committable to a mental institution. "Certifiable" is sometimes used facetiously to describe someone as fit or ready for an insane asylum.

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Rubber mattress: a mattress that is made of rubber or latex that is used especially for the incontinent.

Trolley: a hospital or medical clinic bed on wheels for transporting patients. In the US, they are referred to as gurneys.

Medical association: the British Medical Association (BMA), or the professional association and registered trade union for doctors in the United Kingdom. In the Grove Press version of the play., which retains many of the Britishisms, Geraldine threatens to "ring the B.M.A." to report Dr. Prentice. The Samuel French version swapped "medical association" for B.M.A.

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Candid Camera: Candid Camera in the UK was adapted from the original American TV series of the same name. The show debuted on American radio in 1947 as the Candid Microphone, switching to TV in 1948.

Candid Camera arrived on British TV screens in 1960, presented by Bob Monkhouse. It featured Jonathan Routh and Arthur Atkins as pranksters and ran for seven years.

“nom-de-folie”: translated literally from the French, it means “name of madness”. Dr. Prentice is being esoteric by making a play on “nom de plume”, which is a pseudonym adopted by an author – a pen name or literary double.

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Puerile: relating to childhood; also, infantile, immature, silly, trivial or fatuous.

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Monograph: a scholarly piece of writing

Psychic Institute: The Grove Press edition of the play has Dr. Prentice saying “I wrote it at University”. This suggests that the psychic institute in the Samuel French version is not a place to study metaphysical sciences, but an institute for psychological studies or studies related to the mind.

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Employment Bureau: the national employment agency, with divisions throughout the UK.

Warden: a person responsible for the supervision of a particular place or activity or for enforcing the regulations associated with it.

Tarbabies: a tar baby (note the separation of the words, which is not how it is written in the script) is a difficult problem that is only aggravated by attempts to solve it. The term itself was popularized by the 19th-century Uncle Remus stories by Joel Chandler Harris, in which the character Br'er Fox makes a doll out of tar to ensnare his nemesis Br'er Rabbit. The concept of tar baby goes way back as a form of a character widespread in African folklore. In various folktales, gum, wax or other sticky material is used to trap a person.

The term also has had racial implications. The Oxford English Dictionary (but not the print version of its American counterpart) says that tar baby is a derogatory term used for "a black or a Maori."

The Grove Press edition of the play has Geraldine making white “golliwogs”. A golliwog is a character from children’s literature inspired by a blackface minstrel doll. It was later used to describe any such doll, and also as a racial slur.

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Mutations: in medical terminology, mutations are sudden structural changes within a gene or chromosome of an organism resulting in the creation of a new character or trait not found in the parental type.

Frankenstein: in a book by English author Mary Shelley, which was first published in 1818, Victor Frankenstein was a doctor who created a man from the body parts of corpses and imbued him with life by means of a powerful electric current. There are numerous novels, films, plays and television shows that retell or continue the story of Frankenstein and his monster. My favorite is the play directed by Danny Boyle in 2011 for the National Theatre in London, where Benedict Cumberbatch and Jonny Lee Miller alternately played the creature and the doctor.

Thomas Hardy: (2 June 1840 – 11 January 1928) author of *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, among other works

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Funeral pyre: wood heaped for burning a dead body as a funeral rite

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Transvestite: somebody who dresses like the opposite sex

The Times: *The Times* is a British daily national newspaper, first published in London in 1785 under the title *The Daily Universal Register*. It became *The Times* on 1 January 1788. *The Times* and its sister paper *The Sunday Times*, which was founded in 1821, are published by Times Newspapers.

The Times is the first newspaper to have borne that name, lending it to numerous other papers around the world, including *The New York Times*, which was founded in 1851. Outside of England, the newspaper is often referred to as *The London Times* or *The Times of London*.

The Times is the originator of the ubiquitous Times Roman typeface. In November 2006 *The Times* began printing headlines in a new font, Times Modern. A popular newspaper, *The Times* had an average daily circulation of 393,978 in September 2013. In the same period, *The Sunday Times* had an average daily circulation of 823,696. An American edition of *The Times* has been published since 6 June 2006.[12]

A suitcase awaiting collection: this would refer to a piece of luggage that may have been sent to a destination ahead of its owner, or is in baggage claim at an airport, awaiting pick-up by its owner. Dr. Prentice is threatening to stuff his wife into a suitcase and abandoning her at some pick-up location.

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Pederast: an adult male who is conducting an erotic relationship with a pubescent or adolescent male.

In England, to **take a biscuit from the barrel** means that if someone has done something very stupid, rude, or selfish, you can say that they “take the biscuit” or that what they have done “takes the biscuit”, to emphasize your surprise at their behavior.

