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THE FEMALE WITS: CATHERINE TROTTER, DELARIVIERE MANLEY, AND
MARY PIX-THREE WOMEN PLAYWRIGHTS WHO MADE THEIR DEBUTS IN
THE LONDON SEASON OF 1695-96

City University of New York

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by

CONSTANCE CLARK

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in Theatre in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
University of New York.

1984

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CONSTANCE CLARK

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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by
Constance Clark

Advisor: Professor Albert C. Bermel

This study explores the phenomenon of the entrance of three women playwrights onto the theatrical scene in the London season of 1695-96. The impact of the arrival of Catherine Trotter, Delarivière Manley, and Mary Pix provoked a satire lampooning them called The Female Wits; or, The Triumvirate of Poets at Rehearsal.

Catherine Trotter was the first to make her debut with Agnes de Castro, a tragedy based on a novel by Aphra Behn, which was produced at Drury Lane. Delarivière Manley's first play, The Lost Lover; or, The Jealous Husband, was also produced at Drury Lane. However, a month later The Royal Mischief, intended for that theatre, was withdrawn owing to altercations between the author and the players, and soon after was mounted by Thomas Betterton's company at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Mary Pix's two offerings in the season were Ibrahim, The Thirteenth Emperor

of The Turks and The Spanish Wives.

The flurry of productions of plays by women that season, including a comedy by a pseudonymous "Ariadne," and a posthumous production of a play by Aphra Behn, excited derogatory criticism. It was apparently Manley's defection to the rival house and the success of The Royal Mischief that comprised the particular instigation for the Drury Lane satire, however.

The three women with whom this study deals were prolific professional writers. Trotter had five plays produced and published, Manley had four, and to Pix are attributed a dozen. Each published in other genres as well. Herein their biographies are presented, their plays analyzed, and other works discussed. Sources and influences, including that of their predecessor Aphra Behn, are considered. An evaluation is made of each of these writers' place in the theatre of their times and their influence upon the English drama of the eighteenth century.

Finally, the satire, The Female Wits, which imitates the form and tenor of Buckingham's The Rehearsal, which spoofed John Dryden twenty years earlier, is explicated.

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In the process of the research for this study, I have had recourse to several libraries, often requiring access to rare and fragile materials, and I am grateful for the cooperation of the librarians at the British Library, the Houghton Library at Harvard, the Newberry Library in Chicago, the Union Theological Seminary in New York, the Fales Library at New York University, the New York Public Library, and, of course, the Graduate Center Library, CUNY, especially in the last instance for the helpfulness of Mrs. Bowie.

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Finally, I dedicate this paper to Theodore "Ace" Zarvos, out of love and in gratitude for his supportiveness throughout every aspect of the project.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In one single year [December 1695 to December 1696] audiences saw no less than five new plays by female writers --Mrs. Trotter's Agnes de Castro, Mrs. Manley's The Lost Lover and The Royal Mischief, and Mrs. Pix's Ibrahim and The Spanish Wives. This single record is sufficient to stand as a symbol of a new spirit at work.¹

But how much remains to be done! ... the ladies, Mrs. Manley, the philosophical Mrs. Trotter, and the fat Mrs. Pix, all need attention.²

The above quotations represent two of the infrequent mentions of the subjects of this study in books about the Restoration theatre and call attention to their historical significance. Yet Nicoll's declaration and Summers's summons to scholars have gone largely unheeded, probably because of the plays' inaccessibility until recently.³ Anthologies and popular editions repeatedly republished the same few agreed-upon masterpieces. Theatre historians play down the period of which they write; it is often characterized as a sharp decline from the glittering Restoration

¹Allardyce Nicoll, History of English Drama, 1660-1900, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 1:75.

²Montague Summers, Restoration Theatre (1934; reprint ed., New York: Humanities Press, 1964), p. xiv.

³G. William Berquist, ed., Three Centuries of English and American Plays, a microprint collection (New York: Hafner Press, 1963); Edna Steeves, ed., The Plays of Mary Pix and Catherine Trotter (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1983); Fidele Morgan, The Female Wits (London: Virago Press, 1981).

drama of the 1670s. The Restoration itself is treated for moral reasons as a second-rate period by historians of the Victorian age and persuasion and lies in the critical shadow of the great drama of Elizabethan times. The women playwrights have been grouped together as "minor" writers and perhaps doomed to be ignored because of their alleged mediocrity. They can be assessed only as more is brought to light about them as individuals and about their differing degrees and areas of talent. However, whatever their individual merits, they will always be grouped together, because it was as a group that they were a phenomenon in the London season of 1695-96.

Their arrival provoked the production of a satire lampooning them called The Female Wits; or, The Triumvirate of Poets at Rehearsal.¹

Catherine Trotter was the first to debut with Agnes de Castro at the Drury Lane.² The play was based on a novel by Aphra Behn. Delarivière Manley's first play, The Lost Lover; or, The Jealous Husband, was also produced at Drury Lane.³ However, a month later Manley's The Royal Mischief, intended for that theatre, was withdrawn in midrehearsal owing to altercations between the author and the players.⁴ It was mounted soon after by Betterton's company at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Mary Pix's two entries for the season were Ibrahim, the Thirteenth Emperor of the

¹"W.M.," The Female Wits; or, The Triumvirate of Poets at Rehearsal, ed. Lucyle Hook (London: Turner et al., 1704; reprint ed., Los Angeles: Clark Memorial Library, 1967).

²Catherine Trotter, Agnes de Castro (London: H. Rhodes, 1696).

³Delarivière Manley, The Lost Lover; or, The Jealous Husband (London: Bently et al., 1696).

⁴Idem, The Royal Mischief (London: Bently et al., 1696).

Turks at Drury Lane, and The Spanish Wives, for the same management at Dorset Gardens.¹

While the flurry of women's plays excited reactionary criticism, it was Mrs. Manley's defection and the subsequent success of The Royal Mischief at the rival house that directly provoked the presentation of The Female Wits. The three women with whom this study deals were prolific professional writers. Trotter had five plays produced and published, Manley four, and to Pix are attributed a dozen, although each dramatist published other types of writing as well. In this dissertation their plays are analyzed, while sources and influences are considered, including those of their predecessor in the trade, Aphra Behn. An evaluation is offered of each of these writers' places in the theatre of their times and their influence upon the English theatre of the eighteenth century. Finally, there is an explication of the lampoon The Female Wits, which imitates the form and tenor of The Rehearsal, Buckingham's spoof of John Dryden from twenty years earlier.²

The 1690s are an awkward time for literary and theatre historians to deal with. They are usually treated one of two ways: either everything between 1660 and 1700 is lumped together under the heading "Restoration," or 1688 is considered as the beginning of the "Eighteenth

¹Mary Pix, Ibrahim, the Thirteenth Emperor of the Turks (London: John Harding & Richard Wilkin, 1696). Production information for this play was obtained from Emmet Avery et al., The London Stage, 1660-1800, 11 vols. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960-68), 1:461 (hereinafter cited as [LS]). Mary Pix, The Spanish Wives (London: R. Wellington, 1696) [LS, 1:464].

²George Villiers, The Duke of Buckingham, "The Rehearsal," in British Drama from Dryden to Sheridan, eds. George H. Nettleton and Arthur E. Case (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1969), pp. 39-67 (originally published, London: Thomas Dring, 1672).

Century." This nether period from the revolution to the Age of Enlightenment with its lackluster reputation is without a catching appellation of its own. The "Late Seventeenth Century" merely denotes a block of time, lying in wait, as it were, for the Augustan Age. However, as a transition period it has an importance of its own in displaying the overripe fruit of the previous period and the seedlings of the next. The drama of the nineties is often dismissed as a dying echo of that of the seventies, and yet Congreve, Farquhar, and Vanbrugh made their debuts at this time. Collections of plays include their works with those of Sedley, Wycherley, and Etherege, who preceded them by a generation, under the all-inclusive banner of Restoration drama.

When singled out at all, the drama of the nineties is usually summed up in a few closing paragraphs of a chapter on the Restoration, or the first few of one on the eighteenth century. The period is actually not only post-Restoration but post-rebellion, while not yet "Augustan." The heyday of the "Merry Monarch" was long gone; this was the reign of stolid William and Mary. The wits and rakes of Charles's court had succumbed to the gout, the pox, and country heiresses. Dryden was considered to be in his dotage; his last play, Love Triumphant (1694), failed. "The incomparable Astrea," Aphra Behn, died in 1689. Betterton, for whom Congreve created the role of the dashing gallant Valentine in Love for Love (1695), was approaching sixty at the time. Seventeen years separated Wycherley's last play and Congreve's debut.

In her biography of Aphra Behn, Reconstructing Aphra, Angeline Goreau offers a summation of how far the Restoration theatre had already declined by the year of Charles II's death in 1685:

Aphra's beloved theatre was operating in severely reduced circumstances; her means of income was seriously threatened; her world had been torn apart by political strife; her generation was quickly passing--dead or dying, starving, burned out, or simply given up to staidness. Sedley had retired into complacent middle age and domestic content in the country; Etherege was living in lonely exile in a foreign court and had ceased to write plays; Wycherley was helpless in debtor's prison. Buckingham, in ill health and political disgrace, was described by a contemporary letter writer as "worn to a thread with whoring." Rochester had been dead five years.... Aphra's friend Nathaniel Lee, who like many of the playwrights began to find himself in a precarious financial position, began to suffer intervals of madness as early as 1682.... Heavily in debt, Otway had retreated to the slums of Tower Hill early in 1685 to avoid joining Wycherley in prison.¹

By 1690 the world was even less receptive to an already flagging theatre. King William was not interested in the theatre at all, while the pious Queen Mary gave only token patronage. Among the populace there was a widespread reaction to the moral laxity of the seventies which had been celebrated in the best of the Restoration comedies.

The Revolution of 1688 obviously did not instantly effect the changes in English society that exemplify the character of eighteenth-century England, but that time saw the beginning of a transformation from a rural nation, in which the majority of the populace lived in relative poverty, to the commercial prosperity that accompanied the rise of the merchant class and eventually the Industrial Revolution. The Bill of Rights and Toleration Acts of 1689 strengthened the powers of the common man, thanks to an enterprising parliament. The establishment of the Bank of England in 1694 and the currency reforms of 1695 inspired commerce and trade.

¹Angeline Goreau, Reconstructing Aphra (New York: Dial Press, 1980), pp. 258-60.

Clearly, the general economic prosperity ushered in by the "Glorious Revolution" did not immediately trickle down to the theatre. In the midst of all this activity in the civic and economic spheres, the theatre waned. With the population of London in excess of half a million, the United Company was hard put to fill a few hundred seats. Various reasons can be given for this, none of them exclusive of the other. After the death of Charles II and the flight of James II, there was a withdrawal of Court patronage. The habitual theatregoers of Charles's generation were dying off and not being replaced. There was strong opposition from puritanical church reformers. The middle class and the "Ladies" subscribed to their moral dicta and objected to the raciness of the comedies and the sensationalism of the tragedies. Deterioration in the quality of the fare is not to be dismissed as a factor in the decline.

Did the audience abandon the theatre because of the lower quality of writing, or did writers of high caliber leave the theatre and enter more challenging and rewarding professions because of the later playgoers' inferior tastes? Modern critics generally agree that few professional writers in the nineties match the finest of those of the seventies. Among the latter, the best were derivative, looking back to Dryden and a revival of the Heroic mode. While idealistic dedications espoused the highest artistic standards, the authors' prologues and epilogues half-chastised and half-wooed the audience, lecturing them on what they ought to like, and at the same time promising something to please everyone. Robert D. Hume makes an exhaustive attempt to categorize the variety of dramatic fare with which the

authors of the period sought to tempt the patrons. In The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century, Hume painstakingly categorizes the five hundred new plays which appeared from 1660 to 1700, tracing the changes in theatrical fashion season-by-season.¹ In his effort to avoid the overworked division into "Comedy of Manners" and "Heroic," however, his taxonomy is reminiscent of Polonius' description of the Players' repertoire. Hume defends the drama of the period from judgmental critics on the grounds that it was conceived and executed as entertaining appeals to popular taste.

The new audience became increasingly bourgeois in its outlook; its composition changed gradually. There was no abrupt turnover from an aristocratic coterie to a mob of merchants. As far back as the early sixties, Pepys complained in his diary about the number of ordinary citizens and even apprentices in the audience. Still, artistocratic members of the Kit Cat Club continued to patronize the theatre in the eighteenth century. Among contemporary writers who described the audiences, satirist Tom Brown called the playhouse an "Inchanted Island" and scorned its denizens:

Here Lords come to Laugh, and to be Laugh'd at for being there.... Knights come hither to learn the Amorous Smirk, the A la Mode Grin.... Hither come the country Gentlemen to shew their Shapes, and trouble the Pit with their impertinence about Hawking, Hunting.... There sits a Beau like a Fool in a Frame, that dares not stir his Head, nor move his Body, for fear of incommoding his Wig.... Here the Ladies come to shew their Cloaths.... Here they shew their Courage by being unconcerned at a Husband being Poison'd, a Hero being Kill'd, or a Passionate Lover

¹Robert D. Hume, The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

being Jilted: and discover their Modesties by standing Buff at a Baudy Song, or a naked Obscene Figure.¹

Critic and playwright John Dennis complained:

In the Reign of Charles the Second, a considerable part of the Audience had such an Education as qualified them to judge a Comedy.... [T]here are three sorts of People now in our Audiences, who have no education at all, and who were unheard of in the Reign of King Charles the Second. A great many younger brothers... Several People who made their Fortunes in the late War... [a] considerable number of Foreigners.²

One of those foreigners, Henri Misson, wrote the following account in 1698:

The Pit is an amphitheater fill'd with Benches without Backboards, and adorn'd and cover'd with green Cloth. Men of Quality, particularly the younger Sort, some Ladies of Reputation and Vertue, an abundance of Damsels that haunt for Prey, sit altogether in this Place, Higgedly-Piggedly, chatter, toy, play, hear, hear not. Farther up, against the Wall, under the first Gallery, and just opposite to the Stage, rises another amphitheater, which is taken up by Persons of the best Quality, among whom are generally very few Men. The galleries, whereof there are only two Rows, are fill'd with none but ordinary People, particularly the Upper one.³

To that segment of the audience, the Ladies in the Boxes, is given the most credit for the reform movement in the theatre. Despite Brown's barb that ladies did not blush at obscenity, there is much evidence in the prefaces, prologues, and epilogues of the nineties that the "fair" segment of the audience exerted moral pressure. The impact of Jeremy Collier's A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage in 1698 was the culmination, not the beginning,

¹A.M. Nagler, A Source Book in Theatrical History (New York: Dover Publications, 1952), pp. 247-48.

²Ibid., p. 252.

³Ibid., p. 208.

of the protests.¹ There are no references to a formal organization, yet the word "faction" was used to describe the "crying down" of certain plays by women on moral grounds. These responses may have been spontaneous or the result of planned demonstration. The power of the women as a pressure group seems paradoxical in view of their legal status in society.

While a single mature woman had virtually no rights in society, a woman protected, so to speak, by marriage, was her husband's property. Her own property and any earnings were his, and she could not make a will. A wife could not testify in court against a husband who had assaulted her. In the event of separation, she might have to surrender everything including her children and couldn't remarry. The independent heroines of Restoration Comedy were a glamorous minority. Despite the harsh laws, however, women of the upper classes, in the city at least, had some degree of freedom and mobility.

Classical education for women had enjoyed an upsurge during the Elizabethan times, but that was no longer the case. Intellectual pursuits among women depended upon the indulgence of a father or the liberality of a husband, for the average education did not extend beyond the basic skills, needlework and dancing. Historian David Ogg noted what he felt were outstanding exceptions: "A few pioneers such as Aphra Behn and Mrs. Manley achieved a somewhat ambiguous reputation in letters; Celia Fiennes, who kept a fascinating diary of travel, never aspired to authorship. Most of their female

¹Jeremy Collier, A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage (1698; reprint ed., New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1972).

contemporaries were relegated to the kitchen or the nursery."¹ The generally conservative opinion regarding women was that in body, mind, and morals they were weaker than men. For instance, Milton's Eve:

Too much of ornament in outward show
Elaborate, of inward less exact.
For well I understand in the prime end
Of Nature her the inferior, in the mind
and inward faculties, which most excel;
In outward also her resembling less
His image who made them both, and less expressing
The character of that dominion given
O'er other creatures.²

There were, however, some outspoken advocates of women's education. Two explicit proposals for academies for women were published in the nineties. In 1694 Mary Astell put forth A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of Their True and Greatest Interest.³ She maintained that "Ignorance is the cause of most feminine vices," because a woman "is taught the principles and duties of Religion, but not acquainted with the reasons and grounds of them." Her proposal was for a sort of monastery for devotees who would reject fashion, money, suitors, embrace the classics, and devote themselves to Christian precepts and practices. Daniel Defoe's proposed academy was less monastically rigorous and closely resembled a public school with concentrations in French,

¹David Ogg, England in the Reigns of James II and William III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 51. Celia Fiennes was the author of Through England on a side-saddle in the time of William and Mary (1695), which was not published until 1888.

²John Milton, "Paradise Lost," in The Poems of John Milton, eds. John Carey and Alistair Fowler (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), p. 843 (book 8, lines, 538-46).

³Mary Astell, A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest (London: R. Wilkin, 1695; reprint ed., New York: Source Book Press, 1970), pp. 31, 51.

Italian, Speech, History, and so on, in addition to music and dancing. His plan, set forth in Essays Upon Several Projects in 1697, called for an academy in each of the counties and ten in London. He expressed the conviction that "I have often thought that one of the most barborous customs in the world, considering us a civilized and Christian country, is that we deny the advantages of learning to women."¹

John Dunton's Athenian Gazette (1691-97) encouraged correspondence from women, especially on cultural subjects.² A Dialogue Concerning Women, Being a Defence of the Sex, by critic and poet William Walsh (1691), boasted a preface by John Dryden. It set up a dialogue between Philogynes and Misogynes along the lines of Dryden's "Essay of Dramatic Poesy." It defended women from the most common criticism of them as proud, vain, and inconstant, and particularly attacked one iniquitous double standard: that while at the same time it was a crime for a woman to be unfaithful, it was as scandalous for a man to be considered a constant lover.³ An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex (1696) is attributed to Judith Drake, wife of James Drake, the Troy political writer.⁴

¹Daniel Defoe, "An Academy for Women," in An Essay Upon Several Projects (London: Thomas Cockerill, 1702), p. 282.

²Gilbert D. McEwen, The Oracle of the Coffee-House (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1972), p. 103.

³William Walsh, A Dialogue Concerning Women, Being a Defense of the Sex (London: R. Bently & J. Tonson, 1691).

⁴[Judith Drake], An Essay in Defense of the Female Sex (1696; reprint ed., New York: Source Book Press, 1970).

A defense is always an answer to an attack, and one persistent misogynist was Robert Gould. His Satyr against Women in 1688 was answered by Sylvia's Revenge, now attributed to Richard Ames.¹ But it was apparently taken by Gould to have been composed by Aphra Behn, for he counterattacked, with her as his target, in A Satirical Epistle. Again in 1697, he brought out Satyr against Wooing. His The Playhouse, a Satyr was equally critical of the women in the audience and those who dominated the stage.² Tom Brown, in his diatribe against the theatre, "A Criticism," also capitalized on sloppy but easy guilt by association --the association between the theatre and prostitution: "So some Ladies, when they have past all the Stages of Lewdness, finding their Faces grow stale in all the Brothels in Town, or else out of Hopes to do better, have transplanted themselves to the Theatre, either as Poetesses, or Actresses."³

In the theatre itself, the intellectual woman became a new Jonsonian humor in the comedies of the time--a female fop, affected, arrogant, her self-esteem far in excess of her capacity.

Ironically, it was in Aphra Behn's Sir Patient Fancy (1678) that the first English "learned lady" type, Lady Knowell, made her

¹[Richard Ames], Sylvia's Revenge; or, a Satyr against Man; in answer to the Satyr against Woman (London: Joseph Streater & John Southby, 1688).

²Robert Gould, A Satirical Epistle to the Female Author of a Poem call'd Sylvia's Revenge (London: R. Bently, 1691); Idem, A Satyr against Wooing (London: n.p., 1698); Idem, The Playhouse, a Satyr (London: n.p., 1685).

³Thomas Brown, "A Criticism," in The Works of Mr. Thomas Brown. In Prose, Verse: Serious, Moral & Comical, 4 vols. (London: S. Briscoe, 1707-11), 4:248.

appearance,¹ a type introduced in Molière's Les Précieuses ridicules (1658) and renewed in Les Femmes savantes (1672). By the time "the female wits" erupted onto the theatrical scene, the "learned lady" had become a stereotype. In 1693 Congreve's "poetical" Belinda appeared in The Old Bachelor and his intellectual coquette, Lady Froth, in The Double Dealer (1694).² Thomas Wright had introduced the "scientific" women of The Female Vertuosos the season before Delarivière Manley herself presented the affected poetess, Orinda, in her debut play, The Lost Lover.³

Although Aphra Behn (1640-89) was the first Englishwoman to earn her living by her pen and was the immediate predecessor of the "female wits," women had been active in closet literature since centuries before.⁴ As early as 1363 Katherine of Sutton, abbess of Barking Nunnery, sought to enliven the Easter services by rewriting the liturgical dramas.⁵ The English Renaissance enjoyed a vogue of classical education for the women of the aristocracy. Queen Elizabeth herself

¹Aphra Behn, "Sir Patient Fancy," in The Complete Works of Aphra Behn, 6 vols., ed. Montague Summers (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1967), 4:7-116.

²William Congreve, The Old Bachelor (London: Peter Buck, 1693) [LS, 1:418]; Idem, The Double Dealer (London: Jacob Tonson, 1694) [LS, 1:428].

³Thomas Wright, The Female Vertuosos (London: R. Vincent, 1693); Manley, The Lost Lover.

⁴Nancy Cotton provides a discussion of early women playwrights in England in chapter one, "Renaissance Noblewomen," of Women Playwrights in England, c. 1363-1750 (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1980), pp. 27-54.

⁵Karl Young, The Drama of the Medieval Church, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), 1:164-66, 1:382-84.

translated the chorus from the second act of Seneca's Hercules Oetaeus.¹ Lady Jane Lumley translated Euripides' Iphigeneia in Aulis directly from the Greek original.² Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke, who was Sir Philip Sidney's sister and the editor of The Arcadia, translated the French Senecan dramatist Robert Garnier's Marc-Antoine and had it printed in 1592.³ She also wrote and published an original dramatic dialogue, a short pastoral in honor of Queen Elizabeth titled Thenot and Piers in praise of Astrea. It is believed this was performed on the occasion of a royal visit. Her contemporary Elizabeth Cary, Viscountess of Falkland, produced the first full-length original play, a Senecan tragedy, Miriam, the Fair Queen of Jewry, published in 1612.⁴

Charles I's French queen, Henrietta Maria (1609-69), wrote, directed, and performed in a pastoral and masque at Somerset House in 1626. Some of the dozen ladies-in-waiting who made up the cast donned beards and took parts as men. Despite the scandalized reaction among the English at the Queen's performing in a theatrical performance, she persisted, and gradually amateur theatricals became socially acceptable. She was also the first Queen of England to attend a performance at a

¹Queen Elizabeth I, The Poems of Elizabeth I, ed. Leicester Bradner (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1964).

²Lady Jane Lumley, Iphigeneia in Aulis, ed. Harold H. Child (London: Chiswick Press, 1909).

³Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, Antonie, ed. Alice Luce (Weimar, Germany: E. Felber, 1897).

⁴Elizabeth Cary, Lady Falkland, The Tragedy of Miriam, ed. A.C. Dunstan and W.W. Greg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914).

public theatre. Her practice may well have eased the entrance of actresses on the professional stage following the Restoration.

William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, was a patron of Richard Brome, James Shirley, and Ben Jonson and an amateur playwright himself. Both his daughters, Jane and Elizabeth, dabbled in playwriting, collaborating on two plays (c. 1646)--Pastoral and a comedy with a feminist theme of wives taming their husbands called The Concealed Fansyes.¹ Their contemporary, the Duke's young second wife, became an extremely prolific and openly ambitious dramatist. The twenty-year-old Margaret Lucas followed Henrietta Maria into exile where she met and married Cavendish. He not only condoned her efforts as a writer but advised her and allowed her to publish her works in collections which included nineteen plays. The Duchess's plays were strongly feminist. Youth's Glory and Death's Banquet featured a heroine who was honored among intellectuals. Both Love's Adventures and Bell in Campo celebrated women warriors.² Catherine Trotter may well have been influenced by the Duchess's closet plays. The heroines in her final drama, The Revolution of Sweden (1706) bear a remarkable resemblance to Newcastle's prototypes.³ Though none of the plays in her two collections published in 1662 and 1668 appear to have been staged, there is some question about the authorship of a play titled The Humorous Lovers performed

¹Elizabeth Cavendish and Jane Cavendish, "The Concealed Fansyes," ed. Nathan Comfort Starr, PMLA 46 (1931): 802-38.

²Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, Plays (London: A. Warren, 1662); Idem, Plays, Never Before Printed (London: A. Maxwell, 1668).

³Catherine Trotter, The Revolution of Sweden (London: J. Knapton & G. Strahan, 1706).

at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1667. Theatrical habitué and diarist Samuel Pepys believed it to be the Duchess's, as did other eyewitnesses, but it is now thought to be a play by the Duke, revised by a professional.¹ Previously, in 1640, Shirley had fashioned one of the Duke's sketches for presentation as The Country Captain at the Blackfriars Theatre.²

The Duchess of Newcastle's contemporary and acquaintance Katherine Philips (1632-64) was the first Englishwoman to have a play performed on the public stage. She was ostensibly shy of publication, but Roger Boyle, the Earl of Orrery, persuaded her to allow her translation of Corneille's La Mort de Pompée (1643) to be performed at the Theatre Royal in Dublin in 1663. Her adaptation from French alexandrines into iambic rhymed couplets was a success, and it has been said that the theatre's nickname of Smock Alley dates from this event. Philips's Pompey also played in London. After translating four acts of Corneille's Horace (1640), however, Mrs. Philips died of smallpox. Sir John Denham completed the play, which was also a success. Philips became immortalized in literary circles as "the Matchless Orinda," her poetic pseudonym.³

In 1669, Marcellia, a tragicomedy by Frances Boothby, the first original play by an Englishwoman to be produced, appeared at Drury

¹Samuel Pepys, Pepys on the Restoration Stage, ed. Helen McAfee, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1916), pp. 171-72.

²Cotton, Women Playwrights, p. 40.

³Katherine Philips, Poems By the Most Deservedly Admired Mrs. Katherine Philips The Matchless Orinda. To which is added Monsieur Corneille's Pompey & Horace, Tragedies (London: H. Herringman, 1667).