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Harder to get into than the reading room of the British Museum: In 1759, the trustees of the newly opened British Museum let it be known that the “studious and curious” might be admitted to its collections. The studious and curious were slow to take up the offer – in part because the trustees, fearful of “irregularities,” made it relatively difficult to obtain a ticket of admission.

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Psychiatrist: a physician who specializes in psychiatry. A psychiatrist specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders. Psychiatrists are medical doctors who must evaluate patients to determine whether or not their symptoms are the result of a physical illness, a combination of physical and mental, or a strictly psychiatric one. Psychiatrists in the UK must hold a medical degree, so it wouldn’t necessarily be untoward for the patient to be undressed, but it would be unusual.

Medical Register: The General Medical Council (GMC) is a fee-based registered charity with statutory obligation to maintain a register of medical practitioners within the United Kingdom.

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Defeatist attitude: Defeatism is the acceptance of defeat without struggle. In everyday use, defeatism often has negative connotations and can be linked to pessimism in psychology.

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Hysteria: a psychoneurosis marked by emotional excitability and disturbances of the psychic, sensory, vasomotor, and visceral functions.

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Exhumation: digging up a body

Page 36

Peeping Toms: men secretly watching others, especially with prurience

Page 37

“One, Two, Three Club”: I was unable to find anything about this club. It’s probably a strip club or gay club.

Page 38

Brownies: The junior branch of the Guide Association, which is the UK version of the Girl Scouts in the US. Brownies are girls aged between about 7 and 10, wearing a brown uniform.

ACT II

Per Act I, page numbers are from the Samuel French script

Page 41

Priory Road School for Girls: Appears to be a fictitious school. Though there was a Hastings School for Boys on Priory Road in London around that time. This could be a veiled reference to the farcical “changing” of genders/sexualities throughout the play, but most likely is just a fictitious name for a school made up to evoke the traditional school girl fetishism.

Around the time this play was written, however, Britain was undergoing a lot of educational reform, including making educational more available to the lower classes, and making many of these traditional secondary schools co-educational.

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“be done by as you did” : A reference to the Golden Rule. Also, Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid is a character in the book “The Water Babies,” a morality tale published in 1863, in which a little boy drowns and becomes a “water baby,” but through proving his morality and goodness, is granted life again.

In British slang, to “do” someone is to treat them violently or assault them. Rance is using this form of the verb to create a twisted Golden Rule.

Chaucerian: Of or pertaining to the works of Chaucer. Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400) was an English poet of the Middle Ages and is considered “the father of English literature.”

The word referenced in the play as “Chaucerian” is the word “heterosexual.” The sexuality depicted in Chaucer’s works is much debated upon, and was unconventional for its time, but this is most likely a reference to the fact that Chaucer is credited with the first written appearances of many commonly used English words (he did not invent them, they were already in verbal use). While the word “heterosexual” is not one with which he is credited, this could be a joke about the word heterosexual being perceived as so strange that it is assumed to be a new/made-up word.

Fun Fact: One of the words Chaucer is credited with publishing for the first time is “theatre.”

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Democratic lunacy: In this usage, Rance is essentially stating that all lunatics are treated equally or democratically; or that any person is just as likely to be a lunatic as any other.

In the 1960s and 70s, the political faction called the National Democratic Party was active in the U.K. They were a right-wing conservative group setting themselves up in opposition to the National Front, which was a far-right conservative party operating on a platform of white supremacy.

It's possible this reference to "democratic lunacy" is a political joke about this rivalry.

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Ipsa facto: By the fact itself, by the very nature of the deed.

In this scene, Prentice makes the point that many men suppose themselves virile by virtue of the fact that they are sexually attracted to women.

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On the boil: Maintaining a boiling temperature, like a tea kettle or pot of water. Rance does not want to miss out on any of the action, in this case, the potential of Geraldine to spout expletives. So he indicates that she is not to be calmed down if she "becomes foul-mouthed" but rather be kept "on the boil" (i.e. Let her continue swearing.)

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Archbishop of Canterbury: The leader of the Church of England, the head of the Anglican Communion worldwide. In this usage, he is obviously being used as a paragon of sanity and morality.

Non-compos: Shorthand for "non-compos mentis" meaning "not of sound mind." It is used in law and medicine to assess a person's mental state. To be declared non-compos mentis is to be declared insane.

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Pathologically elevated mood: "Pathologically" is defined as caused by involving disease. Rance is implying that Prentice is excited/upset to the point of mania, and needs to take mood-stabilizers.

Corruptible: Something/someone that can or might be corrupted (i.e. tainted, dishonest, fraudulent).

In this instance, Nick is asking if the policeman can be convinced to undress (i.e. Implying corruptibility in a sexual context.)

Glib pretext: To be "glib" is to be unconstrained, in action or manner. A "pretext" is something that is put forward to conceal a true purpose.

Here, Nick is saying that Geraldine can be written off easily if they come up with some “glib pretext”; some quick, easy lie.

Hermaphroditism: The condition of being a hermaphrodite, or an individual who possess both male and female sex organs, or sexual anatomy that is not consistent with traditional gender presentations. (The accepted term today is intersex.)

Here Rance is referencing the confusion of Geraldine and Nick’s genders.

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A policeman’s tunic: Part of the uniform that is different from those worn in the US. A coat that is worn fully buttoned and usually belted, and extends down past the hips.



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Coquette: A flirtatious woman.

Rance is implying that Mrs. Prentice is a “tease” or “playing hard-to-get.”

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“Documentary type” novelette: A work of fiction longer than a short story but shorter than a traditional novel.

Rance’s reference here indicates that his work will be based on “true” events, but will actually be a work of fiction. i.e. It is a “documentary type” not a documentary.

Iniquity: Wickedness, sin.

Rance claims to capitalize on other peoples’ mistakes/sinfulness.

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Casting horoscopes: The process of charting stellar/planetary movements and deriving from them fortunes/future predictions for individuals.

Prentice is saying that if these events are revealed he will lose his medical practice and have to resort to fortune-telling to make a living.

Melodramatic: Exaggerated, emotional or sentimental. Sensational. Overdramatic.

Mrs. Prentice is accusing Rance of overly dramatic/making a bigger deal out of the situation than is necessary.

Buggery: Slang for sodomy.

Fashionable Bric-a-brac: Bric-a-brac are miscellaneous small articles collected for sentimental or decorative value.

Rance is here implying that themes of sexual depravity are “fashionable” or popular in literature, and therefore he intends to make use of them in his work.

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The whole treacherous avant-garde movement: To be avant-garde is to be experimental or innovative, particularly with respect to art, culture, and politics.

The 1960s and 70s saw a lot of avant-garde innovations in visual art, music, and theatre. Including but not limited to performance art and “happenings,” which were unconventional performances that often appeared to be absurd/nonsensical. These developments in the art world were met with skepticism and scorn from many more conventionally-minded people.

Rance’s criticisms of this movement are reminiscent of many opinions held at the time (and today), painting avant-garde artists as sinful, debaucherous, and treacherous to the moral fabric of society.

Fetishist: In psychiatric terms, fetishism is defined as compulsive use of an object or part of the body as a stimulus in the course of achieving sexual gratification.

Bisexual: An individual who is sexually attracted to both men and women. Also sometimes used as another word for a person presenting as intersex. Though I believe the former definition is in use here.

Necrophilia: An erotic attraction to corpses.

Neurosis: A mild personality disorder presenting with anxiety or indecision and maladjustment to social situations and interpersonal relationships. This is kind of a blanket term for a lot of different common psychological issues.

Resurrection: The act of rising from the dead.

A link here to primitive religion: Rance reads Prentice's insistence that the policeman is not dead to be a reference to the Christian associations with resurrection. i.e. Christ returning from the dead, etc.

Rationalist: The principle or habit of accepting reason as the supreme authority in matters of opinion, belief, or conduct.

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Wanton: Malicious or unjustifiable action, deliberately reckless behavior. Also used to imply lack of sexual restraint.

Rance uses the former definition to criticize the implication that a man could wear a dress.

Graeco-Roman hallucination: A reference to Classical Greek homoeroticism and pederasty during a time and in a culture when love between males was encouraged, and expressed as the high ideal of same-sex camaraderie.

Strait jacket: A garment made of strong material that binds the arms. Traditionally straps attached to the sleeves buckle behind the wearers back, so that they are constrained in a sort of self-embrace. There is also often a reinforcing strap that extends from the sleeves in the front, between the wearers legs, and attaches at the back, making it very difficult if not impossible to remove by oneself. It is commonly used on mental patients and violently disoriented people.



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Degenerate: In its usage as a noun, as it is here, it describes a person who has declined in character or morality from an accepted standard. Also used as a term for a sexually deviant person. Both/either definitions are applicable here.

Psychotic experiences: In psychiatric terms, “psychotic” indicates a person displaying symptoms of psychosis, which is characterized by delusions or hallucinations that put the individual out of touch with reality.