Lane. Very little is known about Mrs. Boothby, and she may never have written another drama.¹

New information has recently come to light about another contemporary of Aphra Behn's, Elizabeth Polwhele. Mrs. Polwhele wrote The Faithful Virgins (c. 1670), a rhymed tragedy which was apparently performed by the Duke's company. Her comedy The Frolicks (c. 1671), presumably lost, was recently discovered at Cornell University Library. A modernized edition by Robert D. Hume and Judith Milhous was published in 1977.²

The Pair Royal of Coxcombs, written by "Ephelia," was performed at a dancing school (c. 1678), but the few other plays written by women during the Restoration were closet dramas.³ Anne Lee Wharton wrote an unpublished blank verse tragedy about Ovid's love for Julia called Love's Martyr (c. 1685).⁴ Anne Finch, the Countess of Winchelsea, was responsible for two tragedies, Love and Innocence and Aristomenes (1713), never intended for publication.⁵

Aphra Behn (1640-89) was certainly the most important woman author of her time. She was more prolific than any Restoration

¹Frances Boothby, Marcellia; or, The Treacherous Friend (London: Will Cademan & Giles Widdowes, 1670).

²Elizabeth Polwhele, The Frolicks or The Lawyer Cheated, ed. Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977).

³Ephelia [pseud.], The prologue, epilogue, and two songs from Pair Royal of Coxcombs, in Female Poems on Several Occasions (London: William Downing, 1679).

⁴Cotton, Women Playwrights, p. 151.

⁵Anne Finch, Countess of Winchelsea, Miscellany Poems, on Several Occasions (London: J.B., 1713).

dramatist except Dryden, with between eighteen and twenty-two plays produced. She also wrote fourteen original novels, translations from French and Latin, songs, poems, prologues, and epilogues.¹

The facts of Mrs. Behn's early life and even her maiden name are still disputed. The chief source of biographical material is The History of the Life and Memoirs of Mrs. Behn, "written by one of the Fair Sex." It has been discredited by several scholars as fiction rather than fact, and has been attributed to hack writer Charles Gildon, who published a collection of her works for which it served as an introduction, in 1696.² The author of the Life and Memoirs claims to have been a friend of Mrs. Behn's, but Robert Adams Day argues in his article, "Aphra Behn's First Biographer," that the author was Mrs. Behn herself--in which case parts of it may still have been embellished or fanciful.³

Aphra Amies (Johnson or Cooper) was born around 1640, probably near Canterbury in Kent. It is generally accepted that Mrs. Behn spent part of her childhood in Surinam, which was the setting for her novel Oroonoko (1688). She married a Dutch merchant, Mr. Behn, in 1658 in England, but was apparently widowed by the time she was sent as a government agent (spy, that is) to Holland in 1666. She was not reimbursed for her efforts, during which she ran up debts and had to spend a brief time in prison. It was apparently through the inter-

¹Behn, The Complete Works,

²Idem, The Histories and Novels (London: S. Briscoe, 1696).

³Robert Adams Day, "Aphra Behn's First Biographer," Studies in Bibliography 22 (1969): 227-40.

cession of Sir Thomas Killigrew, patentee of the King's Company, that she was released. He may have been the connection through which she began to write for the theatre professionally in 1670.

Mrs. Behn's comedies were enormously successful, particularly The Rover (1677) and The Emperor of the Moon (1687), both of which were revived often, into the eighteenth century.¹ She bore the brunt of much criticism in her unique position, attacked for the indecency in her comedies and allegedly in her private life. Mrs. Behn did not apologize for her personal lifestyle but did complain that her plays were no more salacious than those of her male colleagues. She had the respect of her peers Dryden, Ravenscroft, and Lee and was Otway's mentor. After her death, Southerne dramatized two of her novels. The Fatal Marriage (1694) was an adaptation of The History of the Nun (1689), and Oroonoko was produced in 1695.² Behn's The Younger Brother also was produced posthumously in the season when the "female wits" made their debuts.³

Aphra Behn was the idol of "the female wits." Each of them paid her homage in their commendatory epistles and through emulation. Catherine Trotter's first play, Agnes de Castro, was based on Behn's novel of the same name.⁴ Delarivière Manley's independent life seems

¹Aphra Behn, The Rover (London: John Amery, 1677) [LS, 1:256]; Idem, The Emperor of the Moon (London: Joseph Knight & Francis Saunders, 1678) [LS, 1:356].

²Thomas Southerne, The Fatal Marriage (London: Jacob Tonson, 1694) [LS, 1:432]; Idem, Oroonoko (London: H. Playford, 1696) [LS, 1:454].

³Aphra Behn, The Younger Brother; or, the Amorous Jilt (London: J. Harris, 1696) [LS, 1:459].

⁴Trotter, Agnes de Castro [LS, 1:455].

modeled on that of her courageous predecessor. Mary Pix's comedies were crafted to Behn's intrigue formula. As the oldest of the "female wits," Pix could have attended the premieres of The Lucky Chance (1686) and The Emperor of the Moon (1687) and the posthumously produced The Widow Ranter (1690). All three could have seen a revival of Behn's only tragedy, Abdelazer (1695), Thomas Southerne's adaptation of Oroonoko in 1695, The Younger Brother (posthumously produced in 1696), and possibly revivals of The Rover and The False Count, which were reprinted in 1697.¹ Pix's The Spanish Wives utilized one of the plot lines of the latter.

As a pioneer, Behn made a breakthrough which women writers through the centuries have looked to for precedent and inspiration. Appreciation of Behn's significance continues in modern times, as in Virginia Woolf's essay A Room of One's Own (1929): "Aphra Behn proved [to women writers] that money could be made by writing ... and so by degrees writing became not merely a sign of folly and a distracted mind, but was of practical importance." Woolf exclaims: "All women together ought to let flowers fall on the tomb of Aphra Behn which is, scandalously but rather appropriately, in Westminster Abbey, for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds."²

The single event which most directly accounts for the arrival upon the scene of four untried women playwrights in the season of

¹Aphra Behn, The Lucky Chance (London: W. Canning, 1687) [LS, 1:348]; Idem, The Widow Ranter (London: James Knapton, 1690) [LS, 1:377]; Idem, Abdelazer (London: n.p., 1677) [LS, 1:443-44].

²Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (New York: Harcourt & Brace, 1929), pp. 111-14.

1695-96 was the secession of Thomas Betterton and the majority of the leading players from the United Company, which resulted in the coexistence and competition between two rival theatres, opening up a market for new plays. The first woman to have a play produced after the death of Aphra Behn was the as-yet-unidentified "young Lady" who wrote under the pseudonym "Ariadne." She Ventures and He Wins, a comedy, opened the first full season of the Betterton Company.¹ It is peculiar, with all the excitement this event must have generated, that the author should have disappeared from the scene so abruptly. Even though the play failed, there must have been a buzz through the theatrical community as to who "Ariadne" was. But none of the gossip has come down to us, nor is Ariadne included in The Female Wits. It is possible that the failure of the play discouraged the fledgling author. It has also been suggested that the sexual innuendoes in the prologue may have discouraged a "lady" from further engagement with the theatre.²

There is certainly not sufficient basis for an attribution of She Ventures to Mary Pix, but of the women writers in the ten-year period, she comes closest to being a candidate.

The Unnatural Mother (1698) has been attributed to Ariadne by Allardyce Nicoll, for no apparent reason, except that both plays were designated as by "A Young Lady."³ There is no resemblance between the

¹Ariadne [pseud.], She Ventures and He Wins (London: Henry Rhodes, 1696) [LS, 1:452].

²Paula Louise Barbour, "A Critical Edition of Mary Pix's The Spanish Wives" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1975), p. 141. Prologues and epilogues were frequently not written by the playwrights, but were supplied by other writers; Pierre Motteux, who is credited with the epilogue, was just such a "house" writer.

³Allardyce Nicoll, Restoration Drama (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), p. 161.

frothy intrigue comedy, She Ventures, and the villainess tragedy mentioned above, which is closer in style and structure to Delarivière Manley's The Royal Mischief (see below, pp. 158-70). Manley herself is an unlikely candidate for She Ventures, since she refers to The Lost Lover (1696), a comedy with serious elements, as her debut.¹

Catherine Trotter, though she did write one comedy, Love at a Loss (1701), confessed to Lady Sarah Piers in the dedication, "I never thought of making any pretence to a talent for comedy, but writ this when the town had been little pleased with tragedy entire."² Jane Wiseman's first and only known play was a tragedy, Antiochus the Great; or, The Fatal Relapse (1702), and in 1706, a tragedy by a "Young Lady," The Faithful General (1706), based on Fletcher's The Loyal Subject, was produced.³ But during this period there was no woman writer of intrigue comedies in the manner of Behn except Pix.

All that is known about Ariadne is the information she volunteered in the preface to She Ventures. She refers to "inclinations I had for scribbling from my childhood." Similarly, it may be recalled, Pix's dedication to The Spanish Wives reminded the recipient, "You have known me since my childhood, and my inclination to poetry." The preface to She Ventures is self-deprecatory: "I believe the best apology I can make for myself, that it is the error of a weak woman's pen... one altogether unlearned, ignorant of any, but for her mother

¹Manley, The Lost Lover, preface.

²Catherine Trotter, Love at a Loss; or, Most Votes Carry It (London: William Turner, 1701).

³Jane Wiseman, Antiochus the Great; or, The Fatal Relapse (London: W. Turner, 1702); Anon., The Faithful General (London: R. Wellington, 1706).

tongue, and very far from being perfect in that too." The prologue to Pix's Ibrahim of the same season confides, "I am very sensible those that will be so unkind to criticize upon what falls from a woman's pen, may soon find more faults than I am ever able to answer." There is also a plea of weakness in the epilogue of the same work. The plot of She Ventures, which concerns a plucky young heiress who sets out to defy the marriage customs and find a husband who will love her for herself and not her fortune, who seeks a marriage based on true values, is philosophically similar to Behn's comedies, as were Pix's. Ariadne was writing privately during Behn's time. "When the Island enjoyed the blessing of Mrs. Behn, even then I had much ado to keep my muse from showing her impertinence."¹ Mrs. Pix was the only member of the "female wits" who was an adult when Behn was alive.² Barbour, without making explicit comparison, evaluates Ariadne among her peers. "It was the unfortunately still anonymous 'Ariadne' who, along with Pix showed the greatest dramatic potential."³

There is one source that may provide a hint as to the actual identity of Ariadne, and that is Manley's New Atalantis. A character named "Ariadne" is described as having an affair with "a Person of Poetical Dignity; he first made her a Muse, and she in return made him a Fortune." The key identifies the gentleman as Congreve, and Ariadne as Lady Lucy Wharton (née Loftis) the second wife of Sir

¹Ariadne, She Ventures, preface.

²Pix was twenty-two when Behn died.

³Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 129.

Thomas Wharton, the prominent Whig politician.¹

Several factors contributed to the gradual decline of the United Company from the death of Charles II in 1685 to the final break-up in 1695, among them the decline in royal patronage, poor attendance, a stagnant repertoire, dissension among the players, and financial mismanagement. By the season of 1690-91 profits were so poor that Betterton changed his status in the company from shareholder to salaried player in September 1691. In December 1692, two leading players died within a week of each other. The handsome young leading man, William Montfort, was killed in a duel, while leading comic actor Anthony Leigh succumbed to a fever. Business continued to decline, but the disastrous blow came when in 1693 it was discovered that patentee Alexander Davenant had been defrauding the company. He fled the country to avoid arrest, leaving two businessmen, Charles Rich and Sir Thomas Skipwith, holding controlling shares. Rich took over the management, and his policies led to the actor's revolt headed by Betterton in December of 1694.

The events are well-documented by primary sources. Colley Cibber, who chose to remain with the patent company, described the split in his autobiography;² company prompter John Downes recorded it in his history of the theatre of his time;³ and it was the subject of

¹Delarivière Manley, "New Atalantis," in The Novels of Mary Delarivière Manley, ed. Patricia Koster, facsimile ed., 2 vols. (Gainesville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1971), 1:181-82.

²Colley Cibber, An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, ed. B.R.S. Fone (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968), pp. 102-109.

³John Downes, Roscius Anglicanus, ed. Montague Summers (1708; reprint ed., New York: Fortune Press, 1928), pp. 43-44.

A Comparison of the Two Stages (1702).¹ Succinct accounts are given by modern scholars Allardyce Nicoll and Leslie Hotson.² Nicoll has re-printed copies of portions of the actual documents effecting the break-up in A History of English Drama.³

The petition of the players presented fifteen articles of grievances to the Lord Chamberlain detailing "the unjust oppressions and Violations of almost all the By lawes Customes and usage that has been established among us from the beginning." Its complaint was that "the Players under the new management are treated as slaves."⁴ The signatories were: Betterton, Underhill, Kynaston, Bowen, Williams, Doggett, Bright, Sandford, Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Bracegirdle, Mrs. Verbruggen, Mrs. Bowman, Mrs. Betterton, Mrs. Ellen Leigh, and John Bowman.

The patentees promptly replied with an article by article refutation, casting aspersions on Betterton's own integrity. The following March, however, they agreed to come around on several points, but by then Betterton had made arrangements to renovate the old theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and had applied for a separate license, which was granted by King William and issued by the Lord Chamberlain March 25, 1695.

¹[Charles Gildon], A Comparison of the Two Stages, ed. Arthur Freeman (1702; reprint ed., New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1973).

²Nicoll, History, 1:335-36; Leslie Hotson, The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), pp. 292-95.

³Nicoll, History, 1:368-97.

⁴*Ibid.*, 1:368-70.

The shortened season resumed with definite advantage being gained by the runaway company, despite their having to resort to a small, poorly equipped facility. Not only was public sympathy with the rebels, but they had the good fortune to open with Congreve's Love for Love, an enormous success.¹ A revival of Behn's Abdelazer did not do well as an opener for the Drury Lane. After a packed first night, attendance fell off sharply.² The general predicament of the depleted company was summed up in A Comparison between the Two Stages:

Ramble: twas almost impossible to muster up a sufficient number to take all the Parts of any Play; and of them so few were tolerable, that a Play must of necessity be damn'd that had not extraordinary favour from the Audience. No fewer then sixteen (most of the old standing) went away; and with them the very beauty and vigour of the Stage; they who were left behind being for the most part Learners, Boys and Girls, a very unequal match for them who revolted.³

The necessarily intense competition between the companies in a time that could barely support one company opened up the market for innovation and novelty to attract the already dwindling patronage. The partial first season of the separation, which had been suspended in December 1694 owing to the death of Queen Mary, saw fifteen new plays, and the two following seasons saw twenty-one each.⁴

An overview of the known productions of the season of 1695-96 by the Betterton and Rich companies given in the following chart provides a picture of the setting onto which the female wits emerged.

¹William Congreve, Love for Love (London: Jacob Tonson, 1695) [LS, 1:445-46].

²LS, 1:443-44; Cibber, An Apology, p. 109.

³[Gildon], A Comparison, p. 7.

⁴Hume, Development of English Drama, p. 380.

OVERVIEW OF THE LONDON SEASON OF 1695-96¹

September 1695	
Ariadne, <u>She Ventures and He Wins</u> [LIF] ²	Thomas Scott, <u>The Mock Marriage</u> [DL] ³ George Powell, <u>Bonduca; or, The British Worthy</u> [DL] ⁴
October 1695	
	Robert Gould, <u>The Rival Sisters; or, The Violence of Love</u> [DL] ⁵
November 1695	
	Thomas D'Urfey, <u>The Comical History of Don Quixote, the Third Part</u> [DG] ⁶ Thomas Southerne, <u>Oroonoko</u> [DL] ⁷
December 1695	
Catherine Trotter, <u>Agnes de Castro</u> [DL] ⁸	Elkanah Settle, <u>Philaster; or, Love Lies a Bleeding</u> [DL] ⁹ Thomas Dilke, <u>The Lover's Luck</u> [LIF] ¹⁰

(continued)

December 1695 (cont'd)	
	George Etherege, <u>Love in a Tub; or, The Comical Revenge</u> [LIF?] ¹¹ John Banks, <u>Cyrus the Great; or, The Tragedy of Love</u> [LIF] ¹² George Granville, <u>The She-Gallants</u> [LIF] ¹³
January 1696	
	Colley Cibber, <u>Love's Last Shift; or, The Fool in Fashion</u> [DL] ¹⁴
February 1696	
Aphra Behn, <u>The Younger Brother; or, The Amorous Jilt</u> [DL] ¹⁵	John Dryden Jr., <u>The Husband His Own Cuckold</u> [LIF] ¹⁵ [Charles Hopkins], <u>Neglected Virtue; or, The Unhappy Conquerors</u> [DL] ¹⁷
March 1696	
Delarivière Manley, <u>The Lost Lover; or, The Jealous Husband</u> [DL] ¹⁸	[Joseph Harris], <u>The City Bride; or, The Merry Cuckold</u> [LIF] ¹⁹

(continued)

April 1696	
Delarivière Manley, <u>The Royal Mischief</u> [LIF] ²²	Thomas Donget, <u>The Country Wake</u> [LIF] ²⁰ [Richard Norton], <u>Pausanias, The Betrayer of His Country</u> [DL] ²¹ Robert Howard and John Dryden, <u>The Indian Queen</u> [DG] ²³
June 1696	
Mary Pix, Ibrahim, <u>The Thirteenth Emperor of the Turks</u> [DL] ²⁴	Pierre Motteux, <u>Love's a Jest</u> [LIF] ²⁵ [George Powell], <u>The Cornish Comedy</u> [DG] ²⁶
July 1696	
	Thomas Scott, <u>The Unhappy Kindness; or, A Fruitless Revenge</u> [DL] ²⁷ John Dryden and Nathaniel Lee, <u>Oedipus, King of Thebes</u> [LIF] ²⁸
August 1696	
Mary Pix, <u>The Spanish Wives</u> [DG] ²⁹	

(continued)

¹Bracketed acronyms following play titles denote the theatres at which the plays were produced: DG = Dorset Gardens, DL = Drury Lane, and LIF = Lincoln Inn Fields. The plays of Manley, Pix, and Trotter which appeared in this season are more fully synopsized and analyzed in the following chapters than those of later seasons.

²Ariadne, She Ventures and He Wins [LS, 1:452]. This intrigue comedy was a failure.

³Thomas Scott, The Mock Marriage (London: H. Rhodes et al., 1696) [LS, 1:452]. This single-plot comedy, featuring a reformed rake, was favorably received according to the author's preface.

⁴George Powell, Bonduca; or, The British Worthy (London: R. Bently, 1696) [LS, 1:452-53]. This was Powell's adaptation of the Beaumont and Fletcher tragedy about the legendary Queen of Britain who led her forces herself in attempts to stave off the Roman invaders. The heroine was described thus: "Our Mighty Queen! the war-like Bonduca,/ That greatly towers above the humble Sex,/ Aspires to more than Man, and Soars the Hero" (p. 1). The prologue of this entertainment, to which songs were added, discussed the open rivalry of the companies. "Between us and the other Theatre/ There is proclaimed and still maintained a War,/ And all, but knocking out of brains, is fair." The youth and energy of the young company were stressed, as opposed to one "Old, decrepid player," i.e., Betterton.

⁵Robert Gould, The Rival Sisters; or, The Violence of Love (London: R. Bently, 1696) [LS, 1:453]. The tragedy concerned two sisters in love with the same man--one good and one evil. The former is poisoned and the latter struck by lightning. The hero's own sister was also allotted a gory on-stage death from multiple stab wounds. Gould also wrote The Playhouse, a Satyr.

⁶Thomas D'Urfey, The Comical History of Don Quixote, the Third Part (London: S. Briscoe, 1696) [LS, 1:453-54]. The spectacle did not succeed, although its two predecessors had. The author complained in his preface to the printed version that this was owing to ill-management and poor performances due to being rushed on. It seems this was not an uncommon complaint against the Rich Company. The prologue to Bonduca alluded to such a charge: "We're blamed for raising in one night what they [Betterton's company]/ in thirty tedious days can scarce display."

(continued)

- ⁷ Southerne, Oroonoko [LS, 1:454-55]. Southerne adapted Aphra Behn's novel of 1688 about a noble slave in Surinam, adding a non-sequitur comic subplot. The result was the first solid success of the season for Drury Lane. Congreve, who was the chief writer for the rival house, contributed the epilogue.
- ⁸ Trotter, Agnes de Castro [LS, 1:455]. Trotter was the first of "the female wits" to make her debut.
- ⁹ Elkanah Settle, Philaster; or, Love Lies a Bleeding (London: R. Bently, 1695). This was an adaptation of the Beaumont and Fletcher tragedy.
- ¹⁰ Thomas Dilke, The Lover's Luck (London: Henry Playford & Benjamin Tooke, 1696) [LS, 1:455-56]. The comedy about a rake who gives up his libertine ways to win his true love was a solid success for Lincoln's Inn Fields.
- ¹¹ George Etherege, Love in a Tub; or, The Comical Revenge (London: Henry Herringman, 1667) [LS, 1:456]. The London Stage cites a letter referring to a production of this comedy, but it is not known which company brought out the 1664 mixed-genre play. It would most likely be Lincoln's Inn Fields, whose resident playwright Congreve was influenced by Etherege.
- ¹² John Banks, Cyrus the Great; or, The Tragedy of Love (London: Richard Bently, 1696) [LS, 1:456]. This blood-and-thunder tragedy had trouble getting on at Lincoln's Inn Fields. It seems to have caused a minor mutiny in the ranks of the company. The recalcitrant players may have found it excessively gory. The play opened on a battlefield covered with bodies and featured severed limbs. Like Bonduca, it also boasted a warrior queen.
- ¹³ George Granville, The She-Gallants (London: Henry Playford & Benjamin Tooke, 1696) [LS, 1:457]. The fate of this comedy of manners was proof of the growing power of the feminine faction in the audience. Downes reported in Roscius Anglicanus (p. 45) that it was "Extraordinary [sic] Witty, and well Acted; but offending the Ears of some Ladies who set up for Chastity, it made its exit."

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- ¹⁴ Colley Cibber, Love's Last Shift; or, The Fool in Fashion (London: H. Rhodes, 1696) [LS, 1:457-58]. Undoubtedly the most famous play to open in the season was Love's Last Shift, which is often considered the first sentimental comedy. Cibber's status as an actor had risen in the Rich company after the departure of the established stars, and he fashioned the play as a vehicle for himself. Although it was not as innovative as it sometimes claimed, its popularity caused it to be revived frequently, perpetuating its influence. (Vanbrugh's The Relapse, produced by the same company the following season, was an answer play--a cynical rejoinder--making a last stand for Restoration comedy).
- ¹⁵ John Dryden Jr., The Husband His Own Cuckold (London: J. Tonson, 1696) [LS, 1:458]. The title of the famous Dryden's son's only play was misleading. While two separate plots of cuckoldry are hatched, neither is consummated.
- ¹⁶ Behn, Younger Brother [LS, 1:459]. Presented posthumously under the auspices of Charles Gildon at Drury Lane, according to Gildon's dedication, it appears to have been another instance of a play being squelched by a faction in the audience.
- ¹⁷ [Charles Hopkins], Neglected Virtue; or, The Unhappy Conquerors (London: H. Rhodes, 1696) [LS, 1:459]. Actor Hildebrand Horden's dedication also complained this play's failure was due to a faction, "those wide-mouth'd Curs the Criticks." Horden disclaimed authorship of the play, attributed to Charles Hopkins, but Pierre Motteux's epilogue clearly implicates him: "I think this Horden's guilty of a Plot,/ This Plays' a Plot on you" (lines 49-50).
- ¹⁸ Manley, Lost Lover [LS, 1:459-60]. Mrs. Manley's first and only comedy, according to her own admission, did not last long enough to provide an author's benefit.
- ¹⁹ Joseph Harris, The City Bride; or, The Merry Cuckold (London: n.p., 1696) [LS, 1:460]. This farcical treatment of John Webster's A Cure for a Cuckold was reportedly performed by the younger actors of the Betterton company during Lent.

(continued)

- ²⁰ Thomas Dogget, The Country Wake (London: S. Briscoe, 1696) [LS, 1:461]. The farce provided a juicy role for its author, the famous clown, Thomas Dogget. A shortened version was revived as an afterpiece well into the next century.
- ²¹ [Richard Norton], Pausanius, The Betrayer of His Country (London: A Roper et al., 1696) [LS, 1:461]. Brought out under the auspices of Thomas Southerne, this was a deliberate attempt to model a tragedy on the French neoclassic mode.
- ²² Manley, The Royal Mischief [LS, 1:461]. The heroic-style tragedy was in marked contrast to Pausanius, offered by the rival company at about the same time.
- ²³ Richard Howard and John Dryden, The Indian Queen (London: Henry Herringman, 1696) [LS, 1:461]. The revival of this heroic tragedy is known about through an advertisement in a paper calling attention to the attendance of the Venetian ambassadors. It is probable that there were more revivals of earlier plays than are documented.
- ²⁴ Pix, Ibrahim [LS, 1:462]. This was yet another example of heroic tragedy being revived in this period.
- ²⁵ Pierre Motteux, Love's a Jest (London: P. Buck et al., 1696) [LS, 1:462-63]. The lively comedy, which was a success, featured among other elements a "Bookish" Teading lady who would rather read than flirt.
- ²⁶ [George Powell], The Cornish Comedy (London: D. Brown et al., 1696) [LS 1:463]. The piece faced some opposition from women on the grounds of obscenity, which was labeled "hypocrisy" in the preface. The dedication to Christopher Rich commiserated with all he had had to put up with from the mutineers, Betterton and company.
- ²⁷ Thomas Scott, The Unhappy Kindness; or, A Fruitless Revenge (London: H. Rhodes et al., 1697). Scott, whose comedy The Mock Marriage had succeeded earlier in the season, had less success with turning Fletcher's A Wife for a Month, a tragicomedy, into a straight tragedy.

(continued)

²⁸ John Dryden and Nathaniel Lee, Oedipus, King of Thebes (London: R. Bently & M. Magnes, 1696) [LS, 1:463]. Again, it is an indirect source, a poem tying in the appearance of Betterton to a documented event of 1696, which suggests a revival of this tragedy from the mid-Restoration.

²⁹ Pix, The Spanish Wives [LS, 1:464]. Pix's comedy is the last recorded production of the season. The complete production schedule for the season is not known. The chart is based on information in The London Stage, 1:452-64.

Chapter II

CATHERINE TROTTER

A biography of Catherine Trotter appeared just two years after her death in 1749.¹ It served as the preface to a collection of her works, edited by Thomas Birch, an eminent historian who rose high in the Church of England and also became Secretary of the Royal Society. The subjects of his studies included: Robert Boyle, founder of the Royal Society; Henry, Prince of Wales; John Milton; Sir Walter Raleigh; and the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.² He obviously felt Mrs. Cockburn (Trotter's name after her marriage) worthy to be included in such company. In the preface to The Works of Mrs. Catherine Cockburn, Theological, Moral, Dramatic and Poetical (1751), he stated:

Posterity at least will be solicitous to know whom they will owe the most demonstrative and perspicacious reasonings, upon subjects of eternal importance; and her sex is entitled to the fullest information about one, who has done so much to honor them, and raised our ideas about their intellectual powers. (Life, 1:i-ii)

The Works, in two volumes, is not complete. Emphasizing the religious and philosophical treatises of her later life, it does not

¹Catherine Trotter [Cockburn], The Works of Mrs. Catherine Cockburn, Theological, Moral, Dramatic and Poetical, with an Account of the Life of the Author by Thomas Birch, 2 vols. (London: J. & P. Knapton, 1751). Specific references to this source will be parenthetically noted in the text as Life or Works.

²The Dictionary of National Biography, 22 vols., eds. Sir Leslie Stephens and Sir Sidney Lee (London: Oxford University Press, 1917), 2:530-32 (hereinafter cited as DNB).

mention her early novel, Olinda's Adventures (1693), and includes only one play, The Fatal Friendship (1698) (Works, 2:463-551). This tragedy was Mrs. Trotter's second play. It was then and is now considered the best of the five plays she wrote between 1695 and 1706.¹

Birch's biography has been the source used by subsequent scholars. His credentials as a scholar and historian are as impeccable as one could wish, with allowance for the bias of an admirer. The list of subscribers included: the Archbishop of Canterbury, the President of the Royal Society, and a liberal sprinkling of dukes, duchesses, countesses, and earls. Mrs. Trotter-Cockburn had a hand in the edition herself. Birch explains: "She [Cockburn] assisted in this book, but her death prevented her being editor" (Life, 1:xliv). He goes on to say that in one sense the book has benefited, as he was able to include her personal correspondence, which her modesty would probably have excluded.

The only other significant contemporary account of episodes in Catherine Trotter's life was anecdotes about events in her youth according to her sometime friend and fellow "female wit," Delarivière Manley, in her novels The New Atalantis series (1709-11) and The Adventures of Rivella (1714). The aspersions therein, reflecting upon Mrs. Trotter's moral character, were summarily discredited by Birch (Life, 1:xlvi).

Catherine Trotter was born in London, August 16, 1679. Her father was David Trotter, a Scots gentleman and commander in the Royal

¹The others are: Agnes de Castro (1695), Love at a Loss; or, Most Votes Carry It (1700), The Unhappy Penitent (1701), and The Revolution of Sweden (1706).

Navy during the reign of Charles II. He was highly regarded, and had been nicknamed "Honest David." In 1683, he embarked, with the purpose of making his fortune, to convoy the fleet of the Turkey Company, but he died of the plague en route, early in 1684; and the ship's purser absconded with his effects. Shortly after this, the goldsmith to whom he had entrusted the major portion of his fortune went bankrupt. Charles II had awarded Trotter a pension, but it ceased upon his death, leaving his widow and two young daughters impoverished (Life, 1:ii-iii).

Sarah Ballenden Trotter was related to the Maitland and Drumond families, prominent among Scottish nobility, and she raised her daughters in the genteel poverty accorded to "poor relations." The older daughter married Doctor Inglis, Physician General to the Army. Catherine, who was only five years old at the time of her father's death, showed early signs of being a prodigy, and received encouragement from her uncle, who was also a commander in the Navy. It is recounted that Catherine's studies included French, which she taught herself, and Latin and logic, in which she was tutored (Life, 1:ii-iv).

Perhaps it was this encouragement, combined with financial pressure, that prompted Trotter to reach out for connections in the literary and publishing world at the age of fourteen. In the year 1693, she sent verses to Bevil Higgons, an up-and-coming young man of letters, fulsomely praising him and celebrating his recovery from small-pox. She included herself among the "numbers, that thy friendship claim," and urged him, "Go on, brave youth, in all thy noblest arts,/ And every virtue; exercise thy parts./ The world much will expect and claim from thee,/ But most thy gratitude is due to me" (Works, 2:557).

It seems evident that they were already acquainted. Higgons reciprocated with verses intended for the publication of Agnes de Castro (1696), which arrived too late, but were included with The Fatal Friendship (1698).

An even bolder stroke was her putting into the hands of Samuel Briscoe, a publisher of popular fiction and plays, her epistolary novel, Olinda's Adventures (1693), which appears to have been partly biographical and was published anonymously. Later editions that came out in 1718 and 1724 carried her name, as Robert Adams Day points out in ascribing Olinda to Trotter in his introduction to the 1969 reprint edition. The addition of Trotter's name could not well have been used as a selling point a dozen years after her marriage and subsequent retirement, but this time Olinda was surrounded by a collection which included the familiar letters and epistolary fiction of Dryden, Etherege, Behn, Dennis, Farquhar, Manley, and others.¹ Whether she received any of the proceeds from the later editions is not known, but they came out during financially difficult times for the Cockburns, due to repercussions arising from the Reverend's act of conscience in refusing to take the oath of allegiance to George I until 1726. In any case, Trotter made no known effort to deny the attribution. Its absence from The Works may be for the same reason, that of limited space, that Birch gave for not including all of her plays (Life, 1:1).

¹Robert Adams Day, introduction to Catherine Trotter, Olinda's Adventures; or, The Amours of a Young Lady (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, UCLA, 1969), p. 11.

The heroine of Olinda finds herself in the same circumstances as Birch described in the official biography, and of the same age as Trotter was when it came out. Day sees the work as a romanticized autobiography: "Olinda, like Mrs. Trotter, is a wit and something of a beauty in adolescence, a fatherless child living with a prudent mother who is anxious to marry her off advantageously, and a solicitor of favors from noble or wealthy connections" (Life, 1:iv). The framework of the epistolary account itself is an autobiographic effort on the part of Olinda at the request of Cleander, her platonic lover and confidant:

Complying with the request you've often made me, of giving you a particular account of all that has happened to me in my life.... But I believe you'll excuse me if I pass over all that occurred till I was thirteen, for about this time I began to fancy myself a woman.¹

The letters reveal Olinda's relationship with a goldsmith, dubbed Berontes, with whom her mother would make a match, but whose affection she does not reciprocate, and Cleomidon, a dashing noble suitor, to whom she is strongly inclined, but who is married.

The novel ends with Olinda writing to end Cleomidon's courtship. As for Cleander himself, she characterizes their relationship with a rather sententious declaration:

Women may no longer scruple to bestow their friendship upon a worthy man, for fear of misconstructions; both sexes will find their advantages by it. Yours is more capable to instruct and inform our minds, than the wisest of our own; and ours will be more apt to curb that licentiousness which men usually encourage one another in; and what happiness will it be for us to see ourselves the instruments of all men's becoming good, and all women wise?²

¹Ibid., p. 134.

²Ibid., pp. 194-95.

There is a substantially different account of Olinda/Trotter's relationship with Cleander in Delarivière Manley's own fictionalized autobiographical fragment, The Adventures of Rivella. The "key" to "Rivella" identifies Rivella's "Sister Authoress," Calista, as Trotter.¹ (Calista was also the character name assigned to Trotter in The Female Wits [1696].) "Rivella's" character Cleander appears to be the same as Olinda's, John Tilly, the deputy warden of Fleet Prison. According to the vignette, Trotter's relationship with him had blossomed into something more worldly in her later adolescence. The story was that Rivella was approached by Calista to ask her estranged husband, John Manley, to intercede in a court case coming up in which Cleander stood accused of misdemeanors in his wardship of the prison. Rivella refused to do so until she met the defendant face-to-face. The encounter was one of immediate mutual attraction, and Tilly, though married, embarked on a long-lasting affair with Rivella. He incidentally confessed that it was Calista with whom he was first unfaithful to his wife.

Birch's answer to this well-known piece of gossip was that the story was concocted by Manley out of spite for having been ostracized by Trotter because of her licentiousness. It is true that it would have been ill-advised for a single woman of gentility to continue an association with a wanton who lived openly with a married man. Whether Manley's version is pure scandal or Birch's a whitewash cannot be

¹Delarivière Manley, "The Adventures of Rivella; or, The History of the Author of The Atalantis" (1714), in The Novels of Mary Delarivière Manley, 2 vols., ed. Patricia Koster (Gainesville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1971), 2:"key." In-text citations of Manley's novels (1705-14) refer to this edition. The original pagination within the works is retained in citations.

known, but, as Day notes:

The Adventures of Rivella (1714), may be entirely unreliable; but its author was certainly well acquainted with Mrs. Trotter, and what she says of her life in the 1690's, what is narrated in Olinda, and what Mrs. Trotter's scholarly memoirist Thomas Birch relates are similar in outline.¹

This rift occurred late in 1697, after The Female Wits had come out.

By the middle of her sixteenth year, in December 1695, Trotter saw her first play produced at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane.² Agnes de Castro was a tragedy based on the novel by Aphra Behn of the same name, written in 1688. Manley wrote a commendatory poem for the publication of the play. The following season, both Trotter and Mary Pix wrote commendatory verses for Manley's The Royal Mischief, which was published in 1696. Both poems were militantly feminist in tone. Trotter, while maintaining that it was she who had broken the ice, being the first to have been produced, praised Manley's work above her own.

Th'Attempt was brave, how happy your success
The Men with shame, our Sex with Pride confess.
For us you've vanquisht, though the toyl was yours,
You were our Champion and the Glory ours.
Well you've maintained our equal right in Fame,
To which vain Man had quite engrossed the claim.
I knew my force too weak and but assayed
The Borders of their Empire to invade,
I incite a greater genius to my aid.
The War begun, you generously pursued,
With double Arms you every way subdued,
Our Title cleared, nor can a doubt remain,
Unless in which you'll greater Conquest gain,
The Comic or the loftier Tragic strain.
The Men o'ercome, will quit the Fields
Where they have lost their Hearts, the Lawrel yield.

¹Day, intro to Trotter, Olinda, p. iv.

²LS, 1:445.

Trotter, genteel and intellectual, and Pix, much older, and a merchant's wife, seem an unlikely pair, but the two sustained a friendship apparently at least until they both ended their playwriting careers in 1706. There are several references to them in tandem in contemporary documents (see below, pp. 198-99), and they co-contributed to two other collections of poems--The Nine Muses (1700) and Sarah-Fyge-Egerton's Poems on Several Occasions (1706).

The success of Agnes de Castro and the dubious compliment of being included in the popular satire established Trotter's place among London's prominent literati. The marriage which properly would have been arranged for her by this time in her life seems to have been put in abeyance. It is hard to believe that there were no opportunities. In addition to her breeding and aristocratic connections, Trotter was said to have been a beauty in her youth--petite, bright-eyed, and of delicate complexion (Life, 1:xlvi). Even her intelligence cannot have been much of a detriment in the comparatively liberal circle in which she now moved. Perhaps she was able to stave off financial necessity through her earnings or patronage, but the strength of her independent spirit was more likely a determining factor.

In a letter to her friend and long-time correspondent George Burnet, she replied to his question about when she planned to settle herself: "As I never had thought toward it but for one, and there are many obstacles against that, I believe I shall end my days as I am. Indeed, I have always been very fearful of putting my happiness entirely in the power of any one" (Works, 2:186). She reiterated that fear in a letter to another suitor only shortly before accepting Mr.

Cockburn. In his case, it appears, from her correspondence the summer before their marriage, that she was the more aggressive wooer.

It is open to surmise as to who was the "one" she previously considered a long-term commitment with. Was it Tilly, her first flame, or Lord Halifax, with whom she was also linked in gossip (again by Mrs. Manley)?¹ By the time Trotter married in 1708 at the age of twenty-eight, her mother's pension had been restored by Queen Anne, and she was free to make her "love-match" (Life, 1:111). Birch explains her choice, a drastic departure in lifestyle, as that, having found "too general a libertinism among men," she had come to the conclusion that "the best security of her happiness in the conjugal state would be the choice of a clergyman" (Life, 1:xxxiii).

The change from the precocious Mrs. Trotter to the sententious Mrs. Cockburn was not as sudden as it first appears. As early as 1702 Trotter wrote her first philosophic treatise, A Defense of Locke's Essay on Human Understanding, and her plays became increasingly moralistic.

During her ten-year career in the theatre, Catherine Trotter fraternized with the leading literary lights of the day. Her youthful confidence overcame any shyness about soliciting the favors of prominent writers. Agnes de Castro boasted a prologue by no less a luminary than the venerable Wycherley, "at the Author's request." In 1697 she sent Congreve a congratulatory verse on The Mourning Bride, aware that he

¹Manley, "Memoirs of Europe," in The Novels, 1:289. Koster divides the four volumes beginning with "Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality, of both sexes. From the New Atalantis, an Island in the Mediterranean" into the designations "New Atlantis" 1 and 2, and "Memoirs of Europe" 1 and 2.

had previously received encomiums from the likes of Dryden:

Had heav'n bestowed on me half Sappho's flame
 This noble theme had gain'd me larger fame;
 For none can think great Congreve's to extend
 Or praising thee, ought but their own intend.

 How dare I aim at such a dangerous height
 A task, which well might Dryden's muse engage.
 (Works, 2:564-65)

He was delighted and responded with:

I can never enough acknowledge the honour you have done me....
 it is the first thing, that ever happened to me, upon which I
 should make it my choice to be vain.... It is but this moment
 that I received your verses; and had scarce been transported
 with the reading of them, when they brought me the play from
 the press printed off... and all the satisfaction that I can
 take, and all the sacrifice that I can make to you, is only
 to stifle some verses on the same barren subject, which were
 printed with it, and now, I assure you, shall never appear....
 In the mean time give leave to value myself upon the favour you
 have done me; and to assure you, it was not wanting to make me
 more ready than I have been in my inclinations of waiting on
 all your commands. (Works, 1:4-5)

The Mourning Bride was, as promised, published without any commen-
 datory epistles. The disappointment of her verses arriving too late for
 inclusion in the edition must have been allayed by Congreve's effusive
 pledge of favor. His letter indicated that they were already acquainted
 and friendly, if not courting. Trotter became known as one of Congreve's
 protégés.

In the opening scene of The Female Wits, produced in the same
 year, Marsilia (Manley) asks Calista, "Has any Celebrated Poet of the
 Age been lately to look over any of your Scenes, Madam?" Calista re-
 plies, "Yes, yes, one that you know, and who makes that his pretense for
 his daily Visits" (p. 5). Trotter, along with Pix, was mentioned as
 part of Congreve's retinue in Animadversions to Mr. Congreve's Late

Answer to Mr. Collier in 1698, wherein Congreve was described as "Seen very gravely with his Hat over his eyes among his chief actors, and actresses, together with the two She-Things that write for his House."¹ Congreve was to remain Trotter's mentor to the end of her playwriting career. He sent her a set of specific editorial suggestions on the manuscript version of her last play, The Revolution in Sweden (see below, p. 90). The introduction to Animadversions also cast an aspersion upon Trotter's character with an allusion to "the lightness both in Head and Tail of the presuming T-----r."²

The Female Wits did not deal especially harshly with the youngest member of the "Triumvirate." The *dramatis personae* describes Calista as "A Lady that pretends on the learned Languages, and assumes to her self the Name of a Critick." She was portrayed as a self-puffing intellectual snob, but was not the butt of physical mockery as was Pix, nor morally slandered like Manley. These omissions indicate that she was too attractive to be vulnerable on the one account and that her reputation was intact.

After the success of The Fatal Friendship in 1698, Trotter herself was sought out for her expert advice by the fledgling Farquhar. Having seen her in attendance at his benefit performance of Love And A Bottle, Farquhar, whose "passions were wrought so high by representation of Fatal Friendship, and since raised so high by the sight of the beautiful author," sent her the manuscript for evaluation. He had been

¹[George Powell,] Animadversions on Mr. Congreve's Late Answer to Mr. Collier, ed. Arthur Freeman (1698; reprint ed., New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1972), p. 34.

²*Ibid.*, p. 14.

criticized for offending some of the women who had seen it, and presented it "to stand trial before one of the fairest of the sex and the best judge" (Life, 1:viii).

In 1698 Trotter also contributed an epilogue to Pix's Queen Catherine. It was spoken by a little girl, as was the fashion of the time, but, contrary to the practice of putting smutty double entendres in the mouths of children on such occasions, Trotter's was a lightly mocking spoof on the excesses of heroic acting. It predicted a long life for the play, the little girl speculating that she might one day grow up to play "Queen Kate."

On the death of John Dryden in 1700, a collection of poetic elegies exclusively by women writers called The Nine Muses; or, Poems written by so many ladies, upon the Death of the famous John Dryden Esq. came out. It is assumed by scholars to have been organized by Manley, who was represented by verses ascribed to both Melpomene, muse of tragedy, and Thalia, muse of comedy. Perhaps the source of that assumption is found in the opening lines of the verses attributed to Susanna Centlivre, Polimnia, the muse of rhetoric: "Call'd by my Grief, Melpomene I come,/ With Radiant Tears, to Grace my Dryden's Tomb." Trotter, apparently despite any personal estrangement, also answered Manley's call and contributed as Calliope, the muse of epic poetry, while Pix represented Clio, the historic muse. The most thorough discussion of the authorship of the anonymous tributes is found in John Bowyer's The Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre.¹ There is a primary source for Pix's and Trotter's

¹John Wilson Bowyer, The Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), pp. 32-33.

participation. Tom Brown, in A Letter from the Dead Thomas Brown to the Living Heraclitus (1704), identifies some of the muses and "a lean Gentlewoman, Mrs. P-x," and "a thund'ring piece of Man's Flesh, one Mrs. T-tt--." He facetiously inverted their physical descriptions.¹ Both Pix's and Trotter's verses concern themselves with Dryden's enemies. Pix refers to "the malice of his foes,"² and Trotter goes even further, referring specifically to a "B-----re" as an enemy of Dryden, while calling Chapman, Hobbes, and Ogilvy "assassins."³

November of 1700 saw Trotter's only comedy, Love at a Loss; or, Most Votes Carry It, open back at the Drury Lane, with a cast including several actors who had participated in The Female Wits.⁴ Trotter's quarrel with the company must have been resolved over the intervening three years.

Love at a Loss was dedicated to Lady Sarah Piers, wife of a prominent officer under the Duke of Marlborough. Lady Sarah had contributed a poem for the publication of The Fatal Friendship, entitled "To My Much Esteemed Friend." The closing couplet was a wordplay on the title: "O Heav'n this my fondest wish decree! / Our mutual friend-

¹Ibid., p. 32.

²Susanna Centlivre et al., The Nine Muses; or, Poems Written by Nine severall Ladies Upon the Death of the late famous John Dryden Esq. (London: Richard Basset, 1700).

³Ibid., p. 16. Richard Blackmore was a writer who had attacked Dryden in Satyr Against Wits (1700). Chapman, Ogilvy, and Hobbes had all done translations of Homer.

⁴The DNB entry on Catherine Trotter erroneously supposed that Love at a Loss was not performed (4:639). The actors involved in both productions were: Mr. Powell, Mrs. Knight, Mrs. Temple, Mr. Cibber, Mrs. Kent, Mr. Mills, and Mrs. Verbruggen (who spoke the epilogue).

ship may ne'er fatal be." Again, in 1701 Lady Sarah sent a set of verses for The Unhappy Penitent, in which she compared Trotter to "Orinda," as sedate Katherine Philips was known, and praised her above "gay Astrea," or Aphra Behn.¹ Trotter's correspondence reveals them to have been close friends. She was often a guest at Lady Piers's home in Kent. In a recent article, a bizarre interpretation of their relationship was put forth by Margaret Maison. In "Pope and Two Learned Nymphs," Maison conjectures that Trotter is the "Daphne" character in Manley's New Atalantis, and her patroness Zara is Lady Piers. She draws the inference that a lesbian relationship is implied.² The Unhappy Penitent was dedicated to Lord Halifax. Again, according to Maison, Trotter is also the "Lais" figure in Manley's novel, and the "Sergius" whom she is desperately pursuing is Halifax.³ The article, as a whole, stretches conjecture to the ultimate, but it is worth noting as one of the very few references to Trotter in modern scholarship.

By the end of Trotter's career in the theatre, there was an entirely separate set of forces shaping her life. She had been converted to Catholicism early in her life, and though she was a practicing

¹Sarah Piers, commendatory verses for Trotter's The Unhappy Penitent (London: Turner & Nutt, 1701).

²Margaret Maison, "Pope and Two Learned Nymphs," Review of English Studies 29 (1978): 405-14.

³Ibid. Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax, was most famous for implementing the creation of the Bank of England (1694), but he was also a literary patron. Congreve and Addison were among his protégés. He would have been forty years old when Trotter dedicated The Unhappy Penitent to him. His mistress of many years was known to be Catherine Barton, Isaac Newton's niece. He was an intimate of Locke's, which may have opened the way for Trotter to seek his patronage.

Catholic until 1707, her readings in philosophy and associations with intellectuals in the Church of England pulled her in another direction. She had studied John Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690), with its revolutionary concept of a "tabula rasa" (or clean slate) of the newborn child's mind, until it was impressed by the senses. Locke came under attack by a group of academicians. Trotter undertook to defend him in a treatise of her own. She insisted that her Defence of Locke's Essay (1702) be published anonymously for fear that if it were known to be written by a twenty-two-year-old woman it would be discredited. Once the work was an acknowledged success, Bishop Gilbert Burnet's wife Elizabeth, who was herself a published theologian, let the cat out of the bag, so to speak. Locke himself sent Trotter a gift of books and a letter of compliment:

Give me leave therefore to assure you, that as the rest of the world take notice of the strength and clearness of your reasoning, so I cannot but be extremely sensible, that it was employed in my defense. You have herein not only vanquished my adversary, but reduced me also absolutely under your power. (Life, 1:xix-xx)

The Revolution of Sweden, which had been begun in 1704, was not readied for production until 1706. Despite Congreve's conscientious suggestions, it was not a success, perhaps because by that time Trotter was seeing the function of the theatre solely as a vehicle for moral reform. The dedication to Harriot Godolphin, eldest daughter of the Duke of Marlborough, advises: "Our pleasures should be useful to our morals, serve to correct our vices, and animate the mind to virtue." Before she abandoned the theatre, however, she revised Love at a Loss, which had suffered from a very faulty first printing, and retitled it The

Honourable Deceivers; or, All Right at the Last, but it is not known to have been produced (Life, 1:ix).

Although Catherine Trotter denied that she was a Whig, per se, she wrote three occasional poems singing the praises of Whig luminaries. Two were in honor of the Duke of Marlborough on the occasions of the battles of Blenheim and Ramillies in 1704 and 1706, respectively. "The busts in the Queen's Hermitage" honored Queen Caroline (Life, 2:561-64, 2:566-67, 2:572-75).

Trotter's associations with Bishop Burnet, his wife Elizabeth, and George Burnet of Kenmay were critical in shaping her mature life. The Bishop was undoubtedly an influence in Trotter's return to the Church of England, and she certainly would not have married a Protestant clergyman otherwise. When she published the reasons for her reconversion in A Discourse Concerning a Guide in Controversies (1707), Burnet contributed a preface. Through the Bishop, Trotter befriended George Burnet of Kenmay, who became her long-term correspondent during his travels on a religious mission which took him to Paris, Geneva, Berlin, Leipzig, and Hanover. It was he who showed her Defence of Locke's Essay to Leibniz, initiating a correspondence between the two. At the Court of Berlin he discussed Trotter with Sophia Carlotta, Queen of Prussia, who dubbed her "Sappho Ecossoise" (Life, 1:25). Between the lines of Burnet's correspondence, an inclination to pursue a courtship may be read, but it was clearly not reciprocated or encouraged. She especially balked at his suggestion that on his return from his travels, in 1707, he visit and stay in the house where she was summering in Ockham Mills, Surrey.

Through neighbors she met a young divine, Mr. Fenn, who became quite smitten with her and quickly pressed his suit. She was herself already enamored of a young man who was even then preparing for ordination, Mr. Cockburn. But things do not appear to have been going well in that relationship. It is not difficult to see beneath the formal phrasing of her letters that Trotter was wounded by his revelation that his heart was divided between her and another woman; one can sense the humiliation behind her chiding him for tardiness in answering her long and frequent letters. When she felt impelled to express her romantic predicament, she often hid behind the rather coy device of assigning pseudonyms for the principals involved, taken from her last play, The Revolution of Sweden. Thus, Cockburn was referred to as Arwide, wise but cold. She had put into the mouth of this character the following estimate of his wife, Constantia: "Not as a Woman, as a Worthy Friend" (p. 24). She, of course, related to Constantia, and her rival was called Christina, when Mr. Fenn entered the picture, he was named after Gustavus.

Under the guise of seeking a friend's advice, Trotter let Cockburn know of the attentions and intentions of Mr. Fenn: "He is so obliging, as to take all occasions of doing me any little service.... I would give you an account of all that passes, betwixt my new lover and me, in which I have wanted advice, having been much puzzled how to act. His letters express a great desire of passing his life with me" (Life, 2:325-26). She also informed Cockburn that Lady Piers was in favor of the match. "My Lady thinks by all she knows of Him and me, that we could not fail of being happy together" (Works, 2:239). In

fact, she had already written Fenn the previous week, "I cannot give you the satisfaction you desire.... Hearts are, you know, capricious things" (Works, 2:246). The ploy of making Mr. Cockburn jealous worked, however. Within six months they were married.

Even though determined to marry Mr. Cockburn, Trotter's long-standing reticence in making the final commitment surfaced in her final testing of the waters to assure marital compatibility in all respects in advance.

Methinks that upon your principle, that pleasure is to be avoided, inclination should be so too, for that will inevitably give pleasure; and the more solid ends of marriage will be answered by a well-grounded esteem, without that softer part. I confess I am for a little of both, having no aversion for pleasure, and believing it may be had without danger in due circumstances. (Works, 2:240)

Catherine Trotter, the woman of the world, was realistic enough to acknowledge that marriage, even between two religious philosophers, was not wholly a platonic proposition, and to make her position on the matter plain.

After her carefully planned marriage, Mrs. Cockburn settled into what promised to be a comfortable situation. Following his ordination, Cockburn was briefly assigned to a parish in Nayland, Suffolk, but within a year he was appointed Curate of St. Dunstan's in Fleet Street. One could have predicted a steady rise in the ranks within the Church of England through merit and connections, but on the death of Queen Anne, and the accession of George I, Elector of Hanover, the Stuarts were abjured, and Cockburn balked at taking the compulsory Oath. He was thus deprived of a living in the church, and for twelve years was reduced to eke out a living as Latin instructor at a school in Chancery

Lane, while Catherine, completely inactive in literary affairs, struggled to raise four children. There is no way to plumb her emotional reaction to her husband's staunch act of conscience and to her subsequent hardships after having given up her cherished independence, except that she endured them, living up to her commitment.

In 1726 the Reverend Mr. Cockburn experienced a change of heart and finally took the Oath. In the same year Mrs. Cockburn returned to writing, producing another treatise on Locke, whose philosophy was again under attack. Mrs. Cockburn explained why she resumed writing: "My young family was grown up to have less need of my assistance; and beginning to have some taste of polite literature, my inclination revived with my leisure" (Life, 1:xl).

This was also a period of respite from financial pressures. Locke's cousin Peter King (the same who had brought Locke's gift of books to young Catherine Trotter), was instrumental in persuading Cockburn to reconcile to the Oath. He was now Lord Chancellor and arranged for Cockburn to be appointed minister in Aberdeen, Scotland, while receiving an absentee income from the parish of Long Horsley. There was another financial reversal after ten years, when the Bishop of Durham called on Cockburn to tend his flock actively at Long Horsley, causing him to relinquish his home and living in Aberdeen.

Once Mrs. Cockburn had resumed her literary career, she began making new literary contacts. She became an admirer of Alexander Pope and championed the philosopher Samuel Clarke. When she wrote a defense of Clarke's principles against an attack by Dr. Rutherford, William Warburton, eminent critic and Pope's longtime mentor, contributed the

preface. It has been commented that it is hard to conceive how Mrs. Cockburn could reconcile her support of Locke's philosophy and Clarke's. Clarke had supplanted Locke as England's leading metaphysician, espousing an a priori philosophy antithetical to Locke's skepticism. Was she blind to the contradiction, or courting the current powers-that-be in the field? Her double allegiance may be attributable to the flexibility and tolerance in matters of faith and personal philosophy demonstrated in her correspondence.