In the more vernacular usage, as it is presented here, it simply meant to describe a person who is mentally ill to a violent/uncontrollable extent. Mrs. Prentice describes her husband’s enraged demand that she remove her dress, and other similar behaviors he presents, as “psychotic experiences” indicating that in these particular moments he is out of touch with reality.

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Anglo-Saxon love of fair play: The Anglo-Saxons were a people who inhabited Great Britain from the 5th century. They included people from Germanic tribes who migrated to the southern half of the island from continental Europe, and their descendants; as well as indigenous people who adopted the Anglo-Saxon culture and language. Their culture is reputed to have placed a high premium on the principle of fair play and honest business dealings. “Anglo-Saxon fair play” is a common turn of phrase,

Order of the Garter: The most senior and the oldest British Order of Chivalry. The Order is comprised of the King and twenty-five knights, honored for particular service to the nation or the Sovereign.



Queen Elizabeth II wearing the robes and seal of the Order of the Garter in 1969

A person belonging to this order would be perceived as incorruptible, hence Nick’s horror at the suggestion of a member of this Order having committed murder.

This is also heavily ironic, and would probably be much more obviously funny to a British audience, because the Order of the Garter, like so many political institutions, has a somewhat shady history of indiscretion.

Cabalistic signs: The term “Cabalistic” directly means of or pertaining to the Cabala, which is a religious system with roots in Judaism which employs a mystical method of interpreting Scripture to reveal sacred mysteries.

The term is also used to generally apply to the occult and related practices. This is the more likely interpretation here. Rance refers to the Order of the Garter as a “cabalistic sign.” In this instance he is using this term to sort of dismiss it as a meaningless or misinterpreted religious symbol.

Sorcerer’s hat: Referencing the stereotypical wizard’s hat. A tall, pointed hat, often decorated with stars and moons, as Rance states.

Rance is equating occult symbolism with a sort of fake, nonsensical representational of magic, like a fairytale wizard.

Slave of a corporal in the army: Innuendo here is in Rance’s response, that the slave relationship is as a submissive in a “master-slave” sexual relationship.

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“The Way to Healthy Manhood”: This is an actual book by George Newnes published in the 1950s exploring gender roles in marriage, etc.

Opening the barn door after the horse is in: This is a play on the traditional idiom “Shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted” meaning trying to prevent something that has already happened. In this reversal, it implies trying to invite something that has already taken place.

There are many possible interpretations here, but a sexual relationship between Nick and the corporal is definitely implied. Rance seems to be saying that the “The Way to Healthy Manhood” is a text that could warn Nick against the dangers of dominant-submissive relationships with other men, but was given to him after such a relationship had already taken place.

Waving an olive branch: The olive branch is a traditional symbol of peace and purity.

Mrs. Prentice is asking Rance to make sure that her husband is not offering a surrender.

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Kinky: Marked by unconventional sexual preferences.

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Tranquilizers: A drug that has a sedative or calming effect. Prescribed for anxiety, obsessive compulsion, and other common minor emotional and mental issues. They first became available in the pharmaceutical format with which we are familiar today in the mid-twentieth century. They instantly became wildly popular, and doctors advertized them as sort of a cure-all wonder drug that could not only help with anxiety, but also marital problems, challenges at work, and juvenile delinquency. In 1955, 1 in 20 Americans reported using some form tranquilizer, and by the mid-70s more than 100 million prescriptions were filled annually. This play was written right in the middle of that curve.

The Rolling Stones sang about this phenomenon in their song, "Mother's Little Helper," which was recorded in December 1965. The song deals with the sudden popularity of Valium (diazepam), a mild tranquilizer, among housewives and the ease of obtaining it from their doctors.

The conversation that Mrs. Prentice and Rance have would have been especially poignant at this time. She feels underappreciated and disrespected in her marriage, specifically in terms of her sexuality. She claims she doesn't want drugs to solve this problem, and Rance immediately dismisses this statement by asking her where she keeps her tranquilizers, which of course she has.

Acolyte: An altar attendant in public worship, an "altar boy." Also used to describe any attendant, assistant, or follower.

Rance here describes Nick as an acolyte to Prentice. Either definition is applicable, as he does make religious references in the same passage. Given that Rance is under the impression that Prentice and Nick have a sexual relationship, I believe the stereotypical priest-altar boy sexual implications are present.

False gods: In monotheistic traditions, anything that draws attention away from the singular god, or garners worship from the followers is considered a "false god." Also used in reference to pagan traditions and polytheistic religions. This term applies to worshipping anything unworthy of devotion, or that lessens attention away from one's god.