Mrs. Cockburn's admiration for Pope promoted her to dedicate to him her contributions to The History of the Works of the Learned (1743) with the inscription, "With the utmost Deference by an Admirer of his Moral Character." Among her effects was found a long dedicatory letter to Pope, which she never sent. It afforded a glimpse into Cockburn's wistful remembrance of her career in the theatre, from the perspective of over thirty years.

I cannot indeed but regret, that you did not come sooner into the world, or I later; for I flatter myself, I should then have had the pleasure of your acquaintance by the means of one or other who have had a share in your friendship, to whom I was not unknown, Mr. Wycherly, Congreve, etc. etc. But they are all gone before me, though I was in a manner dead long before them. You had just begun to dawn upon the world when I retired from it. Being married in 1708, I bid adieu to the muses, and so wholly gave myself up to the cares of a family, and the education of my children, that scarce knew, whether there was any such thing as books, plays, or poems stirring in Great Britain. (Life, 1:x1)

Even when in her twenties Catherine Trotter complained about eye-strain and physical weakness. She suffered from what she termed "the cholic," which left her weak. As early as 1703, her friend Dr. Nicolas Denton wrote her urging her to give up observing the Catholic fasts which taxed a constitution "naturally infirm" (Life, 1:xxi). Later in

life she could read and write only with difficulty and suffered from severe asthma; yet, she lived to the age of seventy, dying only a few months after her husband. For the last two years of her life, she at least experienced something of being in the limelight again. The eminent historian Thomas Birch was working with her on the publication of her life's work, to which numerous dignitaries had subscribed.

Catherine Trotter Cockburn died in May 1749 and was buried at Long Horsley, next to her husband and youngest daughter, who had died in 1743. A son and two daughters survived her. The epitaph on her tomb read: "Let their Works Praise Them in the Gates. Prov. xxxi:31."

Her private character rendered her extremely amiable to those who intimately knew her. Her conversation was always innocent, useful and agreeable, without the least affectation of being thought a wit, and attended with a remarkable modesty and diffidence of herself, and a constant endeavor to adapt her discourse to her company. She was happy in an uncommon evenness and cheerfulness of temper. Her disposition was generous and benevolent; and ready upon all occasions to forgive injuries, and bear them, as well as misfortunes, without interrupting her own ease or that of others, with complaints or reproaches. The pressures of a very contracted fortune were supported by her with calmness and in silence. (Life, 1:xlvi)

The DNB entry on Catherine Cockburn ends with the line: "Her character was irreproachable."¹ That wasn't the case. It may have been undeserving of reproach, but it was certainly not unassailed, as evidenced by Birch's defense against three separate assaults from Manley. The Calista anecdote, already mentioned, was found in The Adventures of Rivella. In the earlier The New Atalantis, two characters have been identified as representing Trotter. "Lais" is depicted as chasing after "Sergius," Lord Halifax, and, more tellingly, "Daphne," whose

¹DNB, 4:639 (s.v. "Cockburn").

physical description coincides with Birch's of Trotter, "still assumed an Air of Virtue pretended ... she also fitted herself with an excellent Mask call'd Religion; having as often changed, and as often professed her self a Votary to that Shrine, where was to be found the most apparent Interest or which Priest had the greatest Art of Persuading."¹ The portrait goes on to trace her abandonment of the theatre, involvement in religion, and marriage. Her patroness "Zara," supposedly Lady Piers, had a penchant for making love with men in "drag," so to speak, and became violently jealous upon her marriage.

The events recounted in The New Atalantis and Rivella are from perspectives of seven and twelve years' distance, respectively. There was, however, a piece of nasty sexual innuendo that came out in 1698, at the height of Trotter's success. It is contained in a mock dedication "To the Ingenious Mr. _____" for Animadversions. Later identifying P-x and T---r as his targets, the writer, supposed to be George Powell (who played the Prince in Agnes), launched into the following diatribe:

Or could I write like the two Female things
 With Muse pen-feathered, guiltless yet of wings;
 And yet it strives to fly and thinks it sings.
 Just like the Dames themselves who want the town
 And flutter loosely, but to tumble down.
 The last that write of these presuming two,
 (For Queen Catherine is no Play 'tis true,)
 And yet to spell is more than she can do
 Told a high Princess, she from men had torn
 Those Bays, which they had long engross'd and worn.
 But when she offers at our sex thus fair
 With four fine copies of her play--O rare!
 If she feels manhood shoot--'tis I know where.
 Let them scrawl on, and Loll, and wish at ease,
 (a feather oft does woman's fancy please)
 Till by their Muse (more jilt than they) accurst
 We know (if possible) which writes the worst.
 (lines 18-34)

¹Manley, "New Atalantis," in The Novels, 2:55.

Actually it was not the dedication to Princess Anne of The Fatal Friendship which Powell paraphrased, but Trotter's verse to Manley for The Royal Mischief. Powell, perhaps incidentally, did not appear in the two subsequent plays of Trotter's produced by the Rich company. The roles in which he would typically have been cast were taken in both cases by his younger rival Mr. Wilks.

Even within Trotter's lifetime, the early slurs had been forgotten. In 1747, Thomas Whincop published a list "of all the Dramatic Authors, with Some Account of Their Lives." He deemed that Catherine Trother [sic] "was accounted a woman of Virtue."¹

Since Birch's edition, Manley being discredited and Powell ignored, scholars have held Cockburn up as a paragon of virtue. Typical is Mary Pilkington in the early nineteenth century. In Memoirs of Celebrated Female Characters, Cockburn is assessed as:

Particularly to be admired for relinquishing the flattering distinctions of an author, to fulfill those duties which are attached to the character of a wife; and she excites a greater degree of interest, superintending the education of her children, than when she was metaphysically defending the opinions of Mr. Lock [sic].²

Up to the present day scholars such as Jean Gagen, Nancy Cotton, and Paula Louise Barbour all depict Trotter as of the pattern of "Orinda," the reticent, highly respected Katherine Philips, to whom she was so often compared.

¹Thomas Whincop, A Compleat List of all English Dramatic Poets (London: T.W., 1747), p. 295.

²Mary Pilkington, Memoirs of Celebrated Female Characters (London: Albion Press, 1804), p. 120.

There is, however, one modern-day detractor. Margaret Maison, in her "Pope and Two Learned Nymphs," has ferreted out a passage in Pope's Of The Characters of Women (1735) which she identifies as a reference to Trotter. The verse cited is: "Rufa, whose eye quick-glancing o'er the Park,/ Attracts each light gay meteor of a Spark,/ Agrees as well with Rufa studying Locke,/ As Sappho's diamonds with her dirty smock."¹ Maison builds on this fragment, augmented by Manley's aspersions, to make freewheeling judgments. The connection with Locke could point to Cockburn, but if Pope was poking a finger at her as a pretentious flirt, his source had to be the scandal of a generation past. Pope was barely ten years old in Trotter's heyday, and she had retired almost thirty years previous to the appearance of this satire. Maison again cites Pope as calling Rufa "a common sewer" in Sober Advice. Cockburn's dedication to Pope in The Works of the Learned is attributed by Maison to her "pushful nature," and Cockburn's defense of him after his death in a letter to her niece as proof of her "infinite capacity for dissimulation and hypocrisy."² Maison is apparently just out to have some fun toppling an idol--a reputed paragon of virtue.

It is not impossible to reconcile the two sides seen of Trotter/Cockburn, given the circumstances and time frame. A young, sought-after beauty, puffed with flattery, capricious in the flush of her adolescence, may likely have been burned in a romance or two, and

¹Maison, "Pope and Two Learned Nymphs," p. 405.

²Ibid., p. 410.

determined to marry a clergyman as a refuge from the repercussions of a damaged reputation. The epilogue to Love at a Loss presents Lesbia, who became the lover to her betrothed before the actual marriage, bemoaning her slip: "What certain hazards do poor women run!/ They hear, believe, they taste, and are undone/ ... And hands, and seals, and oaths cannot secure/ A mind like man's unfaithful and impure" (lines 21-24). Among Trotter's few published poems is the rueful "The Caution":

Soft kisses may be innocent,
But Ah! too easy maid beware;
Though that is all thy kindness meant,
'Tis love's delusive fatal snare.
No virgin e'er at first designed
Through all the maze of love to stray;
But each new path allures her mind,
'Till wand'ring on, she lose her way.
(Works, 1:568)

Whatever motive lay behind the choice Trotter made in her life, her commitment to it belied any charge of hypocrisy. It was certainly no dilettante who lived through forty years of hardship as a minister's wife, and produced the body of work which required deep thought and diligent effort.

If Catherine Trotter never felt compelled to defend herself from attacks on her character, she was extremely sensitive to intellectual criticism. She was especially stung when she heard that a fellow woman writer, Lady Damaris Masham, had implied in a letter to Leibniz that she was dubious about the authorship of The Defense.

It is not to be doubted that women are as capable of penetrating into the grounds of things, and reasoning justly, as men are, who certainly have no advantage of us, but in their opportunities of knowledge.... I see no reason to suspect [Masham] would pretend to write anything that was not entirely

her own. I pray be more equitable to her sex than the generality of yours are who when anything is written by a woman they cannot deny their approbation to, are sure to rob us of the glory of it by concluding 'tis not her own. (Works, 1: 189-90)

She used her commendatory letters and letters of dedication, in particular those to Princess Anne for The Fatal Friendship and to Harriot Godolphin for The Unhappy Penitent, as forums for protestations of intellectual feminism. As late as 1737, she complained (in "A Poem Occasioned by the Busts Set Up in the Queen's Hermitage"):¹

... those restraints, which have our sex confin'd
By partial custom, check the soaring mind:
Learning deny'd us, we at random tread
Unbeaten paths, that late to knowledge lead;
.....
If some advent'rous genius rare arise,
Who on exalted themes her talent tries,
She fears to give the work, tho' prais'd, a name,
And flies not more from infamy than fame.
(Works, 2:573)

Trotter's feminist convictions appeared incarnate in the larger-than-life heroines of her plays.

Trotter's drama was influenced as much, if not more, by elements in her life outside the theatre world, as by the dramatic trends of her time. Agnes de Castro was really just a token bow to Aphra Behn, whom she admired, but did not follow. It was not the brisk, irreverent plotter of intrigue comedies that inspired her first work. It was Behn's translation of a sad novel about an abiding friendship between two extremely noble women. Nowhere is Behn's flair to be glimpsed in Trotter's work, except weakly in her single comedy, Love at a Loss

¹Busts of Locke and Clarke, whom Trotter-Cockburn championed, were included in the collection.

(1700), for which she apologizes as an attempt to compromise, against her nature, with the taste of the times. Trotter was closer kin to the "Matchless Orinda," Katherine Philips, with whom she liked to be identified.

It is fitting that probably the greatest influence on Trotter's drama was not another playwright at all, but a clergyman reformer, Jeremy Collier. The Fatal Friendship was brought out within a month of Collier's famous A Short View of the Immorality and Prophaneness on the English Stage (1698). Reform was the advertised purpose of Trotter's plays. She finally decided that the romantic inclination was not exalted enough to be the stuff of tragedy, and in The Revolution of Sweden subverted the "belle passion" to civic duty. She herself perceived how she had all but written herself out of the mainstream of the theatre of her day:

I ... could never allow myself to think of any subject that could not serve either to incite some useful Virtue, or check some dangerous Passion. With this design I thought that writing for the Stage, a work not unworthy those who wou'd not trifle their time away, and had so fixed my mind on contributing my part towards reforming the Corruption of it, that no doubt I have too little considered the present tast [sic] of the town. (preface)

Trotter did have idols in the theatre, though; she named them in the two pieces of literary criticism she left behind. In the dedication to The Unhappy Penitent, she lauded Shakespeare, Otway, Lee, and Dryden. In a verse reply to some Irish poetry lovers who had read The Nine Muses and inquired of "Calliope" the sources of her inspiration, she praised "Shakespeare's spirit," "the piercing wit of Vanbrugh," and "Dryden's genius" (Works, 2:559-60). Congreve, of course, was a mentor, but it

was apparently not his spirit she wished to emulate, but his skillful structure. The seeds of Trotter's mature works can be seen in her fling with the relatively frivolous theatre.

Critical Overview

The earliest assessment of Catherine Trotter was the encomium which appeared in Charles Gildon's continuation of Langbaine's The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatic Poets (1699). The writer spoke from personal acquaintance and was obviously as charmed by her personality as he was admiring of her achievements:

Admirable for two things rarely found together, Wit, Beauty; and with these a Penetration very uncommon in the Sex. She discovers in her Conversation a fineness and nicety of reasoning on the highest metaphysical Subjects; nor is she less entertaining on the more gay and conversible.... She has already given us two Plays, which challenge our Admiration, we like the first, but are transported with the last. There is the Chastity of her Person and the Tenderness of her Mind in both; the Passions are natural and moving, the Style just and familiar, and adapted to the Subject; if there be not the Sublime, 'tis because there was no room for it, not because she had not Fire and Genius enough to write it.¹

Another glowing report came from a contemporary, Giles Jacob: "She has writ five Plays wherein the Passions are well described and the Diction is just and familiar.... Mrs. Trother [sic] was very much inclin'd to philosophical Studies, and has written a very pretty small Piece in Defense of Mr. Locke's Essay."²

¹Gerard Langbaine, The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatic Poets. Also an Exact Account of all the Plays that Were Ever Yet Printed in the English Tongue, completed by Charles Gildon (London: Turner, 1699), p. 179 (hereinafter cited as Langbaine/Gildon, Lives and Characters).

²Giles Jacob, The Poetical Register; or, The Lives and Characters of all the English Poets, with an Account of Their Writings, 2 vols. (London: Bettesworth et al., 1723), 2:260.

In 1800, however, Charles Didbin, an avowed misogynist who decried the very idea of women writers, dismissed Trotter as not worth reading. Commenting indirectly on Birch's exclusion of her four plays other than The Fatal Friendship from the Works, he said, "anxious as they have been to relate the particulars of Mrs. Trotter's life, her biographers have trod very tenderly, on the ground of her theatrical reputation."¹ John Doran wrote an account of Trotter typical of the Victorian assessment of an artist:

She produced five pieces, all of a sentimental but refined class--illustrating love, friendship, repentance and conjugal faith.... Mrs. Cockburn was a clever woman, and kept no dull household, though she there wrote a defence of Locke, while her reverend husband was pursuing an account of the Mosaic deluge.... She was a valiant woman too; one whom asthma and the ills of life could not deter from labour. But death relieved her of all these in 1749; and she is remembered in the history of literature as a good and well-accomplished woman--the very opposite of Mrs. Behn and all her heroines.²

Jane Williams, a writer of the same period, found fault with Trotter's plays, but admired her intellect.

Her reasoning powers, her comprehensive knowledge, her acute discrimination, her steadfast love of truth, and her calm, clear sense of right and wrong, always render her a formidable champion. Her eloquence has the force of manly argument, with the charm of feminine persuasion.³

Myra Reynolds, in The Learned Lady in England, 1650-1760, with all due respect for Trotter's abilities, offered an explanation for her

¹Charles Didbin, A Complete History of The English Stage, 5 vols. (London: Charles Didbin, 1800), 4:348-49.

²John Doran, Their Majesties' Servants: Annals of the English Stage from Thomas Betterton to Edmund Kean, 2 vols. (New York: W.J. Widdleton, 1865), 2:242.

³Jane Williams, Literary Women of England (London: Saunders, Otley & Company, 1861), p. 187.

reputation's having been obscured in modern times.

Mrs. Cockburn had a strong, clear, acute mind. The impression she made on the best thinkers in her generation is due to this fact and, further, to the fact that she used her mentality on topics then counted vital. She was didactic, she was morally irreproachable, she was unassuming. That her editor's confident prediction of her fame has been discredited by time, that she is in reality hardly so much as a name today, is due partly to the oblivion that has overtaken her subjects, but also, and even more justly, to the dead level of her excellence. She has no wit, no fancy, no imagination, no sprightliness of thought, no humor.... She is as cold, as orderly, as unstimulating as a formula.¹

Herbert Carter was at a loss to understand Trotter's eminence.

It is difficult to imagine what endowed Mrs. Trotter with distinction as a dramatist in her time and set her above the other two women [Manley and Pix]. She had not the poetic ability of the one nor the technical skill of the other. The secret probably lay in her vigorous and charming little personality.²

Fidelis Morgan's concluding remarks on Trotter are a more positive assessment of her technical skill.

Catherine Trotter's playwriting certainly showed great promise. Her construction was tight, and her language well disciplined and yet rich. Had she not been so influenced by the attacks on the stage by Jeremy Collier, perhaps her later plays would have been stronger.³

Considered a phenomenon in her own time, Trotter drew highest praise from John Duncombe in his The Feminead; or, Female Genius (1754).

But say, what matron now walks musing forth
From the bleak mountains of her native north?
While round her brows two sisters of the Nine

¹Myra Reynolds, The Learned Lady in England, 1650-1760 (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1920; reprint ed., Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1964), pp. 110-11.

²Herbert Carter, "Three Women Dramatists of the Restoration," Bookman's Journal 13 (1925): 97.

³Fidelis Morgan, The Female Wits (London: Virago Press, 1981), p. 31.

Poetic wreaths with philosophic twine!
 Hail Cockburn Hail! Even now from Reason's Bowers,
 Thy Locke delighted culls the choicest flowers
 To deck his great, successful Champion's Head,
 And Clarke expects thee in a laurel shade.
 Though long to dark oblivious wants a prey,
 Thy aged worth passed unreceived away
 Yet Scotland now shall ever boast thy fame,
 While England mourns thy undistinguished name,
 And views with wonder, in a female mind.
 Philosopher, divine, and poet joined.
 (lines 125-38)¹

It could be concluded that Catherine Trotter wrote herself right out of the dramatic genre--rejecting intrinsic elements such as personal passions in her final play and interjecting static philosophical debate. Unlike many of her colleagues, she did not oppose or compromise with Collier's strictures, but rather embraced them. She was the first to get on the bandwagon of moral reform with the resulting manipulation of plot and characters to serve didactic rather than dramatic purposes. From her early twenties she was growing in a direction that found its more suitable outlet in the philosophical treatise.

Synopses of Works and Criticism

Agnes de Castro, although it was preceded by three months by the mysterious "Ariadne's" She Ventures and He Wins, was the first play by one of the "triumvirate" to appear.² Birch gave the year as 1695, which the London Stage has dated more specifically as December of that year. Herbert Carter, in his article "Three Women Dramatists of the

¹John Duncombe, The Femeinead; or, Female Genius. A Poem (London: M. Cooper, 1754).

²She Ventures and He Wins was the first play presented by the newly formed company at Lincoln's Inn Fields. London Stage gives the date September 1695 (1:452).

Restoration," refutes Birch, and asserts that all other scholars cite 1696.¹ This may be a confusion due to the difference between debut and publication dates. The London Stage used the rule of thumb of dating premieres of plays before 1700 approximately a month earlier than the advertisements in journals for the published texts. In this instance a notice in the 27-30 January 1695/96 London Gazette backdates the opening to December.

Agnes was one of several new plays mounted by the recently depleted Rich company after the defection of Betterton, Barry, and Bracegirdle in April of 1695. The uneven season had seen a disastrous flop in the expensive Dorset Garden production of the third part of The Comical History of Don Quixote by Thomas D'Urfey. The first two parts had been successes, and in a preface to the edition the author complained bitterly about mismanagement and "indifferent performance." Following that, however, was Thomas Southerne's adaptation of Aphra Behn's novel Oroonoko, which met with "uncommon success" according to Sullen in A Comparison of the Two Stages.² Oroonoko was accorded high praise therein amongst characteristically derogatory comments about the season. Agnes, which followed hard upon it, may have been its beneficiary. The audience, which had been receptive to an adaptation of a

¹Jacob's Poetical Register is probably the source for subsequent scholars' dating. It is the earliest, and Thomas Whincop, the only other contemporary source, used the Register as his source for his Compleat List (1747).

²[Gildon's] A Comparison is a commentary on the split in the Theatre Royal and the plays of the subsequent seasons. It is presented in dialogue form as three Wits--Critick, Sullen, and Ramble--stroll through London, stopping at the famed theatrical hang-out, the Rose Tavern.

woman's novel, may have been prepared to accept an original work.

The cast was headed by George Powell as the Prince of Portugal, a role that the previous season might have gone either to Betterton or to him; he had been gradually taking over some of Betterton's younger roles. The harrassed heroine and vindictive villainess, which were usually the domain of Bracegirdle and Barry, respectively, were essayed by Mrs. Rogers and Mrs. Knight, who, over the succeeding years of the split companies, took on the types of the departed stars. Less than a year later, several members of this cast were to perform in The Female Wits. Mrs. Temple, who played the Princess, impersonated Mrs. Trotter.

Delariviere Manley, whose own play was waiting in the wings, contributed a commendatory poem for the occasion of Agnes's publication:

Orinda, and the Fair Astrea gone,
Not one was found to fill the Vacant Throne.
Aspiring Man had quite regained the Sway,
Again had taught us humbly to Obey;
Till you, (Nature's third start) in favour of
our kind,
With stronger Arms, their Empire have disjoin'd
And snatcht a Lawrel which they thought
their Prize.
Thus Conqu'ror with your Wit, as with your Eyes,
Fired by the bold Example, I would try
To turn our Sexes weaker Destiny.
O! How I long in the Poetic Race
To loose the Reins, and give their Glory Chase;
For thus Encourag'd, thus led by you,
Methinks we might more Crowns than theirs Subdue.

Trotter's patron upon her debut was Charles, Earl of Dorset and Middlesex, the Lord Chamberlain. The tone of her dedicatory letter is familiar and reveals that they were already acquainted when she had approached him with her script. Having the chief authority over the English stage among her circle of friends could certainly have been a determining factor in Trotter's directing her talents to the drama.

Another verse included was anonymous and from the point of view of a man. Birch has identified it as from John Hughes, Esq., author of The Siege of Damascus (1720) (Life, 1:viii).

Two prologues were printed with Agnes. That by Wycherley, "designed to be spoke" and couched as if being spoken by a woman, was a plea for silence to forestall anticipated heckling. "But Beaux's [sic] and Wits I pray be silent now/ And hear without noise, nay with Patience too/ Our Female Wit, if you'd have her hear you" (lines 26-29). This verse may have been the inspiration for the title of the satire. It also enlisted the partisanship of the women in attendance.

The former prologue may have been late in arriving, for the second prologue was spoken by Mr. Powell. Its tone was condescending: "She's dead if try'd by strict Poetick Laws,/ But Men can't refuse a Woman's Cause" (lines 22-23).

Scene divisions are included in the text, as well as act breaks. Act 1, scene 1 opens the play on a very ominous note, with the play's villainess hatching her plot. Elvira was the mistress of the Prince before he married. Her jealousy of the Princess is redoubled against Agnes de Castro, the Princess's favorite, when she is shown a letter found by Bianca, a lady in waiting, which reveals that the Prince is in love with Agnes. She bribes Bianca into her conspiracy and intends to use the letter to fire her brother Alvaro's own jealousy, for the Prince. Alvaro, too, is in love with Agnes.

Scene 2 is described as opening on "The Princess's Apartment. The Princess sitting in a Melancholy Posture." Since no location is specified for the opening scene, it seems likely that the expository

dialogue was delivered from the apron, in front of the shutters, as was often the case in plays of the period. The shutters then opened to reveal the above tableau effect. (Since so little is known about scenery and staging during this period, the texts of the plays themselves provide helpful clues to stage practice and conventions. Unlike closet literature, drama cannot be judged without a knowledge of the physical limitations of the medium.)

The Princess has been musing over the Prince's coldness to her and senses a rival; but when Bianca gives her the note implicating Agnes, she is not alienated, but merely resigned, and sighs, "Thou dear, thou less my rival than my friend" (p. 8). On being shown the note, Agnes is dumbfounded, and seeing the Prince approach she absents herself. When confronted, he feels due shame, which is compounded by his guilt over his wife's forgiving kindness.

Act 2 opens with Alvaro, who is the favorite of the King, asking him to intercede in his unsuccessful suit to Agnes. The King assures him she will be brought around. Again, a "reveal" provides fluidity in the action. "The Scene opens. The Prince and Princess sitting: Agnes, Elvira, Bianca. The King and Agnes advance from the rest. The Prince and Princess seem to talk." Apparently the audience accepted the conventions of characters walking from one scene, through opening shutters, into another, and characters not being overheard by others who were mimed as speaking at the same time.

The King is thwarted by Agnes's absolute refusal: "No Sir, I value Liberty far more,/ Than to forsake it for Golden Chains" (p. 13). Left alone with the Princess, Agnes offers to leave the court in order

to avoid suspicion that she would entertain the Prince, and to avoid the actual danger of reprisal from the spurned Alvaro. The Princess pleads with her to stay--for the noblest of motives: "Dear Agnes, if thou'st ever loved thy Friend,/ Give not the Prince this Despair,/ My life is ty'd to his, His grief is mine" (p. 14).

In the next scene, Elvira, who has been balked by the sheer nobleness of her intended pawns, contrives another letter. The forged note rejoices at Agnes's overcoming her scruples and instructs her to beg leave of the court when the Prince goes off to battle, so that they can have a rendezvous elsewhere. The act closes on Alvaro's ruminations over his mixed passions for Agnes since his latest rejection: "I Love and Hate her both with Violence,/ and both Passions equally would Please,/ T'enjoy her were for Love a Happy Fate,/ But 'tis the Rape would satisfy my Hate" (p. 17).

In the beginning of Act 3, Bianca tells Elvira what she observed when she delivered the note: "I found the Princess leaning on her Rival's neck;/ They mingl'd kisses with the tend'rest Words,/ As if their Rivalship had made 'em dear;" (p. 20). Agnes left at her arrival, and upon reading the note the Princess had momentarily flushed, then quietly retired, asking simply to be alone. Elvira is confounded by her seeming apathy and vows to bring about Agnes's death by her own hand.

Scene 2 finds Alvaro accosting Agnes. He presses his suit in earnest, but Agnes fends him off with open disdain. Unaware of the contents of the note, she rushes off to seek the advice of the Princess, who, she has been told, is in the garden. There is no separate scene denoted or indication of any scenic effect for a garden, but the

Princess on entering comments that it is dark outdoors. This convention, employed at least since Elizabethan times, allowed for the plausibility of Elvira's entering and stabbing the Princess, mistaking her for Agnes in the dark. As she does so, she gives the lie away: "Know by my means, the Princess thinks thee false" (p. 25). The Princess, who has just wished for death in order to clear the way for the two people she loved most, is glad to be unburdened of life, and joyous Agnes is spared.

Furious at herself for the blunder which only succeeds in opening up the way for her rival, Elvira stabs herself in the offending arm. But she recovers herself and goes off to employ yet another scheme. Upon entering, Agnes does not see that the Princess is wounded. They exchange hyperbolic praises of each other. When, at length, the Princess reveals she is dying, she restrains Agnes from going for help with the dying request: "I charge thee love the Prince, I charge thee marry him" (p. 26). Agnes picks up the knife but, "As she is going to kill herself, She falls in a swoon." Elvira brings in the King, Alvaro, Bianca et al., and accuses Agnes, saying that she got her own wound while trying to protect the Princess from her. Bianca corroborates the story. The King orders Agnes to be tortured first, then burned alive. Her imprisonment is an opportunity for Alvaro to bribe the guards to bring her to him so he can "force the charming, fair damn'd Hypocrite" (p. 28).

Act 4 opens on "Agnes in a Swoon, Women about her endeavoring to recover her." Unaware that she is the one accused, she denounces Elvira to her warder Lorenzo, a long-time loyal follower of the Prince. Despite all appearances being against her, he is convinced of her

innocence and offers to carry her to safety. She refuses, preferring death to loss of honor. "What would the World conclude from such a Flight?/ I could not give a greater confirmation,/ To what they now injuriously suspect" (p. 32). Lorenzo goes off to seek the Prince's help, leaving her with the treacherous guards, who take her away to Alvaro.

"Enter Elvira alone." She is on edge and calls for a mournful song to soothe her. How this interlude was staged is not clear. It appears that she called off-stage for the song. Did she call for musical accompaniment and sing herself, or did a performer come on, do a musical turn and then leave? The action following required that Elvira be alone. "After the Song, the Ghost of the Princess rises." The ghost warns: "Unsuspected [you] shall accuse thyself" (p. 34). "Ghost descends." This was effected by means of a "ghost trap," by which an actor was raised and lowered gradually on a platform controlled by counterweighted ropes.

The experience triggers Elvira into madness. She raves, at one point pulling a looking-glass out of her costume. "Let's see, is Murder printed in my face?" (p. 35). "She runs several ways," and then dashes off.

Act 5 opens with a reveal, which serves to set up a scenic device used later in the act at a crucial moment. "The Scene opens. Elvira Asleep on a couch, Bianca weeping by her. Alvaro advances. The King enters to him and the Scene shuts." A messenger announces that Agnes is coming, escorted by Lorenzo and the Prince, who had intercepted Agnes's capture. The guard confesses the truth, but the King

still believes Agnes guilty when, "The Scene opens. Elvira wakes and starts up." She raves: "Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, Laugh at the Princess,/ She says I'll own myself her Murderer" (p. 40). In her confusion she pulls a dagger from under her gown and stabs Bianca, who reveals all as she is dying. There is a reconciliation between the King, his son, and Agnes, who escort him off, leaving the discredited Alvaro alone. He belies the appearance of a happy ending, vowing: "No other way would exalt my Name,/ Let Universal Ruine give me Fame" (p. 41). As the Prince and Agnes reenter he steps back to eavesdrop. Agnes is resolved to leave, but the Prince begs her to stay, declaring his love openly at last. He swears that he will die without her. She relents, but only on the conditions that he relinquish his suit and pledge himself to protect her from Alvaro. At this, "Alvaro behind draws his sword, and is making at the Prince. Agnes shrieks, the Prince turning about, and stepping aside to avoid the Blow, it passes to Agnes." The Prince, in turn, kills Alvaro. Just at the point of her death, Agnes discovers a stirring of love in her heart for the Prince. Just as he is about to fall on his own sword, Lorenzo rushes in and dissuades him, urging him to consider civic duty over personal tragedy. Thus the tragedy is checked by the facts of history, since the actual prince did not die for many years after his beloved "Iñez's" death.

The epilogue was spoken by Mrs. Verbruggen, who did not appear in the play, but came out in breeches (a beaux-pleaser for which she was famous) and urged applause, promising that the authoress, who was young and fair, would reveal her identity if encouraged: "We may hope in time she'll more disclose,/ That's if you like what here at first

she shows./ Applaud then from curiosity/ She only skulks to be from Censure free" (lines 43-44). The tone of condescending sexual innuendo is similar to the epilogue for "Ariadne's" debut. Both teased with the promise to reveal the identity of the fair authoress, who then might become available for further acquaintance.¹

Agnes de Castro, nouvelle Portugaise (1688), the novel by Mlle. S.B. de Brillac, was based on an incident which took place in the early fourteenth century during the reign of Alphonso IV of Portugal. The Prince, Don Pedro, fell in love with his wife's companion; the affair lasted many years and she bore him several children. On the death of his wife, they were secretly married. When the King found out that this was the reason for his son's repeated refusals to remarry, he sent him on a hunting expedition, and in his absence had her assassinated. The Prince's outrage upon discovery very nearly resulted in civil war.

Mlle. de Brillac added several fictitious embellishments and Trotter even more, though up until the third act the play follows the novel very closely. The first major change is that the character of Elvira, who is more prominent as an agent of evil in general in the play, stabs the Princess, where, in the novel, she died of natural causes. This departure is the first real piece of stage action.

In the novel, Agnes spurns the advances of the Prince and intends to enter a convent, but when he languishes she gives in and

¹The epilogue of She Ventures and He Wins was written by Pierre Motteux and delivered by the popular low-comedian Tom Dogget. It contains the lines: "Tho' you dislike the Play, her Face may please ye:/ She hides it now, yet mislikes the task,/ But knows how much you love a Vizard Mask."

they are secretly married. When the Prince refuses the hand of the Princess of Aragon, Elvira and Alvaro discover the couple's secret, sending the King into a rage. Alvaro offers to kill Agnes, and when the Prince is off hunting, he stabs her in her sleep. The Prince roams the countryside seeking a rebellion, but after a time becomes reconciled and in his turn assumes the throne.

The changes were all in favor of the more condensed action suitable to a stage piece, and to accommodate the heroic model of drama. The action is welcome, since the major portion of the play is given over to the psychological dilemmas and mixed emotions of all of its major characters. The ghost's appearance sets off Elvira's madness resulting in her self-recrimination. Natural death and a clandestine stabbing are replaced with on-stage sword action and an ingeniously self-inflicted wound. And, as a matter of form, time is condensed. The appearance of a ghost was not an obtrusive device for the time. The tradition was long established, and, in fact, there were two treading the boards at the same time at the rival house in John Banks's Cyrus the Great.

Agnes de Castro was well-received. A contemporary, Charles Gildon, in his continuation of Langbaine's Lives and Characters, notes that it "met with good success."¹ David Erskine Baker, in Biographia Dramatica (1812) adds the approbation that it "Deservedly met with good success."² John Genest, on examining it well over a century

¹Langbaine/Gildon, Lives and Characters, p. 149.

²David Erskine Baker, Biographia Dramatica, 3 vols. (London: Longmans et al., 1812), 2:9.

after it was written found it only a "moderate T [tragedy]."¹ In the twentieth century, Edmund Gosse, in "Catherine Trotter, Precursor to the Bluestockings," granted it to be "rather extraordinary for nimble movement and adroit theatrical arrangements." He concluded it was "a bad play, but not at all an unpromising one."² Two recent studies have categorized Agnes de Castro. In Women Playwrights in England, c. 1363-1750, Nancy Cotton dubs it Senecan in mode:

Agnes de Castro is written in weak blank verse; the lines end with one or two extra syllables. The dialogue of the play is peculiar. Although several characters occasionally appear on stage at the same time, there is almost never an actual conversation; usually there are only duologues and soliloquies. The total effect is of a Senecan tragedy a hundred years out of date.³

Richard D. Hume, in The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century, groups Agnes along with Banks's Cyrus and Manley's Royal Mischief as an example of the revival in the 1690s of the heroic mode of the 70s. He sums Agnes up as "a standard mixture of court intrigue and heated heroic sentiment in blank verse."

If Agnes de Castro seems like a throwback in structure and type to earlier periods, there is one aspect about it which seems to point forward. Though the term "She-Tragedy" was coined to describe Nicholas Rowe's The Tragedy of Jane Shore in 1714, scholars now apply the term to Otway's plays as early as the 1680s, and to Thomas Southern's The Fatal

¹John Genest, Some Account of the English Stage, 10 vols. (Bath: H.E. Carrington, 1832), 2:71.

²Edmund Gosse, "Catherine Trotter, the Precursor of the Bluestockings," Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature 34 (1916): 101.

³Cotton, Women Playwrights, p. 83.

Marriage (1694), which was an adaptation of Behn's novel, The History of The Nun; or, The Fair Vow-Breaker. Agnes de Castro seems of the mold, with its two heroines of unassailable virtue who meet tragic ends through no fault of their own. It has no hero per se; the Prince is well-meaning, but not particularly strong. The heroine does not even love him. Both Agnes and the Princess, however, are characters of virtue on a larger-than-life scale. Virtue supplants valor as an heroic criterion. While honor was a common preoccupation of heroines, the depth of the bond of friendship between Agnes and the Princess is extraordinary. Elvira's vengeful reaction on discovering her beloved loves another was a much more common reaction in the drama of the time than the Princess's mastery of her jealousy. The ideal of feminine friendship exemplifies the ideal promulgated by Trotter's idol, Katherine Philips, the concept of exquisite friendship between women.



The Fatal Friendship opened at Lincoln's Inn Fields in April or May 1698.¹ Its dedication addressed Her Royal Highness, Princess Anne of Denmark, later the Queen. It is generally recounted that, unlike Charles II and James II (her father), Anne was not interested in the theatre. Still, any princess would patronize some plays as part of her social duties. Anne had performed in a court masque as a girl, under the tutelage of Mrs. Betterton; she was one of Congreve's patrons, and Pix as well as Trotter dedicated plays to her. Anne was responsible

¹LS, 1:949.

during her reign for the abolition of vizard masks and legislated against the abuse of audience-seating on-stage.¹ The statement in the dedication which came under fire in Animadversion was likely the following:

When a Woman appears in the World under any distinguishing Character, she must expect to be the mark of ill-nature; but most one, who seems desirous to recommend herself by what the other Sex think their peculiar prerogative.

Trotter also put forth her views of the purpose of the theatre, whose "End is most noble, to discourage Vice and recommend firm, unshaken Virtue." It is probably no coincidence that The Fatal Friendship was performed in the same month when Jeremy Collier's A Short View of the Immorality and Prophaneness of the English Stage was published.

The Fatal Friendship was heralded by no fewer than four commendatory poems. The verses by Bevil Higgons, originally intended for inclusion in Agnes, echoed the feminist sentiment of the dedication: "With all your Sex's delicacy strong,/ Possess the talents we do vainly vaunt" (lines 12-13). The second set was signed P. Harmon; he also wrote the prologue. He praised the morality of the piece.

You stand the first of Stage-reformers too.
No vicious stains pollute your Moral Scene;
Chast are your Thoughts, and your expression clean.
(lines 36-38)

He goes on to compare Trotter to Congreve and to George Granville.²

The third set of commendatory verses is now attributed to Lady Sarah Piers and echoed the sentiments of other verses exchanged among

¹Summers, Restoration Theatre, p. 90.

²Lord Lansdowne, whose comedy The She-Gallants had been produced in the 1695-96 season.

women writers:

The fam'd Orinda's and Astrea's Lays
 With never dying Wit bless'd Charles' days
 And we supposed Wit could no higher rise,
 Till you, succeeding, tear from them the Prize.
 More just Applause is yours who check the rage
 Of reigning Vice that has debauched the Stage.
 And dare shew Virtue in a Vicious Age.
 (lines 1-7)

The fourth poem was an anonymous tribute from a man:

Our Salique Law of Wit you have destroy'd:
 Establish'd Female Claim, and Triumph'd o'er our
 Pride:
 While we look on, and with repining Eyes
 Behold you bearing off so Rich a Prize.
 (lines 30-33)

The setting for this tragedy is France, after a war with Spain. The story concerns Grammont and Felicia, who are secretly married and have an infant son. Both are fortuneless and are being pressured to wed others. Felicia's brother Belgard is pressing for a match with Count Roquelaure, Grammont's father, and trying to arrange a marriage for Grammont with the wealthy young widow Lamira.

Grammont's best friend, Castalio, is unjustly imprisoned. The Count, fearing a rival in his son, offers to put up the money to free Castalio if Grammont marries Lamira. He balks: "Marriage My Lord, I hold a Sacred Bond/ Which should be made for nobler ends than Interest,/ Hearts shou'd first be join'd" (p. 13). The further news that his son is being held for ransom makes Grammont relent and enter into the bigamous marriage, which, however, he refuses to consummate. Lamira is enraged at the rejection and vows revenge. Grammont is unaware that Castalio is in love with Lamira. Belgard tells Felicia of the marriage, which prompts her to confess the previous vow. Lamira maliciously taunts

Felicia, pretending that she and Grammont have indeed consummated the marriage. The misunderstanding is cleared up at a secret meeting between Grammont and Felicia, but in the meantime Lamira has fired up the freed Castalio against Grammont. After explanations, the friends are reconciled, but Grammont intervenes in a duel between Castalio and Bellgard and kills his friend by mistake. He stabs himself in remorse just as a messenger arrives with the news that Roquelaure has relented and agreed to care for Felicia and the child, and that Castalio has been cleared of all charges. Grammont's sin appears to have been hastiness in trying to take his fate into his own hands.

O what a Wretch was I, that could not wait
 Heaven's Time! The Providence that never fails
 Those who dare trust it. Durst I have been honest.
 One day had chang'd the Scene, and made me happy.
 (p. 56)

The Fatal Friendship was the only play Birch chose to be included in her Works. He reported, "This tragedy met with great applause, and is still thought the most perfect of all her dramatic performances (Life, 1: viii). It was highly esteemed in its time and was the only successful new play of the season. It received the grudging approbation of usually stern critics. Gildon, in Lives and Characters, allowed: "I need say nothing of this play, the town has prevented my approbation; and I can only add that I think it deserves the applause it met with, which every play that has the advantage of being clap't cannot get from the severer and abler judges."¹ Even Ramble, in the often scathing, A Comparison of the Two Stages (1702), proposes a toast to the "Fair Author of The Fatal

¹Langbaine/Gildon, Lives and Characters, p. 179.

Friendship."¹

John Genest had reservations. "The story is domestic and the play on the whole not a very bad one, but the distress arises from improbable circumstances."² (He does not specify which circumstances he found improbable.) Certainly an impoverished younger brother was a common subject, as was a fortuneless heroine. Secret marriages abounded in the drama of the time. A father and son in love with the same woman and an innocent man accused of a crime were also recognizable situations. Perhaps it was all of the above combined in the same play, plus the incident of a baby kidnapped by pirates which strained credulity. James Beattie was scandalized by the morals of the drama. He thought that it ought to be suppressed on the grounds that it revealed Trotter "at eighteen a greater adept in love matters than unmarried women of her age ought to be."³ He must have been referring to Felicia's description of "all those tender, charming extasies and soft embraces" (p. 25).

Jane Williams, in Literary Women of England (1861), also found it too frank from her Victorian point of view: "The tragedy thus applauded does not contain a single line of real poetry, and does contain certain undecorous allusions, which would not be tolerated either on the stage or elsewhere in modern times." She allows, "The plot's commonplace, but well complicated, and it produces some good dramatic situations," but

¹[Gildon,] A Comparison, p. 28.

²Genest, Some Account, 2:155.

³James Beattie, An Account of the Life and Writings of James Beattie (Edinburg: n.p., 1806, 2:244.

concludes, "This tragedy, having been deemed by contemporary critics the best of Catherine Trotter's dramatic compositions, leaves the reader little cause to join in Dr. Birch's regret that want of space enforced the omission of the four other plays from his edition of her works."¹

In the twentieth century Herbert Carter did not find The Fatal Friendship at all a good specimen of tragedy.² But Fidelis Morgan, who chose it for inclusion in her collection of women's plays of the Restoration, found the plot "extraordinary, for a tragedy, in its ingenious obsession with money, its advantages, and the problems resulting from the lack of it."³

Certainly Trotter's own young life had provided ample opportunity to observe firsthand the problems of survival for impoverished gentility. The proceeds from this play doubtless mitigated, at least temporarily, that very circumstance.

It is true that the real villain of the play is poverty; the crisis is brought on by the hero's forced "sell-out" in marrying an heiress. This is definitely a theme anticipating the domestic drama to become prevalent in the next century. It is purely domestic in scale; no empires fall, only private lives are wrecked. The theme of the evils resulting from forced marriage hearkens back, however, to Aphra Behn, who, in her turn, was ahead of her time.

¹Williams, Literary Women, p. 183.

²Carter, "Three Women Dramatists," p. 97.

³Morgan, Female Wits, p. 31.

Perhaps it is a more difficult task to determine what made a play a success in that changing and fickle period than to explain the failures. The Fatal Friendship seems to have been championed as an example that "reformed" or moral drama could succeed. Making the hero guilty of no greater crime than impetuosity and parental disobedience (of an unreasonable parent at that) diminished the scope of the tragedy --which need not have been a fatal one. The murder is an accident. The "deus ex machina" ending of the father's sudden forgiveness and the reprieves is bitterly ironic in that it is just too late to save two essentially good young men. So, the end seems more of a mishap than a tragedy. Just what comprised tragedy bothered Trotter, and in the dedication to her next serious play she questioned whether romantic love was even an important enough concern for a tragedy.



Love at a Loss, Trotter's sole effort at comedy, opened at Drury Lane on November 23, 1700.¹ In the dedication to Lady Sarah Piers, her close friend, Trotter apologizes for the play, and protects herself from too stringent criticism on three separate counts: she has never claimed to have any talent for comedy; she has not put much effort into the project; and it was ruined by sloppy printing. She claims that it was originally intended only as a comic subplot.

I never thought of making any pretense to a talent for
Comedy, but writ this when the Town had been little pleased
with Tragedy intire, mingled with one of mine which since

¹LS, 2:5.

the taste has mended, appeared alone; and this lay by me a considerable time, till idleness reminded me of filling it up, thus it was placed with little care or concern for the success; not intending to establish my fame by it.

One of the three plots running through the comedy was probably intended to run parallel to that of The Fatal Friendship.

The prologue, like so many at that time, decried the foreign invasion of singers and dancers and announces of the authoress, "Gladly she does disband all Foreign Aid,/ Let Mother Wit defend an English Maid" (lines 13-14).

The play involves three damsels in romantic dilemmas. Lucilia is to be wed the next day to Phillabel, but she is desperately afraid that he will find out about some love letters she has indiscreetly sent some time ago to a fop who is still wooing her. (This role was taken by Anne Oldfield, who eventually replaced the renowned Bracegirdle in leading ingenue roles.) Miranda, an incurable coquette, has been mismatched with her temperamental opposite, Constant. Lesbia's problem is more rooted in reality. Although duly betrothed to Beaumine, she has been persuaded to consummate in advance, which has resulted in his waning interest. The rake, who first appears to be of the Restoration cut, reforms at the end and himself delivers a moralizing verse on the proper treatment of wives:

For treating them with rudeness, or neglect,
Does most dishonour on ourselves reflect:
If that respects which our own merit drew,
We think, by their becoming ours, less due.
And as in chusing, we their worth approve,
We tax our Judgement when we cease to love.
(p. 56)

To make yet another moral point, Lesbia, whose folly was the most serious, returns to deliver the epilogue:

What certain hazards do poor Women run!
 They hear, believe, they taste, and are undone.

 And hands, and Seals, and Oaths cannot secure
 A Mind like Man's unfaithful and impure.
 (lines 1-2, 13-14)

Trotter had cited George Piers, her friend Lady Piers's husband, in her dedication as the perfect example of a spouse.

A living Instruction of the Moral of the last Verses of this Comedy, and so well recommends his own Worth by his Respect and Value for you, and (in an Age when Wives are scarce looked upon but as the impediment of a Man's Pleasure, or at best a Convenience in settling his Affairs, without aiming at a satisfaction in herself) has found his felicity, in making yours.

The play was not a success. The badly produced edition apparently nettled Trotter, who had been unable to recall it, and she revised it years later as The Honourable Deceivers; or, All Right at the Last.¹ This version was never produced and has been lost.

Allardyce Nicoll saw the Lesbia Beaumine plot line as central, with Beaumine the pivotal character. He classified the play as a comedy of humours, employing many of Jonson's devices, but serving as a "background to a manners plot revolving around Beaumine 'a Gay roving Spark,' and a slight sentimental element in the figure of Lesbia."²

Love at a Loss received so little critical attention that it was sometimes supposed not to have been produced. Herbert Carter was of that impression, as was Leslie Stephen in his DNB entry.³

¹Baker, Biographia Dramatica, 1:384.

²Nicoll, History of English Drama, 2:176.

³Carter, "Three Women Dramatists," p. 96; DNB, 4:639.

Of the three plot lines which wove through Love at a Loss, it is probable that the more nearly serious and the one in which the female character is most fully developed was that intended to run along the plot of The Fatal Friendship. The Miranda/Constant plot is merely an exercise in juxtaposing two opposite humours characters. While Lucinda's fear at being called to account for indiscreet letters written in her youth has an autobiographical ring of truth in Trotter's case, the dilemma is too slight to be used parallel to a theme with which Trotter obviously wished to make a moral statement. The lost revised version of the play may have strengthened the dominance of Lesbia's story with its improbable theme of a seduced woman who gets her man in the end. The loophole which spares Lesbia the stigma of a fallen woman is that of pre-contract, betrothal being a much stronger contract then than in modern times. But her salvation is also dependent on an enlightened, liberal partner, i.e., a reformed rake. No "Gay, roving Spark" of Restoration comedy would have married a fallen woman--even one he himself had despoiled.



With The Unhappy Penitent, Trotter returned to tragedy. It opened February 4, 1701 at Drury Lane.¹ Lady Sarah Piers's prefatory poem compared Trotter to both Katherine Philips ("Orinda") and Aphra Behn ("Astrea"), as she had in her previous paean for The Fatal Friendship:

¹LS, 2:7.

Thus like the morning star Orinda rose
 A champion for her Sex, and wisely chose
 Conscious of female weakness, humble ways
 T'insinuate for applause, not storm the Bays.
 Next gay Astrea briskly won the Prize
 Yet left a spacious room to criticize.
 (lines 7-12)

Trotter's dedication to Charles Montague, Lord Halifax, constituted an essay in dramatic criticism. She delineated the salient qualities of four predecessors whom she most admired:

The most universal Genius this Nation ever bred, Dryden himself did not excell in every Part, through most of what he writ there appears a Distinguishing Greatness, that Elevation of Thought, that Sublime which transports the Soul; he commands our Admiration of himself, but little moves our concern for those he represents; his Genius seems not turned to work upon the softer Passions....

Otway, besides his Judicious Choice of the Fable, had a peculiar art to move Compassion, which as it is one of the chief Ends of Tragedy, he found most adapted to his Genius, and never venturing where that did not lead him, excelled in his Pathetick....

Had Lee consulted his strength as well, he might have given us more perfect Pieces, but aiming at the Sublime, instead of being Great, he is Extravagant....

The inimitable Shakespeare seems alone secure on every side from attack (for I speak not here of Faults against the Rules of Poetry, but against the natural Genius) he had all the images of nature present to him... for tho' he has chiefly exerted himself on the more Masculine Passions 'tis as the choice of his Judgement not the restraint of his Genius, and he seems to have design'd those few tender moving Scenes he has giv'n us, as a proof he cou'd be every way equally Admirable.¹

Of tragedy, Trotter made the stricture, "I have ventured to propose a Doubt whether Love be a proper subject for it; it seems to me not Noble, not Solemn enough for Tragedy." She concluded the essay with

¹Trotter paraphrases Dryden in Essay of Dramatic Poesy (1668): "All the images of nature were still present to him," which was reiterated more than a half century later by Samuel Johnson in "Preface to the Plays of Shakespeare," in Dramatic Theory and Criticism, ed. Bernard E. Dukore (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1974), p. 405.

advocating moral reform in the theatre.

The prologue, spoken by Mrs. Oldfield, sued for reunification of the rival companies:

But now the peaceful tattle of the Town,
Is how to join both Houses into one,
And whilst the blust'ring hot-brain'd heroes fight,
Our softer Sex pleads gently to unite.

(This premature hope put forth by the patent company was probably prompted by the slump in attendance; a letter from William Morley to Thomas Coke quoted in the London Stage describes the season of 1700/1701 thusly: "I believe there is no poppet shew in a country town, than but takes more money than both the playhouses."¹)

The Unhappy Penitent is set in the Court of Charles VIII of France in the late fifteenth century. Charles has been engaged to Margarite of Flanders since childhood, but Ann of Brittanie has recently come to court, and Charles has fallen in love with her. Ann returns his love, but she and Margarite remain friends in spite of it. Margarite is actually in love with the Duke of Lorrain, and, feeling that Charles's long delay has cancelled her previous vow, she secretly marries Lorrain. The Duke of Brittanie, who loved Margarite, slanders her as a cast-off mistress of the King, but with Ann's help she is proved innocent. Brittanie leaves the country, leaving behind a letter confessing his lie. However, Margarite had sworn to enter a convent if her name was cleared, and she keeps her resolve, renouncing her beloved husband. Ann and the King will marry after all. The play concludes with a moral statement blaming Margarite's impetuosity in breaking her vow.

¹LS, 2:3.

The play was not a success. Genest, as in the case of The Fatal Friendship, taxed Trotter with improbability: "This is an indifferent T[ragedy]. by Mrs. Trotter--the whole business of it is love--Margarite's conduct is not very natural."¹ Modern scholars agreed. Nancy Cotton found the tragedy "priggish" and noted, "The morality of the play is contractual. Margarite violated her contract with the King, but redeems her mistake by keeping a contract with heaven."² Robert Hume called it "sentimental mush of the most contrived sort."³

The Unhappy Penitent, like Agnes de Castro, presented two high-minded women who are involved with the same man and yet maintain a friendship. This time the tragedy ended in renunciation, not death. The prologue had promised: "You've a bloodless Tragedy;/ Our Authoress cannot let her Heroe dye" (lines 12-13). Trotter's choice of a story based on an historical incident in which none of the principals had been killed precluded the slew of corpses that usually ended a tragedy. Trotter presented a case of basically decent people caught up in conflicts of interest, resulting in frustration and unhappiness, but without any dastardly deeds being perpetrated. What can seem from today's viewpoint contrived and priggish may well have been conscious striving on Trotter's part for a refinement of the concept of moral integrity.

Trotter's conscious effort to mold the plot and characterizations to demonstrate a moral, in keeping with her concept of the drama

¹Genest, Some Account, 2:234.

²Cotton, Women Playwrights, p. 106.

³Hume, Development of English Drama, p. 453.

as a tool for instruction rather than as a mirror of life, may account for the effect of unnaturalness.



The Revolution of Sweden, Trotter's last play, was begun in 1703, but not produced until 1706. Trotter had sent an outline to Congreve for his comments, although he himself had quit writing for the stage, presumably on account of his disappointment over the tepid reception of his masterpiece, The Way of the World (1700). His advice was thorough and practical, but judging from the finished play, Trotter did not implement all of his suggestions.

I think the design in general very great and noble; the conduct of it very artful, if not too full of business, which may either run into length or obscurity; but both those... you have skill enough to avoid. You are the best judge whether those of your own sex will approve as much of the heroic virtue of Constantia and Christina, as if they had been engaged in some belle passion; for my part, I like them better as they are. In the second act, I would have that noise which generally attends so much the fighting on the stage, provided against; for those frequent alarms and excursions do much to disturb an audience. The difficulty in the third act is as well solved by you as possible; and certainly you can never be too careful not to offend probability, in supposing a man not to discover his own wife.

In the fourth act it does not seem to me to be clear enough, how Constantia comes to be made free, and to return to Gustavus; the third intimating so strongly, why we might expect to have her continued in the Viceroy's power. This act is full of business; and intricacy, in the fourth act, must by all means be avoided.