Human vices, such as sex, are often considered false gods. This is the clearest interpretation of Rance's words here, accusing Nick and Prentice of prioritizing their sexual relationship over more worthy devotion. Though given Rance's previous comments in regards to the occult, this could also be seen as a criticism of paganism and/or an equation of homosexual activity with occult religious practices, seen as immoral.

Syringe: A small medical device consisting of a glass or plastic tube (probably would have been glass at this time), and utilizing a piston or rubber bulb to draw liquid in and eject it back out through an aperture at the end of the tube. In medicine it is used to clean wounds, or inject fluids.

Page 62

Seal of the confessional: A confidentiality between a priest and an individual confessing sins. Information shared in a confessional cannot be divulged, and is therefore considered under a holy seal.

Rance asks Geraldine if she is under the seal of the confessional, as if this were the only logical explanation for her not telling him where the body is.

Black rites: Referencing pagan/occult ritual.

Foul priest of the unknown: Rance is again accusing Prentice of being involved in immoral religious/cult practices.

Hypodermic: Characterized by introduction of medicine or drugs under the skin. In this case, referencing a “hypodermic syringe” this would be a syringe with a needle attached, to inject drugs into the system. In this case, tranquilizers.

Swab: A bit of sponge, cloth, cotton, or absorbent material used in various ways in medicine. In this instance, they are talking about putting disinfectant on one’s skin before injecting drugs into the system.

Page 63

Skullduggery: Underhand dealing or trickery.

Figment of her imagination: Something created by her mind.

Geraldine is making a sort of multi-layered meta-statement here. She was fine, but was pressured into believing she is mad, but she is aware that she only believes she is mad and is not actually mad. And that she is able to identify that she may be imagining things, though she is not in fact imaging things...

Phantom of your subconscious: In psychology, the subconscious mind is a part of your mind of which you are not currently aware. i.e. There are reasons and motives behind your own thoughts/actions that you have not consciously processed.

A phantom of the subconscious would be a manifestation of something being processed by the subconscious mind, put into a format the conscious mind could process. Nick is rejecting the idea that he himself could be a phantom of Mrs. Prentice’s subconscious.

Page 64

Higher reaches of the civil service: In this case, the highly respected government/public service jobs.

Rance is mental health professional employed by the state, and he himself is admitting the absurd lack of qualifications for people at his level of power.

Sigmund Freud: An Austrian neurologist who was a pioneer in the field of psychoanalysis. He popularized the concept of the subconscious mind, as well as many other concepts that paved the way for huge advances in psychology and psychiatry.

One of Freud's most famous theories is that of the Oedipus complex, which posits that all men have a subconscious desire to kill their fathers and have sex with their mothers. The scene with Rance describes, that of placing his family into a communal strait jacket, and posing with his foot on his father's head, would be a prime example of the kind of fantasies that led Freud to develop this theory.

Climax (double entendre): In terms of plot development, it is the highest or most intense point in the action. The culmination of all the events that came before. This scene is indeed the climax of the play.

Rance refers to "climax" as being a term used by "racier novelists." He is talking about romance novels or the like, and their use of the word to describe an orgasm.

Page 65

Howdah: A seat or platform for one or more persons, placed on the back of an elephant so that it may be ridden.



a brooch depicting a princess on a howdah

Page 66

(after the war) The effect of the Labor Government on the middle classes: Referencing the Labour Party of Britain, a moderate-liberal political party. They won the national election just after WWII, which would have been the right time frame for Mrs. Prentice's story.

While in power, the Labour Party made many changes to national policy, including enacting Keynesian economic policies (positing that economic output is directly influenced by spending in the economy), and developing a national healthcare system.

These would be some of the effects of this government on the middle class. Many would have seen them as a good thing, but one gets the impression Mrs. Prentice may not mean it that way.

Pekinese: A Chinese breed of small dogs having a long, silky coat. A popular breed for lap dogs/dogs owned and groomed for shows/uses as a living fashion accessory.

Page 67

Peccadilloes: A minor sin or offense.

Prentice's statement is ironic because the offenses uncovered on that day were in reality not at all minor.

ADDENDUM TO GLOSSARY: WHAT THE BUTLER SAW

ACT I

Page numbers are based on the page numbers printed in the Grove Press Edition:

Page 289:

Health Scheme: Another term for the National Health Service in Britain, established in 1949 to make medical care more available/affordable to the public. It revolutionized healthcare in the region, but was also heavily criticized in its early years as people adjusted to the change.

In this scene in the play, Dr. Prentice is asking Geraldine not to report the exam, allegedly because his insurance does not cover it. It's just a way to get her not to mention what he has done.

Related trivia: The establishment of the National Health Service led to the abolishment of routine circumcision, allowing for the procedure only in the cases of medical need.

The Mental Health Act of 1959 reduced the ground on which someone could be admitted to a mental hospital, i.e., it became easier to commit someone. Though this happened ten years before the publication of this play, it is possible that Orton was commenting on this change.

Page 292:

Christmas Cracker: A party favor used at Christmas parties in England. It is a cardboard tube wrapped in festive paper, and when you pull on the ends it emits a loud crack and basically explodes. Traditionally, the tube contains one of each of the following: A small toy, some kind of game, a joke, riddle, or piece of trivia written on a paper, and crown made from colored tissue paper, which all the guests at the party are to wear throughout the evening.

Mrs. Prentice is implying that Dr. Prentice “finishes” quickly.



Rejuvenation pills: Euphemism for male sexual aids: the 1969 version of Viagra, which did not become available until 1989.

Mrs. Prentice is implying that Dr. Prentice has taken such pills and still cannot “perform.”

Page 295:

Commissioners: This term appears to have many uses, but essentially refers to someone in charge/someone who doles out responsibilities.

It is reasonable to assume that Dr. Rance is saying that he had been given the job of investigating Dr. Prentice by one of his superiors in “the mental branch” of the government.

Page 303:

Dicky: In bad condition, shaky, or unreliable. To feel dicky is to feel in some way unwell.

Page 305:

Homuncules: Term used to describe a small person. Also a word used in very early biology for a small, full formed person that existed inside of sperm cells, presumably later to grow into a baby.

Rance is here referring to the white tar babies. While the first definition is the most likely (i.e., a doll is like a tiny human), an innuendo involving the latter definition is also present, being that the dolls are white, etc.

Page 309:

The Guardian: Prominent British newspaper, *The Guardian* is a national daily newspaper. Founded in 1821, it was known as *The Manchester Guardian* until 1959. From its beginnings as a local paper, it has grown into a national paper associated with a complex organizational structure and an international multimedia and web presence. Its sister papers include *The Observer* (a British Sunday paper) and *The Guardian Weekly*. It has two online outlets based outside the United Kingdom, *Guardian Australia* and *Guardian US*.

Page 310:

Two-hour cleaning service: Hotels will often provide this premium service, where the guest’s clothes can be dry-cleaned, pressed and returned within two hours. Sometimes they have premises on-site that will do it and sometimes they send out to a dry-cleaning service, which they have contracted for this service. The page boy would

most likely be the one who delivered and picked up from the dry cleaners and got the clothing items back to the guest. Sometimes, someone from laundry services will deliver to the guest, especially if it's done in-house.

There are many implications here of why Nick would have had these items cleaned before returning to them to Mrs. Prentice. It is said that he sold her dress. Perhaps he was getting it cleaned because in the course of his assignation with Mrs. Prentice, it became soiled in a manner known to those of us who are familiar with a famous navy blue dress worn by Monica Lewinsky and adorned, so to speak, by the 42nd president of the United States.

Page 312:

“mess me about”: British equivalent term for messing with someone, deceiving them, tricking them, or leading them on. Not strictly used in sexual context, though it clearly has sexual connotations here.

Five shillings: This is equivalent to approximately £2.57 today, or \$4.27. So it is not much money, especially given the implication that this is what Nick gets paid to undress etc. in front of guests at the inn.

The fact that Dr. Prentice knows what the “rates” were thirty years ago, implies that he used to engage in such activity in his youth. And his comment about the unions is clearly a nod to the current economic climate at the time, in which pay had not been adjusted for inflation in a long time.

Houdini: Stage name for Erik Weisz, a Hungarian-American illusionist, famous for his escape acts.

Dr. Prentice is remarking on the speed and agility with which Nick is able to undress. Saying he is better than his old secretary who was a descendant of Houdini implies that she could “escape” from her clothes quite impressively.

“Unscientific”: Mrs. Prentice is indicating that only a doctor needs to conduct examinations with their patients undressed, for scientific purposes. By saying that his examination will be “unscientific” Dr. Prentice is avoiding the question, but could also potentially be implying that he intends to perform an examination of a more sexual nature, which would not be strictly “scientific.”

ACT II

Page 321:

Tissue of Lies: A story invented in order to deceive, woven together carefully like very fine cloth, but very easy to see through.

Page 322:

Freaks' Roll-Call: Concrete definitions were elusive, but this appears to be a term basically used to call someone a freak. Roll-call being a list of names to be called at the beginning of a meeting to ensure all members of the group are present, if your name appears on the freaks' roll-call, then you belong to that group.