The last act will have many harangues in it, which are dangerous in a catastrophe, if long, and not of the last importance.... You see, Madam, I am as free as you command me to be; and yet my objections are none such, as you may provide against, even while you are writing the dialogue. (Life, 1: xxii-xxiii)

The play was brought out at the Queen's Theatre by the Betterton company, which had produced The Fatal Friendship in 1698. It had been

scheduled to open February 7, but was postponed until February 11. The leading men were the venerable Betterton and his young protégé Barton Booth. Mrs. Barry played the noble Constantia, but the other female lead was taken by Mrs. Harcourt, after her controversial defection from Rich's company.¹

The play was not a success, and Trotter added a preface to the published version, defending it against critics who, she claimed, never even saw the play, or if they were bodily present were not attentive. She blamed the taste of the audience, with which she was writing at cross-purposes, and reaffirmed her moral premise.

The dedication to Harriot Godolphin was a feminist statement about the intellectual equality of women.

There are so great Difficulties, and such general Discouragements, to those of our Sex who would improve their Minds, and employ their Time in any Science or useful Art, that there cannot be a more distinguishing Mark of a Free and Beneficent Spirit, than openly to condemn that ill-grounded Custom, by giving Countenance and Protection to those who have attempted against it... such an Encouraging Indulgence to the Endeavors of our Sex, initiated by many of your Ladyship's Quality, and Merit, it might incite some Greater geniuses among us to exert themselves, and change our Emulation of a Neighboring Nation's Fopperies, to the commendable Ambition of Rivalling them in their illustrious women.

The prologue warned the audience that they were in for something of a lecture. Trotter had replaced passion in her heroines with patriotism.

Invited by a Woman, every Guest,
No doubt, expects a soft, Effeminate Feast
.....
They must a Noble Heroine Approve,
Parting with Life, nay what we prize Above,
To save the Nation, vanquishing her Love.
(lines 1-2, 25-27)

¹LS, 2:117.

The story is set in the midst of Gustavus Adolphus' rebellion against the Danes early in the seventeenth century. The fates of two couples are shaped by the tides of battle. Christina flees her husband Beron, who is a traitor, and fights, disguised as a man, on the Swedish side, under the name Fredage. Constantia is the wife of Gustavus' ally Arwide. Both women exhibit extraordinary courage. At the moment when Fredage is faced with actual combat, she reflects on the differences in male and female courage as the product of conditioning.

Why do I dread what will enflame
The meanest Soldiers Courage? Are our Souls too
Like their frail Mansions of weaker frame than Mans?
Or can the force of Custom and Opinion
Effect this difference?

(p. 17)

Constantia is captured by the Danish forces, but, impervious to peril, engages in theological debates. She is steadfast when wooed by the enemy Viceroy, but aghast when she is falsely informed that her husband Arwide, also taken prisoner, has bought his own life by giving her over to the Viceroy. When she is released owing to a sudden forced retreat by the Danes, she goes straight to Gustavus and informs on Arwide. He is arrested, but when he denies the charge Constantia believes him despite the evidence. Christina, in whom Beron has confided in as Fredage, reveals her own identity and his villainy as she dies from a wound, clearing Arwide. Far from being offended by his wife's action, Arwide is proud of her. "Yes, my Constantia, thy exalted Vertue/ Constrain'd my Admiration, tho' a Sufferer by it./ O wou'd Men emulate thy great Example" (p. 71).

The Revolution of Sweden is noted in John Downes's Roscus Anglicanus: "She kept close to the history, but wanting the just

decorum of plays, expir'd the sixth day."¹ Genest mentioned the historical source in his critique:

The T[ragedy]. was written by Mrs. Trotter--on the whole it is not a bad play--for the history on which it is founded see Vertot's Revolution of Sweden. Mrs. Trotter omits the early part of Gustavus's exploits--in the beginning of her play he is camped in the neighborhood of Stockholm--Arwide and Christina are real characters, but almost all that they say and do in this T. is fiction.²

This play has attracted the attention of some modern scholars. Allardyce Nicoll found it "a poor piece of work, with a strained and chaotic plot, and passions atrophied and chill. Its only interest lies in the classic treatment of otherwise heroic subject-matter."³ Morgan defends the craftsmanship. "The play is written with Trotter's usual care for language, and it is well constructed, but because of the subject matter as much as anything else, certainly leaves a distinct impression of dullness."⁴ Montague Summers did not find the piece dull. "On the whole it is not an uninteresting drama, although somewhat lacking in fire and spirit. The historical characters are transformed into purely romantic figures, and one feels that it should have been wrought in the heroic manner of a quarter of a century before."⁵ While acknowledging the faults of the play, Cotton defends it for its sincerity of purpose, making comparisons with the unacted plays of the Duchess of Newcastle

¹Downes, Roscus Anglicanus, p. 49.

²Genest, Some Account, 2:348.

³Nicoll, History of English Drama, 2:104.

⁴Morgan, Female Wits, p. 28.

⁵Summers, Restoration Theatre, p. 265.

of the previous generation:

No doubt the Town would have been better pleased if the heroines, as Congreve hinted, had been engaged in some "belle passion." But Trotter was sincerely single-minded in her attempt to reform and in her desire to depict heroic women.

For this reason, The Revolution of Sweden is interesting as an early feminist statement. It is the type of play that the Duchess of Newcastle tried to write many years earlier. Christina is the military-patriotic lady, and Constantia fulfills the duchess's ideal of the oratorical heroine, capable of arguing theology with learned prelates.¹

The Revolution of Sweden was Trotter's only play after she had redirected her literary interests to philosophical treatises, and religious tracts. Her first, The Defence of Locke's Essay on Human Understanding, was written in 1702. By this time she was determined to marry a clergyman, and her correspondence shows she was being courted by two of them even while she was writing this play. The love between the leading characters, Constantia and Arwide, is austere, verging on the platonic. Both the heroines function on a higher plane than that of romantic love, which is not surprising since Trotter had rejected it as insufficient for tragic scope. Congreve had warned against "Harangues," and yet this was just the direction in which Trotter was directing her efforts--towards the sermonizing lecture of discourse. Such is the scene in the Viceroy's camp when Constantia engages in polemical discussion with the Archbishop, literally bringing the action to a standstill.

This play is Trotter's strongest feminine statement. The women represented are no longer even represented as dependent upon the support of a peer; each is a tower of strength unto herself. The two heroines embody two different aspects of excellence--Constantia intellectual prowess and Christina physical courage. They are also exquisitely moral.

The epilogue casts an aspersion, albeit it humorous, on the perils of trusting a man's promise. She is referring to a promised but undelivered prologue, but the double entendre is clear:

Our Authoress, trusting to a Brother's Pen,
 As who among us trust no faithless Men,
 Has been deceived--But that I need not say.
 She took his word, and then--you know your way.
 (lines 1-4)

Although it suited neither the taste of its time nor ours, one can consider The Revolution of Sweden a success in the light of Trotter's perception of the purpose of the theatre. It was a platform for her feminist theories and a sort of sermon "vivant."

Chapter III

DELARIVIÈRE MANLEY

About the life of Delarivière Manley a good deal of information is available. A major source is Manley herself. Early theatre historians and biographers adapted her fictionalized autobiography, The Adventures of Rivella (1714), and the "Delia" episode in The New Atalantis (1709) and presented the composite as given fact.¹ The accounts of Giles Jacob in The Poetical Register (1723), Thomas Whincop in A Compleat List of All English Dramatic Poets (1747), David Erskine Baker, Biographia Dramatica (1812), and John Doran, Their Majesties' Servants (1865) all treat Rivella as factual. Even as recently as 1981 Nancy Cotton, in Women Playwrights in England, followed the tradition.

Other modern scholars are more skeptical. The premise of Walter and Clare Jerrold's biography in Five Queer Women is:

Mary Delarivière Manley was a lady of many reticences. Among other things, she wrote a little volume which is regarded as her life history, but in it she tells what she pleases--and leaves out much more than she tells... and by her writing under an assumed name was free to say as many nice things about herself as she wished.²

Fidelis Morgan, in The Female Wits, a collection of plays including Manley's The Royal Mischief (1696), takes a similar view of her biography:

¹Manley, "Rivella" and "New Atalantis," in The Novels, 2:180-94.

²Walter and Clare Jerrold, Five Queer Women (London: Brentano's Ltd., 1929), pp. 83-84.

Autobiographies are unreliable at the best of times, but having given herself the freedom of a pseudonym, "Sir Charles Lovemore," she was free to dispense with personal modesty and paint as flattering a picture of herself as she liked.... And this is the problem with Mrs. Manley. She has presented us with so many accounts of her life that it is difficult to know where reality ends and self-delusion begins.¹

A reading of Rivella, however, finds Mrs. Manley as often frank as flattering. It is far from flattery when a woman "who had the misfortune to be Born with an indifferent Beauty" admits to a pock-marked complexion and a tendency to obesity. More important, while Manley openly stated her purpose in writing the book, "My Business was to give you Rivella's History on those Occasions that have to her Prejudice, made most Noise in the World," she still reports through Lovemore, peccadilloes of an unsavory nature and admits to serious character faults. At one point in his story he comments, "I still had so much concern for Rivella that I pitied her Conduct, which I saw must infallibly center in her Ruin: There was no Language approached her Ear but Flattery and Persuasion to Delight and Love. ... Her Vanity was now at the Height."² He prefaces another criticism with, "Valuing myself as I do upon the Reputation of an Impartial Historian, neither blind to Rivella's Weaknesses and Misfortunes."³

Paun Bunyan Anderson, Manley's chief biographer, whose unpublished dissertation, "Mary Delarivière Manley, A Cavalier's Daughter in Grub Street" (1931), and the more accessible article, "Mistress Delarivière Manley's Biography," are the key sources for modern scholars

¹Morgan, Female Wits, p. 32.

²"Rivella," p. 44.

³Ibid., p. 53.

of Manley, took a middle ground on the subject of her veracity. Searching for confirmation or contradiction in other sources and documents, he concluded: "Beneath the alluring surface of her narrative lies a structure of objective fact."¹ Patricia Koster, who wrote the introduction for the reprint edition of Manley's major novels, also defended Manley's general trustworthiness. She asserted after her investigations of the incidents reported in Manley's scandal chronicles that "She did not mention a scandal without foundation."² Koster concluded, "Scholars have generally assumed that she depends more on her overheated imagination than she does upon fact. To the extent that I have been able to check her stories, I have found that the extant records tend rather to support than overthrow what Mrs. Manley says."³

Despite the references and anecdotes supplied by contemporaries, and her own accounts of several of the major events in her life, the first vital statistics, the date and place of her birth, and even her proper name, have been matters for speculation. The date 1663 given for her birth in G.A. Aitken's entry in the DNB, though taken from a contemporary source (B.M. Sloane MS 1708.f.117), does not agree with the documented events of her life which can be approximately dated.⁴ The same source gives her name as Mary. Anderson, in his research for his dissertation, noticed that nowhere did she or her contemporaries refer to her

¹Paul Bunyan Anderson, "Mistress Delariviere Manley's Biography," Modern Philology 33 (1936): 262).

²Manley, Novels, 1:vii.

³Ibid., 1:xvii.

⁴DNB, 12:921.

as Mary. In all her signatures, and every document, including her will and tombstone, either Dela, Delarivier, or Delarivière was the inscription. Anderson supplies the information that the unusual Delarivière was the name of the wife of her father, Sir Roger Manley's, commanding officer in the Navy, in whose honor she may have been named.¹

Anderson's discoveries and common sense both argue against the B.M. manuscript name and date. Accurate dating is further complicated by Manley's own use of poetic licence regarding her age and the dates of certain events, in the reminiscences written when she was in middle age. This is a not-uncommon practice of women in public life, and in Manley's case it appears to have been a plausible matter, the reduction ranging on a sliding scale from two to five years--not sixteen, as would have been the case had she been born in 1663.

Information about the early events in Manley's life can be gleaned from facts known about her father, whose official life was well documented through military records. Manley, whose family dated back to William the Conqueror, was knighted by James I in 1628. A staunch Cavalier, he had to flee to Holland in 1646, but after the Restoration was appointed deputy governor of the Isle of Jersey.² Manley reports in Rivella that she was born "in one of those islands, which formerly belonged to France."³ This places her birthdate between 1667 and 1672, when Sir Roger was transferred to Portsmouth. If, as

¹Anderson, "Mistress Delariviere," p. 263.

²DNB, 12:923.

³"Rivella," p. 14.

Edmund Curll relates in his introduction to the posthumous edition of Rivella, she was born at sea between Jersey and Guernsey, then 1672 seems a likely date.

Walter and Clare Jerrold report that Manley herself gave her birthdate as 1677, but there are contradictions between that claim and her own accounts of events.¹ It is unlikely that she was so precocious as to be smitten by a young officer stationed at her father's fort when she was but eight years old. Military records show that the Earl of Huntington's regiment was stationed at Landgard Fort in 1685. The 1672 birthdate would make her thirteen at the time--just the right age for a girl's first infatuation. One of Jonathan Swift's letters to "Stella" refers to Manley as "about forty" in 1712.²

The Adventures of Rivella is a thinly disguised fictionalized autobiography. Edmund Curll recounted that Manley had got wind that Charles Gildon was preparing a biography and in self-defense against anticipated criticism offered to substitute one by herself.³ The framework is a conversation between Sir Charles Lovemore and a visiting young French Cavalier, D'Aumont. It was supposedly translated into English from the account written by the Frenchman from memory, which, after his sudden death, had been discovered among his effects by his gentleman. After a preliminary comparison of Englishwomen of letters with

¹Jerrold and Jerrold, Five Queer Women, p. 86.

²Jonathan Swift, Journal to Stella, 2 vols., ed. Harold Williams (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 2:474.

³Ralph Straus, The Unspeakable Curll (London: Chapman & Hall, 1927), p. 44.

the French, in which Rivella is held superior to Madam Dacier, because in addition to prodigious intellect she also possesses sex appeal, the story of her life is begun.

Delarivière Manley was one of five children, who included older brothers, Edward and Francis, an older sister, Mary Elizabeth (the possible source of confusion about Delarivière's name), and a younger sister, Cordelia. Sir Roger's wife died when the last two girls were quite young, and she and her sisters were largely reared by governesses. Sir Roger may have had a hand in their education, however; he was a literary man and an historian. At the King's command he wrote The History of the Late Warres in Denmark (1670). The History of the Rebellion, written in Latin, was translated and published posthumously in 1691. Sir Roger's biographer in the DNB states that Manley as Rivella "wrongly represents her father as author of the first volume of The Turkish Spy, "now attributed to G.P. Marana."¹ Actually, though it is not generally known, and is not listed with his other credits in the DNB, Sir Roger did write the portion of Knolles's History of the Turkish Empire spanning the years 1676 to 1686.²

Delarivière began writing as a girl, with a long correspondence with a neighboring boy, John Tidcombe, who was to remain a life-long friend, and perhaps lover, and who was designated the model for the love-lorn but loyal Sir Charles Lovemore in Rivella.³ He may also be

¹DNB, 12:923.

²Richard Knolles, The Turkish History (London: Knolles, 1687-1700), pp. 49-96.

³Manley, Novels, 2:key.

the prototype of "Awdwell" in The Female Wits, whose relationship with "Marsilia" parallels that described between Lovemore and Rivella.

Lovemore was forgotten upon her acquaintance with Lysander, a young subaltern officer who unfortunately was in love with someone else, but who often came to dinner, thus preserving her fantasy of an intrigue. Lysander has been identified as Ensign James Carlisle, an actor and playwright.¹ He may have sparked in Manley an early interest in the theatre. His rival Lovemore describes him as "The most Beautiful Youth I remember ever to have seen. His Voice was very good; the Songs then, in vogue Amorous, and such as suited her temper of Mind; she drank the Poyson both at her Ears and Eyes."² Her grief at his regiment's transfer, which was engineered by her concerned father, was so severe that she was sent away to try to forget him, to the home of a Huegenot minister near where her brother Francis was stationed. Her studies in French during that stay were the only formal education she ever received.

Shortly thereafter occurred the two events that were to decisively shape her life. Her father died in 1687, and in 1688 the Glorious Revolution prevented her scheduled appointment as a lady-in-waiting to Mary of Modena. This position would have exposed her to court society and opened up opportunities for her to make a suitable marriage. Her father's death placed her in the circumstance which would result in denying her a respectable place in society for the rest of her life. While her older sister had married an officer in the regiment, she and

¹Anderson, "Mistress Delarivière," p. 263.

²"Rivella," 1:19-20.

Cordelia were placed under the guardianship of her first cousin, twenty years her senior, John Manley. He had been raised and educated by Sir Roger. He was married and did not take in the girls immediately, but shunted them off to an aged aunt who filled the impressionable girls' heads with chivalric tales and romances. The following is Manley's account for the debacle that resulted in John Manley's return. It is framed as Delia's confession to the Grand Druid in the second volume of The New Atlantis.

He was in deep mourning... he told us for his Wife. We congratulated him for his deliverance from an old uneasy Lady.... My cousin-guardian immediately declar'd himself as my Lover, with such an eagerness that none can guess at who were not acquainted with the violence of his Temper. I was no otherwise pleas'd with it than he answer'd something to the Character I had found in those Books that had poyson'd and deluded my dawning Reason.... I fell ill of a violent fever, where my life was despair'd of. Don Marcus [John Manley] and my sister never quitted the chamber in sixteen nights, nor took any other repose, than by throwing themselves upon a little pallet in the same room. In short, having ever had a Gratitude in my Nature and a tender sense of the benefits upon my recovery I promis'd to marry him. 'Twas fatally for me performed in the presence of my Sister, one maid servant, and a Gentleman who had married a Relation of ours. I was then wanting of fourteen, without any deceit or guess of it in others....

He brought me to Angela [London] fix'd me in a remote quarter of it, forbad me to stir out of doors or to receive the visits of my dearest Sister or any other Relation, friend or acquaintance. I thought this was a very rough proceeding, and griev'd the more excessively at it, since I married him only because I thought he lov'd me....

I was uneasy at being kept a prisoner, but my Husband's Fondness and Jealousy was the pretense.... Soon after I prov'd with Child, and so perpetually ill that I implor'd Don Marcus to let me have the company of my Sister and my Friends. Having first tried all the arguments he could invent, then the authority of a Husband, but in vain, for I was fix'd to my point, and would have my Sister's company; he fell upon his knees before me, with so much Confusion, distress and anguish, that I was at a loss to know what could work him up to such a pitch. At length... he stabbed me with the wounding relation of his Wife's being still alive! conjur'd me to have some Mercy upon a lost Man, as he was in an obstinate, inveterate Passion, that had no alternative but Death or Possession....

My fortune was in Don Marcus' hands, or worse, already lavish'd away in those excesses of drinking and play, that he could not abstain from, though he had lately married me, a wife of whom he pretended to be fond.... What could I do? forlorn! distress'd beggar'd! to whom could I run for refuge, even from want and misery, but to the very Traitor that had undone me....

Thus was I detain'd by my unhappy circumstances and his prevailing Arts to wear away three wretched years in his guilty House.¹

Her newborn son was no comfort to her, nor does she appear to have been a loving mother. "My wretched Son, whenever I cast Eyes upon him, was a mortal Wound to my Repose; the Errors of his Birth glared full upon my Imagination."²

Besides a discrepancy about Manley's age when this took place (she was more likely seventeen than thirteen), questions were raised about the circumstances of her separation from John Manley. Manley acknowledged but denied the rumors in Rivella. "Some Part of the World, who were not acquainted with her Vertue, ridiculed her marriage, and the Villany of her Kinsman," and again in The New Atalantis:

That ill-natured part of the World, who when my misfortunes began to be Publick (for I was the last that knew of it) were so malicious to say, that either I was never Married, or else could be no stranger to his Ladies being alive.³

There is also the matter of one of the letters contained in Letters Written on a Stage-Coach Journey to Exeter (1696). This collection was Manley's first publication and is supposed to be a series of personal letters written over 1694 and 1695 during a period of retirement from London to the countryside. In the eighth letter, dated

¹"New Atalantis," 2:183-89.

²Ibid., 2:189.

³"Rivella," p. 31 (John Manley's fictitious name in Rivella was Oswald); "New Atalantis," 2:186.

March 15, 1695, the writer complains, "Now I am wedded and bedded too" and goes on to condemn retirement to the country as the worst sort of matrimony. Had she followed Manley into the country? She says in Rivella that he had asked her to join him, showing her an essay on polygamy as persuasion. The Jerrolds suggested that 1694 may have been the actual date of their marriage.¹

As Lovemore picked up the threads of the narrative in Rivella, having referred the reader to The New Atalantis where the above account could be found, he recounted that he had returned from abroad, where he had spent the years of Rivella's multiple misfortunes, and was horrified to find her ensconced in the household of the aging demi-mondine, The Duchess of Cleveland, Hillaria, who twenty-five years earlier had been the mistress of Charles II. As a favorite of the Duchess, Manley was doubtless made privy to the inside gossip about Charles's court and the early careers of prominent personalities which became the material of her scandal chronicles. In the gambling salon of Madam Mazarin, another former mistress of a King (Louis XIV), and other fashionable places frequented by the Duchess, she may have made her future literary contacts as well. The transformation from abandoned waif to member of the gaming set came about through her introduction to the Duchess by a Mrs. Ryder, her next-door neighbor, and the only person Manley conversed with in her solitude after John Manley's departure. Mrs. Ryder later became jealous of Manley's supplanting her as the Duchess's favorite, and began sending anonymous notes suggesting that Manley was setting

¹Jerrold and Jerrold, Five Queer Women, p. 86.

her cap for Cleveland's current lover, the actor Cardell Goodman.¹

After a heady six months, the fickle benefactress evicted Manley, accusing her of making an assignation with her son. This would be either Charles Fitzroy, Duke of Southampton, or George, Duke of Northumberland. Charles is the most likely since he was between marriages at this time.² At this point "Lovemore" made a concrete offer of support: "I who knew of Rivella's Innocency, beg'd she would retire to my Seat... she excus'd her self upon telling me she must first be in love with a man before she thought fit to reside with him."³ However, it is not far-fetched to imagine that Manley, finding herself without resources, took someone as a protector for a while, returning to London two years later with her bundle of manuscripts. The Female Wits, supposed to take place shortly after Manley's return to London, portrays Marsilia as being clandestinely kept by a man of property, the hapless Awdwell, who complains to Marsilia: "Why are you so ungrateful? Is it from your Lands water'd by Helicon, or my honest dirty acres your maintenance proceeds?"⁴ In any case, Manley was a skilled novelist by the time she wrote Rivella; and certainly a raped and abandoned heroine is more engaging than a runaway mistress or a bigamous, bored wife. John Manley was her occasional partner in adventures at least through 1701. Their son was apparently

¹Manley, Novels, 2:key. The key first appeared in Curll's fourth edition of Rivella.

²Claire and Walter Jerrold speculate that it was Henry, Duke of Grafton, but he had died in 1690.

³"Rivella," pp. 40-41.

⁴W.M., The Female Wits, p. 12.

raised by his father. He is mentioned once again in Rivella, when in approximately 1698, John Manley negotiated with Delarivière for a £2000 trust for him from an anticipated profit from a money-making scheme in which they were both involved.

Manley's career as a writer is barely touched on in Rivella. In one instance she disparaged her tragedy The Royal Mischief (1696): "I have since heard Rivella laugh and wonder that a Man of Mr. Betterton's grave Sense and Judgement should think well enough of the Productions of a Woman of Eighteen, to bring it upon the Stage in so handsome a Manner as he did."¹ (Actually, Manley was about twenty-two at the time of its composition.) On her return to London in late 1695 or early 1696, she made her debut on the literary scene with her Letters, followed by the two plays, The Lost Lover; or, The Jealous Husband and The Royal Mischief. The Letters were introduced with a commendatory letter, signed J.H., which announced the coming plays: "Sir Thomas Skipwith and Mr. Betterton are eagerly contending who shall first bring you to the Stage, and which shall be most Applauded, your Tragic or Comic strain." The Jerrols surmised that the initials J.H. were a blind for self-advertisement on Manley's part,² but the J.H. who wrote a commendatory poem for Trotter's Agnes de Castro was identified by Birch as John Hughes, Esq.³ Hughes was a minor writer, a friend of Richard Steele's, whose relationship with Manley also dates to this time. Sarah Fyge Egerton's Poems

¹"Rivella," p. 41.

²Jerrold and Jerrold, Five Queer Women, p. 99.

³Trotter, Life, p. viii.

(1706) also had a poem contributed by a J.H., quite possibly the same obliging fellow. The format of the Letters was copied later by other women writers of the period, Susanna Centlivre with Journey to Exon (1717) and Eliza Haywood with Bath Intrigues (1725).¹

In Rivella, Manley described her peculiar relationship with Skipwith candidly portraying herself as having played the fool. Apparently her sole attraction to "Sir Vainlove" was that he was madly in love with someone else all the while he was courting her. Her jealousy promoted her to send him the following verse, quoted in Rivella, which he had set to music and sang in company, identifying the author as his mistress, whom he "had brought to tread the Stage," thus demolishing what was left of her reputation:

Ah dang'rous Swain, tell me no more
Of the blest Nymph you worship and adore;
When thy fill'd Eyes are sparkling at her Name
I raving wish that I had caus'd the Flame.
If by your Fire for her, you can impart
Diffusive Heat to warm another's Heart;
A dang'rous Swain! what wou'd the Ruin be,
Shou'd you but once persuade you burn for me?²

Despite her embarrassment, professed in Rivella, Manley in fact included the song in The Lost Lover, which was produced by Skipwith at Drury Lane in March 1696.³ The comedy was not a success, and considerable problems developed during the ensuing rehearsal period for The Royal Mischief, causing her to take the tragedy to the Betterton company

¹Robert Adams Day, Told in Letters: Epistolary Fiction before Richardson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), p. 43.

²"Rivella," p. 45.

³LS, 1:459-60.

at Lincoln's Inn Fields, where it was promptly mounted. This is the principal incident on which The Female Wits was based (see pp. below, pp. 158-70 and 288-322).

The Royal Mischief fared better than Manley's first effort. It had the benefit of an all-star cast in Betterton, Barry, and Bracegirdle, for whom it was undoubtedly written, since she states in the preface that it was composed while she was in the country, which was before the secession of those players from the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. It was a fair success, running six days, thus providing two authors' benefits.¹ The preface of the play speaks with the confidence of an author who considers herself securely launched on a career in the theatre, but within months the bubble had burst. The Royal Mischief had achieved notoriety for what Manley euphemistically called its "warmth." It was well known enough to be remembered by the audience who saw the take-off in The Female Wits.

From the description of her as Marsilia in the *dramatis personae* to her farcical exit, Manley was depicted as a conceited, self-deluded termagant, whose only credential for having a production was "She's a Favorite" (p. 18). The anonymous author, or group of collaborators, followed the format of Buckingham's The Rehearsal (1671), with Marsilia as Manley paralleling Bayes as Dryden. Though both Mrs. Trotter and Mrs. Pix were also caricatured, Manley and specifically The Royal Mischief were the main butts of the jokes. The humiliation must have had a substantial impact; Manley did not present another play for ten years.

¹Ibid., 1:461.

The satire was squelched after six performances, by persons of influence acting on Manley's behalf, according to the preface. It was not published at this time, either. It did come out much later, in 1704, just as Manley was beginning to become involved in writing pamphlets as a Tory polemicist. Perhaps its publication was an effort to discredit her.

Lovemore reported a social whirl around the young Rivella at this time, in which she was caught up, to the further detriment of her reputation. One of her flatterers, said to be a great man, wrote verses for her quoted in Rivella and printed with The Royal Mischief (see below, p. 159). The amorous tribute has been tentatively ascribed to the Duke of Devonshire by Anderson.¹ They seem an odd pair of mutual admirers. Cavendish was one of the prominent Whig leaders, as Manley was a devout Tory. He was later to become Lord Steward to Queen Anne. Manley included him in her first anti-Whig novel, The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians (1705), as Devonius, but he was shown in a comparatively soft light. The DNB characterizes the Duke as tall and handsome and an inveterate womanizer. The entry quotes a poem written at his death "by a Lady" which closely resembles a phrase in Manley's dedication to The Royal Mischief:

Whose awful Sweetness challenged our esteem,
Our Sex's Wonder and our Sex's theme;
Whose soft, commanding looks our breasts assailed;
He came and saw and at first sight prevailed.²

¹Paul Bunyan Anderson, "Mary de la Riviere Manley, A Cavalier's Daughter in Grub Street" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1931), p. 93.

²DNB, 3:1284.

Manley's compliments included: "Your Grace, who is justly the admiration of our Sex... it seems particularly adapted to our Sex, to describe the Graces of your Person, what has employ'd our wonder, should our Expressions."

One friendship of whose Manley was so proud that she even called him by his real name in Rivella was George, Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt. Her anecdote concerning him relates how one evening at cards Rivella saved the Prince from being cheated by sharpers, for which bounty he was immensely grateful. They remained correspondents until after his death in 1705.¹

Among her fellow women writers, Manley is known to have been close to both Catherine Trotter and Mary Pix. She was also friendly with Sarah Fyge-Egerton, a feminist poet. A later rift in their friendship, as so often happened when Manley made an enemy, supplied material for The New Atalantis. In Egerton's collected poems,² not published until 1706, but mostly written about ten years before according to its preface, the poems "Delia to Phraartes on his playing Caesar Borgia" and "Delia to Phraartes on his mistake of three Ladies writing to him" (Delia, of course, being Manley's nickname and her pseudonym in portions of The New Atalantis), appear to be framed as if written by Manley. Manley may have been an admirer of Powell's before the acrimony arose over the productions of The Royal Mischief and The Female Wits. Powell played Phraartes in Neglected Virtue; or, The Unhappy Conquerors, pro-

¹"Rivella," p. 103.

²Sarah Fyge Egerton, A Collection of Poems on Several Occasions (London: n.p., 1706).

duced at Drury Lane one month before Manley's debut, when The Lost Lover would have been in rehearsal.¹ The title role of Caesar Borgia, originally a Betterton vehicle, was played by Powell after the split of the United Company.² "Delia's" poems read like fan letters in verse.

As early as 1695 Manley began a friendship with a young soldier that was to become a long-lasting, if stormy, relationship. Richard Steele and Mrs. Manley were confidants, if not lovers. She met Steele before his success with The Funeral (1701) and before he had espoused the virtues of The Christian Hero (1701). Sixteen of his letters to her, identified by Anderson and now accepted as his by his biographer, G.A. Aitken, and other scholars, were included in The Lady's Pacquet Broke Open (1706). They are established as having been written over a period from 1695 to 1702.³

The letters were familiar in tone. Steele expressed his admiration for Manley as a writer and as a woman. He seemed to court her at times: "I believe you laugh at my giving you an account of myself and y[e]t 'tis insignificant to you my Good or Ill, 'tho it depends wholly on you. I am here so utterly left to my own thoughts that my Passion gives me double torture."⁴ Twice he suggested that she visit him where he was stationed, but he also openly discussed his relationships with other women, complaining of a young mistress who avoided him, while he

¹LS, 1:459.

²Cibber, An Apology, p. 126.

³Richard Steele, The Correspondence of Richard Steele, ed. Rae Blanchard (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 425.

⁴Ibid., p. 11.

in turn was avoiding an old woman pursuing him. He urged Manley to write more frequently and to confide likewise in him: "I am sure that you are never out of an Intrigue, and I will take it ill that I live in Ignorance."¹ The following would appear to have been sent just at the time of The Royal Mistress: "I congratulate your Success, and am heartily glad that Wealth falls into an hand which is liberal as 'tis fair."²

In fact, Manley had occasion to be generous to Steele at about this time. When he and a damsel he had gotten pregnant were in distress, Manley referred him to her midwife. Two of Steele's later letters refer to the midwife as a persistent creditor. Manley gave a full account of the incident in The New Atalantis in 1709, at a time when they were bitterly estranged.³ Even in the friendly early letters there were indications of flare-ups between them: "There is nothing in all my late Follies and Disappointments that afflicts me as much as disobliging you."⁴

After the debacle of The Female Wits, Manley again retired to the country, but this time not far from London. She reported in Rivella she was regularly visited by Catherine Trotter, "Calista." On one occasion Calista asked her to intercede for a friend, "Cleander." This was John Tilly, deputy warden of The Fleet Prison, who was on trial for

¹Ibid., p. 428.

²Ibid., p. 427.

³"New Atalantis," 1:189-93.

⁴Steele, Correspondence, p. 425.

administrative misconduct. John Manley ("Oswald") returned to London, was chairman of the investigation. Mrs. Manley agreed on condition that she meet the defendant. Tilly was shortly to become the love of her life, and she lived openly with him, even though he was married, until 1702. This affair caused an estrangement of considerable bitterness between the sister authors. Trotter avoided Manley thereafter, and must have thereby wounded her deeply. Otherwise, it is difficult to understand the repeated virulently scandalous aspersions on Trotter in both The New Atalantis and Rivella, both written several years after the incident, and long after Trotter had retired from the London literary and social scenes. Trotter's biographer Thomas Birch describes her motive for "withdrawing herself from the slight acquaintance, which she once had with Mrs. Manley, on account of the licentiousness both of her writings and conduct."¹ Manley, who recounted that Tilly had told her that Trotter was the first woman with whom he had been unfaithful to his wife, depicted the motive as jealousy and the excuse as hypocrisy, describing Trotter as "The most of a Prude in her outward Professions, and the least of it in her inward Practice."² She placed in Lovemore's mouth the following account of Cleander's affair with Calista:

Her Mother being in Misfortunes and indebted to him, she had offered him her Daughter's Security, he took it, and moreover the Blessing of one Night's Lodging, which he never paid her back again. Rivella laughed in her Turn, because Calista had given herself Airs of not visiting

¹Trotter, Life, p. lviii.

²"Rivella," p. 66.

Rivella, now she made her self the Town Talk by her scandalous Intrigue [sic] with Cleander.¹

Manley largely left off her literary pursuits at this time to rely on "Cleander's Genius of Business."² In 1700, however, she wrote two pieces for The Nine Muses, a collection of elegiac poems on the death of Dryden. John Wilson Bowyer has proposed that there were in all six contributors. Manley represented both dramatic muses, Melpomene (tragedy) and Thalia (comedy). Sarah Fyge Egerton contributed three poems signed Euterpe, Terpsichore, and Erato. Mary Pix was Clio and Susanna Centlivre Polimnia. Surprisingly, both the now estranged Catherine Trotter and her friend and patroness Lady Sarah Piers contributed, the former as Calliope and the latter as Urania. Bowyer posited that Manley was the organizer of the project.³

Some of Tilly's business projects were adventurous. One venture was into alchemy, in which he was said to have been involved along with Richard Steele and poet William Burnaby. John Dennis, in his satire on Steele, "The Character and Conduct of Sir John Edgar," mentions that "Edgar" along with "Burnaby the Poet, and Tilly the late Warden of the Fleet, enter'd into Indentures Tripartate... you and your Brethren were Gulls."⁴ Mrs. Manley's version of the story appears in The New Atalantis. She describes herself as an "airy wife who pretended to be a sort of director in the Laws of Poetry, and believed herself to be a

¹Ibid., pp. 101-102.

²Ibid., p. 74.

³Bowyer, The Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre, pp. 31-32.

⁴John Dennis The Critical Works of John Dennis, 2 vols., ed. Edward Niles Hooker (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1943), 2:190.

very good judge of the excellencies and defects of Writing."¹ The lady had saved her friend (Steele) from ruin by persuading him not to sell his last remaining asset, his commission, to sink into his investment in an alchemist's factory. She warned him that she had intelligence that the operator was a cheat. However, in Letter 34 in the Lady's Pacquet, the writer, identified as Steele, asserts: "You cannot imagine how much the dear Indulgence of my Chymical Creed has made me forget my present Calamities." The letter condemns alchemy and suggests that she was still dabbling in it. Rae Blanchard, editor of Steele's Correspondence, dates this incident 1699.²

An amusingly told vignette sheds further light on Steele's relationship with Manley, and on her biography in general. Steele had been busily courting a bevy of ladies at a sort of salon at "the airy wife's" house, when he was summoned to her bedroom for a confidential chat. He found himself uncertain about her intentions and ambivalent in his own reaction to the invitation, "for the Lady was no Beauty." Actually, the lady had retired only to rest because she was soon to give birth. From this account it appears that their relationship had been platonic, or at least that Manley, who expected the identity of Monsieur L'Ingrate (as Steele was dubbed in the anecdote) to be easily guessed, wanted the world to think so. The story also suggests that Manley had a second child with Mr. Tilly.³

¹"New Atalantis," 1:189.

²Steele, Correspondence, p. 435.

³"New Atalantis," 1:189-93.

The alchemy project must have overlapped with a continuing scheme covering a period of years and reported at some length in Rivella, which turned out disastrously for Manley and Tilly. They invested a good deal of time and money trying to mediate in litigation between Ralph Montague and the Earl of Bath over the estate of the Duke of Albermarle, "Rivella" reported. The Earl promised them a hefty reward if they could swing the case in his favor. In the end, the spurious so-called heir in question, whom they had humored and maintained at their own expense, ran off with Manley's maid and drank himself to death, so their significant investment gained no return.

In 1702 Tilly's wife finally died, but misadventures and his extravagant life with Manley had brought him to such straits that it was decided that he must repair his fortune with a good marriage. Manley recounts her painful but noble decision to send him to court a wealthy widow, with whom he made a mismatch. He is said to have gone insane, and he died in 1709.

According to Rivella, this was Manley's last affair of the heart. John Barber, the printer and alderman with whom she was living when she wrote Rivella, is not mentioned at all. From a letter to Edmund Curll, the publisher, it appears that she wrote the biography without his knowledge. In a letter to Curll making an appointment concerning the book, she cautioned, "I will come to your House: for if you come upon this Hill, B[arber]. will find it out; for God's sake let us try if this Affair can be kept a Secret."¹ Their clandestine

¹ Straus, Unspeakable Curll, p. 44.

rendezvous were obviously an effort to avert the jealousy of a rival printer, not a lover. It is doubtful that Manley's relationship with Barber was platonic, but she may have wished their liaison to appear purely professional. "Sir Charles Lovemore's" account of Rivella's personal life after Tilly's departure suggests one of austerity:

After that time, I know nothing memorable of Rivella, but that she seem'd to bury all Thoughts of Gallantry in Cleander's tomb; unless she had herself publish'd such melting Scenes of Love, I should by her regularity and good behavior have thought she had lost the Memory of that Passion.¹

In order to recover from the separation from Tilly and to reduce expenses, Manley planned a trip to Bristol, where friends would put her up if she could only get there. She appealed to Steele, who had since made a good marriage to an elderly woman, Margaret Stretch. After keeping Manley waiting some time for the sum she had asked, and then a lesser sum, he finally refused, sparking a feud which went on for years. The apparent misunderstanding was to be debated in print some eight years later, with their two versions of the story alternating between The Tatler and two volumes of The New Atalantis.

How Manley subsisted between this time and the publication in 1705 of her novel Queen Zarah and the Zarazians is not clear. She did spend some time in Bristol and stayed during the summer of 1704 at the home of Sarah Fyge Egerton in Buckinghamshire.² They quarrelled, with disastrous results for Manley's financial prospects. Three sources tell the story of another dubious enterprise. Letters 5 through 9 in the

¹"Rivella," p. 108.

²Anderson, "Mistress Delarivière," p. 271.

Lady's Pacquet are correspondence with Egerton. Manley depicts Egerton, a "poetical wife," in The New Atalantis as a fiery, violent shrew and describes her betrayal through the voice of her victimized husband, who had just been crowned with a hot apple pie:

A Lady [Manley] whom she had invited to stay at our House that Summer, assum'd the reasonable Freedom to advise her against Passion and Anger, she took it so ill at her hands, that to be reveng'd she made her self a voluntary evidence in a Law-Suit against her, of all the Discourse they had had together in Freedom, and by adding a great deal false to the true, made her lose her cause.¹

The case Manley lost was summarized by John Nichols in 1809 edition of Steele's Correspondence. A certain Mary Thompson had been kept by a Mr. Pheasant. On his death, she promised Manley £100 annually for life if she could help her win a widow's dower of £1500. A record of marriage to Pheasant was indeed produced and vouched for by Edward Smith, who swore that he had procured the parson, Dr. Cleaver. But Smith had an infamous reputation, and (possibly on a tip from Egerton) an investigation proved the entry a forgery, while both the parson and the other witness turned out to be dead.² There is no record of punishment for the conspirators.

Manley returned to London to be greeted by the publication of The Female Wits, but this time she did not flee. She plunged into writing her first political scandal chronicle, The Secret History of Queen Zarah (1705). The work is generally agreed to be Manley's, even though it is unsigned, and there is no record of her mentioning it.

¹"New Atalantis," 1:161-62.

²Philip Sergeant, Rogues and Scoundrels (London: Hutchinson & Company, 1924),

As early as 1725, Curll attributed it to her in his introduction to the fourth edition of Rivella. The book is a roman à clef, one of the earliest of the genre in English literature. Its framework plot is the rise to power of "Zarah," Sarah Churchill, the Duchess of Marlborough, starting with her seduction, with the aid of her mother, of "Hippolito," John Churchill, to her mental seduction of "Albania," Queen Anne, and seizure of royal power.¹ There is an account of how the young John Churchill climbed his way up politically on the petticoats of the Duchess of Cleveland, "Clelia," when she was at the height of her influence as favorite mistress of "Rolando," Charles II. As former companion to the Duchess, Manley was no doubt privy to her confidences about the escapades of her heyday. Nor was Manley spreading spurious scandal; the affair between Churchill and the Duchess is confirmed in the doughty Bishop Gilbert Burnet's History of His Own Times (1724).²

Among the other prominent Whigs under attack in Zarah was Secretary of State Robert Harley, whom she referred to as a dog, licking the feet of his mistress, the Duchess of Marlborough. But as Harley's political activities shifted to the Tory cause he rose in Manley's esteem, and she dealt generously with him in The New Atalantis. In fact, she wrote asking him to take her into his employ as a pamphlet writer (Swift and Defoe were already under his patronage by that time).³

¹Manley, Novels, 2:key.

²Gilbert Burnet, Bishop Burnet's History of His Own Times (London: n.p., 1734), p. 101.

³Historical Manuscripts Commission, The Portland Papers (London: HMC, 1897), 5:491 (hereinafter cited as HMC).

The preface to Zarah is, along with Catherine Trotter's dedication to The Revolution of Sweden (see above, p. 87), one of the earliest examples of literary criticism written by a woman author. In its discussion of the reasons for the superiority of the English historical novel over the French romance, it shows the influence of Dryden, but with a firm Aristotelian basis. Manley advocates the use of probable fiction over more historical truth, characters of psychological dimension over humour types, conversationally natural dialogue, and a through-line of plot. In the arguments regarding the first purpose of art, instruction or pleasure, she definitely opts for the latter:

Moral Reflections, Maxims and Sentences are more proper to Discourses for Instructions than in Historical Novels, whose chief End is to Please; and if we find in them some Instructions, it proceeds rather from their Description than their Precepts. (preface)

In 1706 The Arabian Nights Entertainments was first translated into English. Manley acknowledged borrowing from it for the plot of her play Almyna; or, The Arabian Vow, the following year. Almyna was not signed, but is attributed to Manley. Anderson pointed out that the title is an anagram of "Manley."¹ The production of Manley's strongly feminist drama was beset with difficulties, although it was given a sumptuous mounting by Betterton and his co-manager Owen Swiney. It opened the week before Christmas, between performances of a very successful opera at the rival house, and lost two leading cast members. Hoping to salvage something from it, Manley dedicated it to the Countess of Sandwich. That same year The Lady's Pacquet of Letters was published.

¹Anderson, "Mistress Delarivière," p. 272.

There was a lapse of two years until Manley broke into her most prolific and notorious period with the first volume of The New Atalantis. Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality of Both Sexes: From the New Atalantis, an Island in the Mediterranean was the first of the four volumes, written over 1709-10, that became Mrs. Manley's chief claim to fame. This succès de scandale was hugely popular, running to six editions within ten years. It was read up until the end of the century and has been commented upon down to modern times.

The roman à clef, attacking the Whig luminaries, was so transparent as to make a key to it redundant to anyone au courant with the political inner structure of England. The framework of the first two volumes is an allegory in which Astrea, goddess of justice, is guided through a tour of Atalantis by Intelligence, who is the commentator, or the voice of Manley. The framework of the third and four volumes, Memoirs of Europe, is a group of English travelers meeting on the Continent to exchange stories. It is distanced by time, set in the eighth century A.D. Both claimed to be translations. The dedication of the first volume to the Duke of Beaufort maintained the pretense: "My Lord, how vast must be the Ambition of a mere translator, to dare to hope from so great a Prince his most noble protection for so small a trifle?"

The chronicles are a collection of anecdotes, many of them racy, involving the personalities of the court and "Persons of Quality" over a thirty-year period, from the reign of Charles II to that of Queen Anne. The first volume appeared in May 1709 and an eagerly awaited second in October. But, just nine days after publication, it was

suppressed, and Manley and her publishers and the printer were arrested under the jurisdiction of the Lord Chancellor, the Earl of Sunderland. (He was the son-in-law of the Duchess of Marlborough, one of the main targets of the scandal.) Sunderland wrote to the Duchess November 4: "I believe Mr. Maynwaring has given you an account of the lady, I have in custody for The New Atalantis, and of the noble, worthy persons she correspondes with. I shall spoil their writing, at least for some time, for I promise them, I will push it as far as I can by law."¹ However, when Manley's case was heard at the Queen's Bench, February 14, 1710, no charges were proved against her, and she was released, immediately upon which she launched into volume three, the dedication of which she was bold enough to sign D.M. There is a detailed account of this episode in Rivella, which is in substance verified in Narcissus Lutrell's A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs.² In Rivella, the ubiquitous Lovemore again materializes just at the moment of crisis and urges her to flee the country, but she steadfastly resolves to go through the ordeal in order to exonerate the others involved. In fact, the others were released the day following Manley's questioning.

On several occasions Manley justified her glorified gossip as motivated by righteous indignation and all for the good of the Tory cause. She wrote Harley: "I willingly devote my Ease and Interest

¹Henry L. Snyder quotes this letter ("New Light on Mrs. Manley?" Philological Quarterly 52 [1973]: 767) with the citation Blenheim MSS E-15.

²"Rivella," p. 108. Narcissus Lutrell kept a day-by-day chronicle of notable contemporary events from September 1678 to April 1714 (A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs from September 1678 to April 1714, 6 vols. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1857]: 4:505).

where my Principles are engaged, and if I have the Fortune to do some small service, my Design is answered. I have attempted some faint Representations... of Heads of the Party who have mislead [sic] thousands."¹

Manley's "candidness" found a defender in Lady Mary Wortly Montague, who was agitated over the delay in receiving the second installment of the chronicles owing to their suppression:

But do you know what has happened to the unfortunate Authoress? People are offended at the liberty she used and she is taken into custody. Miserable is the fate of writers! If they are agreeable they are offensive, and if dull they starve. I lament the loss of other parts which we should have had... but now she will serve as a scarecrow to frighten people from attempting anything but a heavy panegyrick with names at length and false characters so daubed with flattery that they are the severest kind of lampoon.²

One of Manley's accounts received verification from the enemy camp. The Duchess of Marlborough, who was no longer being received by Queen Anne, having been replaced in favor by Mrs. Masham, wrote the Queen describing some of the material in The New Atlantis:

It is a dialogue between Madame Maintenon and Madam Masham, in which she thanks her for her good endeavors to serve the King of France here, and seems to have great hopes of her, from her promising beginnings and her friendship for Mr. Harley; and there is stuff not fit to be mentioned of passions between women, and a long account of that Lady's famous amour with Mr. Chudd, managed by Lady Newport. Some part of that I knew to be true.³

¹HMC, 4:541.

²Lady Mary Wortly Montagu, The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortly Montagu, 3 vols., ed. Robert Halsband (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 1:146-47.

³Sarah Marlborough, The Private Correspondence of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, 2 vols. (London: H. Coburn, 1838), 1:235.

Patricia Koster cites two other scandals she has documented through the Public Record Office and other contemporary sources which lend credibility to Manley's versions in their substance.¹ The selected exposure of scandals along partisan lines was all the more a threat if grounded in reality. It is probable that Mrs. Manley had a source of information who was privy to the inside workings of the administration. This could have been Harley, who was in a position to act as a conduit of information, or even Mrs. Masham herself, to whom Manley dedicated the fourth and last volume of The New Atalantis, under the appellation "Louisa of Savoy."

When she was arrested for libel in October 1709, Manley once again appealed to Steele in a time of crisis. At this time he was in a position to help. He interceded on her behalf, a magnanimous gesture on his part since the two had only recently attacked each other in print. Practically on the eve of the publication of the first volume of The New Atalantis, in which Manley pilloried him as "Monsieur L'Ingrate," Steele had drawn a character of her as "Sappho" in the sixth number of The Tatler:

I have just come from visiting Sappho, a fine lady who writes verses, sings, dances and can say and do whatever she pleases, without the imputation of anything to injure her character; for she is so well known to have no passion but self-love; or folly, but affectation; that now upon any occasion, they only cry, "It is her way!" and "That is so like her!"... She said a thousand good things at random, but so strangely mixed, that you would be apt to say, all her wit is mere good luck, and not the effect of reason and judgement.²

¹Manley, Novels, 1:xxvii-xxviii.

²Richard Steele, The Tatler 6 (12 April 1709).

Manley told several tales out of school on Steele in The New Atalantis. She revealed that she had known him since he was "but a wretched, common trooper," morally loose, hypocritical, opportunistic, and in desperate search of the philosopher's stone.¹ That September 3rd, The Tatler (no. 63) satirized Manley as "Epicene, the writer of Memoirs from the Mediterranean."

Who by the Help of some artificial Poisons convey'd by Smells,
within these few weeks brought many Persons of both Sexes to
an untimely Fate; and what is more surprising has, contrary to
her Profession, with the same Odors reviv'd others who had
long since been drowned in the Whirlpool of Lethe.²

Assuming the author to be Steele, she wrote him an angry letter to which he replied, denying that the attack was from him. (It has since been attributed to Jonathan Swift, which, in turn, has been disputed.³) Manley apparently did not believe Steele, and, in any case, as editor he had allowed it to be printed.

Immediately after their brief truce while Manley was in custody Steele did write a piece of his own for The Tatler labelling a libeller as "the filthiest creature in the street."⁴ Manley retaliated by dedicating the third volume of The New Atalantis (Memoirs of Europe) to Sir Isaac Bickerstaff, which was Steele's nom de plume in The Tatler. The dedication was laced with sarcasm and included Steele's letter denying the "Epicene" piece. The letter, which she claimed to have

¹"New Atalantis," 1:189-93.

²Steele, The Tatler 63 (3 September 1709).

³Jonathan Swift, Swift's Poems, 2 vols., ed. Harold Williams (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), I:149.

⁴Steele, The Tatler 92 (10 November 1709).

reproduced verbatim, also admitted his not loaning her money when she was in need, and included an admission of his indebtedness to her: "I had the greatest sense imaginable of the kind notice you gave me when I was going to my ruin," thus verifying what she had told about Monsieur L'Ingrate. But Manley appears to have deleted a mitigating sentence explaining that Steele really did not have the money to lend her at the time. That sentence was found in a draft of the letter he had kept.¹

Steele must have got wind of what she was up to. On the same day as her publication in Tatler (no. 177), Bickerstaff again castigated libellers: "Their names shall give fresh offence many ages hence after the commission of their crime." Further, he denied even knowing Manley: "A female author has dedicated a piece to me, wherein she would make my name, as she has others, the introduction of whatever is to follow in her book; and has spoke some panegyrical which I know not how to return, for want of a better acquaintance with the lady."²

The animosity may have been further exacerbated by Manley's editorship of The Female Tatler, based on The Tatler and presided over by the persona of Mrs. Crackenthorpe, "a Lady that knows everything." H.R. Fox Bourne identifies Manley as Mrs. Crackenthorpe in English Newspapers.³ The circumstantial evidence presented by Anderson is impressive, including the fact that Mrs. Crackenthorpe ceased contributing to the magazine on the day following Manley's examination, which had resulted

¹Steele, Correspondence, p. 27.

²Steele, The Tatler 177 (27 May 1710).

³Bertha Monica Stearns, "Early English Periodicals for Ladies," PMLA 48 (March 1933): 44.

in her being shut up "without being allowed Pen, Ink and Paper."¹ The explanation offered in number 51 of The Female Tatler (12 November 1709) for Mrs. Crackenthorpe's departure was her "resenting the Affront offered her by some rude Citizens." Both Anderson and Bourne present contemporary allusions which point to Manley's being at least a coeditor. Bourne in particular cites The General Postscript, a journal which provided commentary on current publications. The edition of Postscript stated that The Female Tatler was written by "Scandalosissima Scoundrelia and her two natural brothers."² The descriptive pseudonym accorded Manley would be a reference to The New Atalantis, currently enjoying a widespread vogue.

Susanna Centlivre's The Man's Bewitched was stopped by the angry cast members after the third night when an article appeared in The Female Tatler detailing the author's complaints about them. Centlivre was blamed for having written it, but more likely it was a recounting of a conversation she had had with Manley. In her preface Centlivre denied writing the article while admitting that she had said such things, believing them to be in confidence. She and Manley were friends. The prologue in the printed version pointed directly to Manley, asking, "Why should tender Delia tax the Nation; stickle and make a noise for Reformation,/ Who always gave a Loose [sic] her self to Inclination?" (lines 10-12).³

¹Anderson, "Mary de la Riviere Manley," p. 68; "Rivella," p. 114.

²The General Postscript 1 (?7 September 1709).

³LS, 2:205.

Manley's previous experience in editorial work and as an anti-Whig propagandist may be the reason why Jonathan Swift employed her to replace him as active editor of The Examiner in the spring of 1711. He had not seemed to think much of her as a writer prior to that time, judging from earlier comments. He had criticized both her methods and her style in The New Atalantis. As he wrote to Addison (22 August 1710):

I read your Character in Mrs. Manley's noble Memoirs of Europe. It seems to me as if she had about two thousand Epithets and fine words putt up in a bag; and that she puled [sic] them out by handfull, and strewed them on her Paper, where about once in five hundred times they happen to be right.¹

He had even picked on her spelling in a letter to "Stella." He chided his beloved correspondent, "Rediculous, Madam. I suppose you mean ridiculous; let me have no more of that; 'tis the author of the Atalantis's spelling."²

Swift and Manley probably first met at about this time. He wrote Stella January 4, 1711, "I dined with people that you never heard of, nor is it worth your while to know; an authoress and a printer."³ The letter also dates her relationship with Barber to this time, three years earlier than supposed by scholars, whose first knowledge of the relationship came from a letter from Manley to Curll in 1714.⁴

¹Jonathan Swift, Swift's Correspondence, 2 vols., ed. Harold Williams (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 1:170-71.