Dr. Prentice is refuting the implication that he could have engaged in any kind of indiscreet activity with Nick because he is married. Match essentially rebuts him with the fact that just because he is married, does not mean that he is incapable of this kind of behavior.

Related trivia: The only other direct hit for this term on Google, other than the quote from this play, was a volume of the *Contemporary Theatre Review* entitled *The Freaks' Roll-Call: Live Art and the Arts Council 1968-1973*, documenting the avant-garde artistic movements of this time and the involvement of the Arts Council that helped fund some of them. Given that this article was not published until 2012, it is possible that the title is in fact a reference to this play, which of course was first produced in that time period.

Page 334:

Dutchman: A Dutch person, native to the Netherlands or descendant.

Dr. Rance is most likely using this as a racial epithet. Either his theories about Dr. Prentice's phallic worship are correct or he is fool, or similar.

Related trivia: *Dutchman* is also the title of a play by Amiri Baraka, first produced in 1964, made into a movie in 1967. It is a deeply disturbing commentary on racial tension and prejudice at that time. The playwright is American, and the first production took place in New York, but Anthony Harvey, who directed the film, is English. While the movie is still set in the U.S., it is possible that this film would have been part of the cultural awareness of Orton and his audience at the time.

The title of the play is probably referencing the legend of The Flying Dutchman, which is a ghost ship that sails the seas, never able to make port or find home.

Page 336:

Selling matches: This would have been a low station, selling matches out on the street.

Possibly a reference to Hans Christian Andersen's famous short story, *The Little Match Girl*, in which a poor child is selling matches on the street on a cold winter night, and ends up dying of hypothermia.

Page 336-337:

Rance's speech, which starts at the bottom of page 336 and continues onto page 337, contains references that are not in the Sam French version. He mixes up psychological terms like “archetypes” and “Father-figure” with devil worship and occult concepts like the anti-Christ, sacrificing white virgins and dark gods of unreason.

Anti-Christ: Chief enemy of Christ who would reign at the end of time, first mentioned in the epistles of St. John. The idea of a mighty ruler who will appear at the end of time to fight against the forces of good was adapted from Judaism; the Jewish concept in turn had been influenced by Iranian and Babylonian myths of the battle of God and the devil at the end of time.

Archetype: a psychological concept introduced by Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung (July 26, 1875-June 6, 1961), who believed that archetypes are models of people, behaviors or personalities. Jung suggested that the psyche was composed of three components: the ego, the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious.

The collective unconscious, Jung believed, was where these archetypes exist. He suggested that these models are innate, universal and hereditary. Archetypes are unlearned and function to organize how we experience certain things.

Father-figure: A father complex in psychology is a complex — a group of unconscious associations, or strong unconscious impulses — which specifically pertains to the image or archetype of the father. These impulses may be either positive (admiring and seeking out older father figures) or negative (distrusting or fearful).

Sigmund Freud, and psychoanalysis after him, saw the father complex, and in particular ambivalent feelings for the father on the part of the male child, as an aspect of the Oedipus complex. By contrast, Carl Jung took the view that both males and females could have a father complex, which in turn might be either positive or negative.

“To sacrifice a white virgin”: while it's true that sacrificing virgins is a known primitive tribal practice to appease the gods, end drought and such – even outside B movie plots - it is the twisted mind of Dr. Rance that makes them white. It's even more B movie that way, as in “Alabaster-skinned blonde emerges as sole survivor from crashed plane into remote jungle, is captured by barbarian tribesmen with bad drumming and multiple piercings, and is trussed up S&M style and wrapped in some clingy little transparent number (the better to serve up multiple nip slips) as preparation for sacrifice. While she stands at the precipice of some high, dark cliff, just about to be tossed into the roaring, flaming lava churning below, the square-jawed pilot with lots of glistening hair who had been thought to perish in the plane crash rescues her by scooping her into his arms while also managing to fend off hoards of natives with only a Cub Scout penknife. He takes her to the smoldering wreck of the plane and manages to get it aloft by just pushing the throttle a few desperate but mighty thrusts (insert sexual imagination here). They fly home to certain marriage and not a very happily ever after, because Miriam, who is miserable that her son married a shiksa, makes life so wretched

for her new daughter-in-law that the alabaster-skinned blonde buys a one-way ticket back to the remote island. “ Something like that.

Dark Gods of unreason: For Friedrich Nietzsche was a German philosopher of the late 19th century who challenged the foundations of Christianity and traditional morality. For Nietzsche, human nature was essentially Dionysiac, governed by the amoral god of unreason and drunkenness, who evokes the sense of dark underground forces mysteriously stirring.

Orton inserted this here because he had a Dionysius theme going on in his comedies. In his diary on June 3, 1967, he wrote, “provided one spent the time drugged or drunk, the world was a fine place.” According to John Lahr, “Orton was obsessed with the Dionysius theme ... *What the Butler Saw*, which lay in a drawer beneath his bed in Islington awaiting a final draft, planned comic revenge on Pentheus, the persecutor of Dionysus who is at the same time doomed to suffer from Dionysian passion. At the finale, the figure of control – Sergeant Match – climbs down through the skylight on a rope ladder. With a wink at Eueipides, Orton has Match wearing a leopard-skin dress. Instead of condemning the spectacle, he joins the participants and ascends toward a new light.”

“**When they broke into the evil-smelling den** they found her poor body bleeding beneath the obscene and half erect phallus.” I’ve searched for the sentence, and found nothing to indicate Rance is citing some Gothic potboiler. I think he is quoting his own steamy prose here from the book he intends to write.

Page 338:

Auto-erotic excitement: The term auto-erotic refers to sexually stimulating one’s self.

Dr. Rance is asking Dr. Prentice if he derives sexual pleasure from wearing women’s clothing.

Harpy: In Greek mythology a harpy is an evil winged spirit, half woman, half bird. They are best known from the legend of Phineus, tormented by the harpies, who continually stole food from him. Their name comes a Greek word meaning “to snatch.”

It is also a commonly used term for a treacherous or deceitful woman. Which is how Dr. Prentice uses it here against his wife.

Page 348:

Early warning system: Usually refers to weather reporting that predicts hurricanes and other severe weather patterns. But also used by mental health professionals when discussing early detection of mental health problems.

The 1969 Atlantic Hurricane Season was record-breaking, and was not surpassed in severity until 2005. Though records seem to indicate that these hurricanes mostly effected the United States and Central and South America, it is possible that terminology like “early warning system” would have been thrown around in the news a lot at the time, and that this would be familiar to audiences at the time. Orton may then be utilizing a double entendre, using both the weather and mental health related definitions.

Page 352:

Undertaker: Funeral director. A person in charge of embalming and preparing a body for burial, and usually also arranging the funeral ceremony.

Hero of 1940: Referring to Winston Churchill. To give context to this, here’s a passage from a bio of Churchill on Wiki: during the 1930s, Churchill took the lead in warning about Nazi Germany and in campaigning for rearmament. On the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, he was again appointed First Lord of the Admiralty. Following the resignation of Neville Chamberlain on 10 May 1940, Churchill became Prime Minister. His steadfast refusal to consider defeat, surrender, or a compromise peace helped inspire British resistance, especially during the difficult early days of the War when Britain stood alone in its active opposition to Adolf Hitler. Churchill was particularly noted for his speeches and radio broadcasts, which helped inspire the British people during difficult times.

Page 353:

High Street: Referencing the main thoroughfare of a city or town. It is the most common street name in the United Kingdom, there being 5,410 High Streets in the U.K. as of 2009. While this number was ostensibly lower in 1969, Match uses the term “the High Street” indicating that Churchill’s statue would be placed on the main road of whichever town they are in.

Battle of Britain: An air-bombing campaign by the German Air Force (Luftwaffe), against the U.K. in 1940. They targeted shipping centers, airfields, and areas of political significance, all to gain air superiority over the Royal Air Force, so that Hitler could invade England.

The R.A.F. succeeded in their efforts to thwart the German’s invasion attempts, which was the first major defeat the Germans suffered in WWII, and was considered a major turning point.

Update: New development on the **Station Hotel**

If you recall, I emailed the only Station Hotel I could find in London that called itself, simply, Station Hotel, without anything else in its name. It took a while to get a reply. Mary James provided some information in the meantime, telling me that when she was

growing up in Scotland, “almost every town with a train station, if there was a hotel close by, it was called the Station Hotel”.

This week, I finally got an answer from The Station Hotel, 14 Staplehurst Rd, London SE13 5NB, United Kingdom. They uniquely call themselves The Station Hotel, without the name of a location following. Their General Manager forwarded my email to Dan Shotton, Director of the corporation, Red Comb Pubs, Ltd., that owns the hotel. He said they’ve owned the site for 18 months, “so I’m afraid my knowledge of its history is somewhat limited. It currently trades as a pub and restaurant, although we do have plans in place to reinstate the letting bedrooms later this year.” He attached an old photo of the pub sent to him by a local resident when his company bought the pub, which you’ll find below. Judging from the dress style, I’d place it around 10 years before Dr. and Mrs. Prentice visited the linen closet that fateful night before they married.