²Swift, Journal to Stella, 1:123 (14 December 1710).

³Ibid., 1:154.

⁴Strauss, Unspeakable Curll, p. 44.

Swift's comments about Mrs. Manley to Stella once she was in his employment reflected a great deal of professional respect. In addition to the Examiner, Swift employed Manley to write pamphlets, the best of which he accounted to be an ironic commentary, "The Vindication of the Duke of Marlborough."¹ His personal references to her at this time were also of a kindly nature. He told Stella of seeing her at Lord Peterborough's (30 June 1711):

soliciting him for some pension or reward for her services in the cause, by writing her Atalantis and persecution etc. upon it. I seconded her and, hope they will do something for the poor woman.²

Later he expressed sympathy for her illness from "dropsy and a sore leg" (28 January 1712):

I am heartily sorry for her; she has very generous principles for one of her sort, and a great deal of good sense and invention. She is about forty; very homely and very fat.³

Yet he wrote a vitriolic satire on Manley as "Corinna":

This day, (the year I dare not tell,)
 Apollo play'd the Midwife's Part,
 Into the World Corinna fell,
 And he endow'd her with his Art.
 But Cupid with a Satyr comes;
 Both softly to the Cradle creep:
 Both stroke her Hands, and rub her Gums,
 While the poor Child lay fast asleep.
 Then Cupid thus: This little Maid
 Of Love shall always speak and write;
 And I pronounce, (the Satyr said)
 The World shall feel her scratch and bite.
 Her Talent she display'd betimes;
 For in twice twelve revolving Moons,

¹Swift, Journal to Stella, 1:380 (9 October 1711).

²Ibid., 1:306.

³Ibid., 2:474.

She seem'd to laugh and squawl in Rhimes,
 And all her Gestures were Lampoons.
 At six years old, the subtle Jade
 Stole to the Pantry-Door, and found
 The Butler with the Lady's Maid;
 And you may swear the Tale went round.
 She made a Song, how little Miss
 Was kiss'd and slobber'd by a Lad:
 And how, when Master went to p--,
 Miss came, and peep'd at all he had.
 At Twelve, a Wit and a Coquette;
 Marries for Love, half Whore, half Wife;
 Cuckolds, elopes, and runs into Debt;
 Turns Auth'ress, and is Curll's for Life.
 Her Common-Place-Book all gallant is,
 Of Scandal now a Cornucopia;
 She pours it out in Atalantis,
 Or Memoirs of the New Utopia.¹

Editor Harold Williams has placed the undated poem as having been written in 1711 or 1712, just when Manley and Swift were associated, but line 28 indicates that the poem, not published until 1727, was written after 1714, for "Curll," who published Manley's "life," that is, Rivella, had not met her before they embarked on the project.²

Daniel Defoe, also writing for the Tory cause at this time, paid tribute to Manley's fame by titling a short satirical history Atalantis Major. Riding the crest was also an impostor, John Oldmixon, who has been tentatively identified as the author of The Court of Atalantis, which imitates Manley's format, but is anti-Tory in sentiment. One of its targets was Manley herself.

In his characterization of the prominent Tory, the Duke of Beaufort, who was Manley's patron, and to whom she dedicated the first

¹Swift, Swift's Poems, pp. 148-50. Williams here cites the first identification as in Hawkesworthe's edition (1755). The "New Utopia" referred to is the half-title of Memoirs of Europe (1710).

²Straus, Unspeakable Curll, p. 44.

two volumes of The New Atalantis, he discussed Manley:

A She Poet made her Fulsome Addresses to the generous Otho [Beaufort], who not knowing how to distinguish Flattery from Praise, was wonderfully delighted with her Fustian Compliments, and employ'd his domestick [Yalden] to pay her his Acknowledgements, not only in her own Kind, but also in Money. The Man not considering his own Character, and hers, takes that infamous Office upon him, and gives the Lewdest Wretch in the Land a Certificate of her Virtue and Honour, which she exposes on all Occasions; and amidst her Lewdness and Infamy, is the greatest Fury of a Zealot that it ever produc'd.¹

Yalden was a poet and also chaplain to Beaufort. In The New Atalantis he is the "Grand Druid," or spiritual advisor to whom Delia (Manley) confides the story of the early ruin.²

In periods of comparative security Manley seems to have been less active. Such had been the case when she was taken care of by Tilly and "Rivella tasted some Years the Pleasure of Retirement, in the Conversation of the Person beloved."³ John Barber, printer and alderman, was prosperous, and for the first three years after she moved in with him, she produced no new works. Barber (who eventually became Lord Mayor of London) had an unscrupulous reputation. Two biographies of him were written after his death, and both were derogatory. The first was written by Daniel Defoe's son, Benjamin, and the other is attributed to rival printer Edmund Curll. The latter described him thus:

He had many defects and but few virtues to weigh in the opposite scale; and indeed were I able to give an impartial account, most of the passages I would mention concerning

¹[John Oldmixon,] The Court of Atalantis (1714; reprint ed., New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1973), p. 87.

²"The New Atalantis," 2:181-91.

³"Rivella," p. 104.

him would not be greatly to his advantage.... Avarice was his predominant vice, although he had a variety of others in conjunction with it.¹

Barber did, however, take Manley under his wing, and along with her, her now-widowed younger sister, Cordelia.

During 1713 Swift and Steele were waging war in their respective papers, The Examiner and The Guardian. Steele got the impression that Manley was a party to Swift's attacks on him, and in a retort stated that it was no matter which of the editors wrote against him, "an estranged friend or an exasperated mistress."² Swift followed with a castigation of Steele, denying that Manley was involved and demanding "reparation for the offended innocence."³ The cruelest cut was delivered by Steele in his ironic apology in The Guardian the very next day: "I declare them, it was a false report which was spread concerning me and a lady, sometimes reputed the author of The Examiner; and I can now make her no reparation, but in begging her pardon, that I never lay with her."⁴

Manley carried the argument on in Rivella, published the following year. In describing Rivella's tender, generous nature, Lovemore points out the one exception:

¹Edmund Curll, An Impartial History of the Life, Character, Amours, Travels, and Transactions of Mr. John Barber, City-Printer, Common-Councilman, and Lord Mayor of London (London: Edmund Curll, 1741), p. 8.

²The Guardian 53 (12 May 1713).

³The Examiner 35 (22 May 1713).

⁴The Guardian 63 (23 May 1713).

I have often heard her say that she was an utter Stranger to what is meant by Hatred and Revenge; nor was she ever known to pursue hers upon any Person, tho' often injur'd, excepting Mr. S___le, whose notorious Ingratitude and Breach of Friendship affected her too far, and made her think it the highest Piece of Justice to expose him.¹

After a hiatus of three years, Manley took on the writing of Rivella only in self-defense, as it were. The story of how the novel came about was traced in Curll's preface to the 1725 edition of Rivella:

In the year 1714 Mr. Gildon upon a Pique, the cause of which I cannot assign, wrote some Account of Mrs. Manley's Life, under the title The History of Rivella, Author of the Atalantis. Of this Piece, Two sheets only were printed, when Mrs. Manley learning it was in the Press and suspecting it to be what it really was, a severe Invective upon some Part of her Conduct, she sent me the following letter.

Manley met with Curll and Gildon and talked them into cancelling that version in exchange for which she would supply her own, even keeping the original title. Curll attested that within a week the major portion of it was submitted. The whole venture was conducted behind Barber's back, and Manley demanded that the identity of the author be kept secret until after her death.² Apparently she feared the wrath of Barber on finding out she was dealing with a rival printer. Twenty-seven years later Curll, the author of An Impartial History of the Life, Amours, Travels, and Transactions of Mr. John Barber, emphasized how much Barber had profited from Manley's labors:

... through whose interest all those persons who contributed to make his Fortune were owing; besides the large Sums he acquired from her Writings: The Atalantis, her novels, the Play of Lucius, with many political pamphlets.³

¹"Rivella," p. 13.

²Straus, Unspeakable Curll, pp. 44-47.

³Curll, An Impartial History, p. 24.

Benjamin Defoe's biography of Barber depicts his relationship with Manley as purely a business arrangement:

For the sake only, of being near the Press and more at hand to see her own Work done correctly, and better attended to than it had been, she had an Apartment fitted up for her at the House of Mr. Barber, with whom she resided till the Day of her Death.¹

Curll's understanding of the relationship was different. He drew a picture of Manley as an injured lover:

Such was the insolence of his behavior to her, that she justly gave him the name "Tyrant," and in a few years he might be said to assume "Brute" in forsaking the polite Mistress, to take up with the ignorant serving-wench.²

Barber published Manley's play Lucius, The First Christian King of Britain in 1717, and if Defoe's statement that Manley received 600 guineas for it upon delivery in lieu of benefits is correct, it was indeed of profit to Barber.³

Lucius, produced at Drury Lane, came out eleven years after Almyra, and Manley felt free to sign it. The play, which starred the leading lights of the day, Barton Booth and Anne Oldfield, had been promised at the conclusion of Rivella:

She [Rivella] now agrees with me that Politicks is not the business of a Woman, especially one that can so well delight and entertain her Readers with more gentle pleasing Theams, and has accordingly set her self again to write a Tragedy for the Stage.⁴

The appearance of Mrs. Oldfield seemed to signal a reconciliation between

¹Sergeant, Rogues and Scoundrels, p. 203.

²Curll, An Impartial History, p. 44.

³Sergeant, Rogues and Scoundrels, p. 204.

⁴"Rivella," p. 117.

Manley and the star. Manley had apparently offended Oldfield by attacking Arthur Maynwaring, Oldfield's longtime lover, in The Examiner in 1712.¹ Maynwaring had been active in Manley's prosecution over The New Atalantis.²

Lucius also provided the occasion for a reconciliation between Manley and Steele. They apologized just as they had quarreled, in print. Manley's dedication to Steele contained her apology, while Steele contributed the prologue to the play (see below, pp. 175-76). The Tory writer and diplomat, Matthrew Prior, supplied an epilogue. Although Manley wrote to Prior in 1719 mentioning a forthcoming play, Lucius was the last of hers produced.³ It ran to a second edition in published form and was revived for her benefit in 1720. Steele advertised the revival in The Theatre. In number 10 he reprinted the prologue, and number 26 was devoted to a formal apology to Manley over past injuries, written in the third person:

... there is an unanswerable Exception against his [Steele's] being a Man of Gallantry, which is the Case of Mrs. Manley. He had the impatience to write something like Satire in return to the Liberties that ingenious Lady took with him in certain of her Writings.... But I will atone for this Crime in some measure, and signify to the Town, that her Tragedy of Lucius is now in Rehearsal on the Stage, to be acted for her Benefit.⁴

¹Richard B. Kline, "Anne Oldfield and Mary De la Rivière Manley: The Unnoticed Reconciliation," Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre Research 14 (November 1975): 53-58.

²Gwendolyn B. Needham, "Mary de la Rivière Manley, Tory Defender," The Huntington Library Quarterly 12 (1949): 262, n. 21.

³Anderson, "Mary de la Rivière Manley," p. 106.

⁴Richard Steele, The Theatre (21 February 1720; 29 March 1720).

In the same year a collaboration between Pope, Arbuthnot, and Gay--Three Hours After Marriage--was produced at the Theatre Royal comedy satirized a woman poet named Phoebe Clinket, who was supposed to have been modeled on The Countess of Winchelsea, but who was likely a composite of the countess, Susanna Centlivre, and Manley.¹ One of the lines Clinket spouts is "Swell'd with a Dropsy, sickly Nature lies" (p. 5). Manley was known to have the disease as early as 1712.

Manley produced a work of fiction, The Power of Love, in 1720. It was a series of seven short novels adapted from stories in Painter's Palace of Pleasure, a sixteenth-century translation of French novellas.² That year also saw the publication of some of Manley's verses, in Anthony Hammond's New Miscellany of Original Poems.³

From 1720 until her death in 1724, nothing of Manley's was produced or published. According to Curll, her last years were unhappy. Although Barber took Manley's sister into his house, he also took in a servant girl, who quickly supplanted Manley in his affections. The culmination of the affair happened when Barber, who had been complaining of ill health, was encouraged by his doctor to take a trip to Italy. He departed for Rome, sending for his "Dulcinea" to join him. When Manley, who was herself in failing health, found out, she was brokenhearted and died a short time later. "A most violent fit of the cholic, which kept

¹LS, 2:431-32.

²The novels were titled: The Fair Hypocrite, The Physician's Stratagem, The Wife's Resentment, two titled The Husband's Resentment, The Happy Fugitives, and The Perjur'd Beauty.

³DNB, 12:922.

her on the rack no less than five days, carried her off with its exquisite torture."

Manley was interred in the middle aisle of the Church of Saint Benet at Paul's-Wharf. Her gravestone carried the following inscription:

Here lieth the Body of Mrs. Delarivière Manley, Daughter of Sir Roger Manley, Kt., Who, suitable to her Birth and Education, was acquainted with several parts of knowlege, and with the most polite writers, both in the French and English Tongue. This Accomplishment, together with a greater Natural Stock of Wit, made her Conversation agreeable to all who knew Her, and her Writings to be universally Read with Pleasure. She died July the 11th, 1724.¹

Her will was proved September 28, 1724. She ordered all her papers to be burned except her collection of books and "one Tragedy call'd the Duke of Somerset and one Comedy named the double Mistress which I hope may perhaps turn to some account."²

The Jerrolds concluded their biography with the insinuation that Manley may have committed suicide, since her death occurred directly upon her abandonment by Barber, and "cholic" is not known to be a fatal disease. They noted that the symptoms of her death resembled those of poisoning.³ But in her will, dated October 6, 1723, almost a year before her death, she described herself as "weak, and daily decaying in strength," and an article in The Weekly Journal, February 29, 1724, had reported that Mrs. Manley was dangerously ill.⁴ These references suggest death from natural causes, at about the age of fifty-two.

¹Curll, An Impartial History, pp. 44-46.

²Sergeant, Rogues and Scoundrels, pp. 207-208.

³Jerrold and Jerrold, Five Queer Women, pp. 137-38.

⁴Anderson, "Mistress Delarivière," p. 272.

Critical Overview

Delarivière Manley was an easy target for derogatory criticism from the start of her entrance into the public world. Her subsequent choice of a free style of life and her notoriety as a scandal chronicler did nothing to discourage the disreputable image. Parallels between her and Aphra Behn were apparent, and she may even have consciously modeled herself after "Astrea." She was flamboyantly open about her affairs in the flush of her successful youth, but by the time she came to write Rivella she had sought out a spiritual advisor in Yalden, and she wished it to be known that she had returned to the fold.

Rivella is certainly much indebted, continued Lovemore, to a Liberal Education, and those early Precepts of Vertue taught her and practised in her Father's House. There was then such a Foundation laid, that tho' Youth, Misfortunes, and Love, for several years have interrupted so fair a Building, yet some Time since, she is returned with the greatest Application to repair that Loss and Defect; if not with relation to this World (where Women have found it impossible to be reinstated) yet of the next, which has mercifully told us, "Mankind can commit no Crimes but what upon Conversion may be forgiven."¹

She was bitter about the double standard of which she was so clearly a victim. Nothing of the scandal that had irreparably branded her had in any way checked John Manley's rise in the world. Delia complained to the "Grand Druid":

I found the Reputation I had lost... had destroy'd all the Esteem that my Truth and Conversation might have else procur'd me. O nice unrelenting Glory! is it impossible to retrieve the[e]?... why are your Sex so partially distinguish'd? Why is it in your Powers, after accumulated

¹"Rivella," p. 12. Yalden, chaplain to the Duke of Beaufort, Manley's patron, is identified in the key.

Crimes, to regain Opinion? when ours, tho' oftentimes guilty,
but in appearance, are irretrievably lost?¹

Throughout her work echoes of this sentiment recur. Seduction scenes crop up frequently in her novels. Even her one comedy had running through it a serious strain concerning a cast-off mistress whose character was drawn with unusual depth.

Even before The Female Wits, Manley, along with Mary Pix, was a target for derision for a different kind of sexual infraction, presuming to adopt a man's profession, that of a writer. In The Session of the Poets Holden at the Foot of Parnassus-Hill July the 9th, 1696, both writers were punished for the offense with the deprivation of sexual gratification. In Manley's case, it was concluded that she

Stands indicated by the name D.M. Spinster, in that she very peremptorily, mutatis, mutandis against an express form in that case made and provided by Apollo and the Muses, has Sacrilegiously usurped that province of Poetry no ways belonging or appertaining unto her, for few Sappho's or Orinda's appear now upon the Stage.²

Manley's sentence for her infringement was "That she must not kiss any Man, nor be kissed by any Person."³

A more scurrilous aspersion appeared in 1704, the same year as the publication of The Female Wits. Advertisements from Parnassus reported:

The Literati having, some months since, admitted Orinda, Mrs. Behn and Mrs. Manly, and several other Poetesses, into Par-

¹"New Atalantis," 2:190; the key identifies Yalden as the Grand Druid.

²Anon., The Session of the Poets Holden at the Foot of Parnassus-Hill July the 9th, 1696 (London: E. Whitlock, 1696), p. 39.

³Ibid., p. 44.

nassus, contrary to their ancient Customs.... Apollo wonder'd at 'em: But it was not long, 'ere his Majesty smelt a Rat; wherefore he gave orders no more Ladies should be admitted, and that these should be Banish'd out of Parnassus. For he ... foresaw, that the Learned Exercises, which the Virtuosi and these Ladies perform'd together, would end like the Playing of Dogs, in getting upon one another's Backs.¹

Of the three poetesses named, only Manley was still living and therefore vulnerable to the insult.

Mrs. Manley was not without admirers in the literary community, however. Charles Gildon, in his continuation of Langbaine's English Dramatic Poets, praised her highly, voicing a rare feminist sentiment:

The Lady has very happily distinguished her self from the rest of her Sex, and gives us living Proof of what we might reasonably expect from Womankind, if they had the Benefit of those artificial improvements of Learning the Men have, when by meer Force of Nature they so much excel.²

In The Poetical Register Giles Jacob commended "the Atalantic Lady, being deservedly esteemed for her Affability, Wit and Loyalty."³ Just shortly after her death The Historical Register contained the assessment, "She was a Person of Polite Genius, and uncommon Capacity, which made her Writings naturally delicate and easy, and her Conversation agreeably entertaining."⁴

Perhaps Manley never received a more wholehearted tribute than that of Edmund Curll:

¹Tragano Boccalini, Advertisements from Parnassus, 2 vols. (London: Richard Smith, 1794), 1:51.

²Langbaine/Gildon, Lives and Characters, pp. 90-91.

³Jacob, The Poetical Register, p. 167.

⁴Anderson, "Mary de la Rivière Manley," p. 92.

Mrs. Manley was a gentlewoman both by birth and education. All who had the happiness of her conversation were soon convinced how free she was from the vain frailties of her sex; what a nobleness and generosity of temper she was possessed of; how distant her views from the least appearance of self-interest or mean design; how often I have heard her passionately regretting the miseries of mankind, but never her own, unless they prevented her benevolence to the afflicted. Never was she vindictive against the most inveterate enemy, the innate softness of her soul rendered her deportment equally obliging to all beholders; never did she resent but with the strictest justice; and with equal humanity, forgave the offender.¹

It is perhaps no coincidence that Curll's encomium bears a strong resemblance to that of Lovemore in Rivella itself.

Thomas Birch, Catherine Trotter's biographer, had reason to see Manley's character otherwise. He acknowledged Manley's attacks on Trotter both in The New Atalantis and Rivella, but insisted that "the only provocation to it was the withdrawing herself from the slight acquaintance, which she once had with Mrs. Manley, on account of the licentiousness both of her writings and conduct."²

The same year Thomas Whincop, in A Compleat List of all English Poets, tied in Manley's character as was usual with an evaluation of her writings, noting she was "very free with the Characters of many Persons of Quality and Distinction, and also free with her own Sex in her wanton Description of Love Adventures."³ At the turn of the nineteenth century, the virulent misogynist, Charles Didbin, in A Complete History of the English Stage (which was a misnomer), described her as "a woman of

¹Curll, An Impartial History, p. 44.

²Birch, intro to Trotter, Works, 1:xlvi-lxviii.

³Whincop, A Compleat List, p. 259.

turbulent and ungovernable spirit; who, fancying she could write, was determined to rule." He dismissed The New Atalantis as "wanton and lascivious."¹

Toward the end of the century Percy Fitzgerald was more compassionate in his New History of the English Stage (1881). He described Manley's life as "of a strange, romantic sort" and blamed her ruin on Sir Thomas Skipwith, "a vain, conceited coxcomb; who delighted in boasting of his conquests over women.... He published Mrs. Manley's dishonor, and from that time our sprightly poetess was considered by the sober part of the sex as quite abandoned to all shame."² Adolphus Ward defended Manley in A History of English Dramatic Literature (1899) as "The great society novelist of an age to which she should not be too severely condemned for having held up a mirror. Of her cleverness there can be no doubt, and if she had little consideration for the good fame of others, she had at least the courage of her intentions, and held her own not only by the fear she inspired."³

In modern times Manley has come under some of the harshest criticism of all. Reverential biographers of the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough have vilified the authoress with surprising emotion from their perspective of historical distance. Gwendolyn B. Needham cites

¹Didbin, Complete History, 4:345.

²Percy Fitzgerald, A New History of the English Stage, from the Restoration to the Liberty of the Theatres, 2 vols. (London: Tansley Brothers, 1882), 1:248.

³Adolphus William Ward, A History of English Dramatic Literature to the Death of Queen Anne, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan & Company, 1889; reprint ed., New York: Octagon Books, 1966), 3:432.

Winston Churchill wishing to sentence Manley to be sent "back to the cesspool from which she crawled."¹ He was naturally affronted on behalf of his illustrious ancestor, John Churchill, who figured so prominently in the accusations Manley made, ranging from blind ambition, to pimping, to common stinginess. In Marlborough, His Life and Times, Churchill called Manley "a woman of disreputable character paid by the Tories to to take part in a detraction which in the intense political passion of the time, was organized against Marlborough.... The New Atalantis is a scandalous and indecent chronicle of the Court of Charles II, conceived in the mood of The Decameron or Memoirs of Casanova, but without the grace and sparkle which have redeemed these works."² A.L. Rowse, another noted historian, also described Manley as "disreputable" in The Early Churchills, and even in the index, a usually objective section of a book, she is listed as "a low writer."³ Even in the DNB, Manley's biographer, G.A. Aitken, indulged in a judgmental comment: "In the New Atalantis, Mrs. Manley fully exhibited her taste for intrigue, and impudently slandered many persons of note."⁴ Philip Sergeant, in Rogues and Scoundrels, includes Manley under his heading, but shows a begrudging admiration for her sheer energy:

¹Gwendolyn B. Needman, "Mary de la Riviere Manley, Tory Defender," The Huntington Library Quarterly 12 (1949): 256.

²Winston Churchill, Marlborough, His Life and Times, 4 vols. (London: George G. Harrop & Company, 1949), 2:53-54.

³A.L. Rowse, The Early Churchills (London: Macmillan & Company, 1956), pp. 299-300.

⁴DNB, 12:921.

Mrs. Manley's admiration for herself does not make her disguise from her readers the fact that she carried unconventionality of living to an extreme.... [S]he evidently shared with so many men of her period that exuberance of temperament which enabled them simultaneously to work hard and to play hard to the end of their days.¹

Manley has her modern supporters, however. Fidelis Morgan, who published The Royal Mischief in her collection The Female Wits, provided a biographical sketch which concluded:

Delariviere Manley is perhaps the most fascinating of the women playwrights of her time. At once an example of decaying gentility and a sort of swashbuckling feminism, at the same time as she snubbed her nose at popular opinion she was upset that people did not approve of her behavior. Although not the first, not the most prolific, nor perhaps the best, she combines in both her life and her work naivety and energy, strength and vulnerability.²

Nancy Cotton placed the women writers of the period in two distinct camps according to their lifestyles: the Orindas, reticent about publicity and careful of their reputations, and Astreas, modeling themselves on Aphra Behn's bold defiance of the social taboos. Manley was clearly an Astrea:

Manley was even more bold than Mrs. Behn in the assertiveness of her life and works. Having been socially ostracized by the double standard, she proceeded to attack it in her work and flaunt it in her life. In her fiction she repeatedly used her own seduction as an example to criticise sociosexual injustices to women. She avowed for herself a standard of sexual independence.... She made erotic treatment of sex, the cornerstone of her commercial success.³

Manley's chief biographer, Anderson, concluded:

¹Sergeant, Rogues and Scoundrels, p. 171.

²Morgan, Female Wits, pp. 42-43.

³Cotton, Women Playwrights, p. 203.

Her life was unified by the vigor of the conception which she held of herself, and impressed upon her contemporaries. She made the reader of her autobiography see that the cultivated, passionate and generous Cavalier gentlewoman had met the strange demands of her difficult life with resolute cleverness and good humor.¹

It is hard to reconcile the image Manley presented of herself in Rivella, and the poor woman sick from the dropsy whom Swift described, but the picture she drew was evoked out of her own spirit. She considered her greatest achievement herself, a total woman who knew how to live. In the last paragraph of the novel, Lovemore does not dwell upon Rivella's literary achievements; he regales D'Aumont with her talents as a hostess and conversationalist, finally to be interrupted by the bedazzled would-be suitor:

Allons, let us go my dear Lovemore, let us not lose a Moment before we are acquainted with the only Person of her Sex that knows how to live, and of whom we may say, in relation to Love, since she has so peculiar a Genius for, and has made such noble Discoveries in that Passion, that it would have been a Fault in her, not to have been Faulty.²

Manley did receive some critical evaluation which was not inexorably tied to her personal reputation. Giles Jacob, who praised her plays individually, summed up, "In all the Writings of Mrs. Manley there appears a happy Sprightliness and an easy Turn."³ Manley and her literary imitators came in for tongue-in-cheek praise from Henry Fielding in Joseph Andrews:

¹Anderson, "Mistress Delarivière," p. 278.

²"Rivella," p. 120.

³Jacob, Poetical Register, 2:169.

I would by no means be thought to comprehend those persons of surprising genius, the authors of immense romances, or the modern novel and Atalantis writers; who, without any assistance from nature or history, record persons who never were, or will be, and facts which never did, nor possibly can, happen; whose heroes are of their own creation, and their brains the chaos whence all their materials are selected. Not that such writers deserve no honour, so far otherwise, that perhaps they merit the highest; for what can be nobler than to be as an example of the wonderful extent of human genius?¹

Undoubtedly the most famous reference to Manley's work was in Pope's The Rape of the Lock:

Let Wreaths of Triumph now my Temples twine,
(The Victor cry'd) the glorious Prize is mine!
While Fish in Streams, or Birds delight in the Air,
Or in a Coach and Six the British Fair,
As long as Atalantis shall be read,
Or the small Pillow grace a Lady's Bed.
(lines 161-66)²

Contemporary James Sterling's commendatory verses before Eliza Haywood's Secret Histories, Novels and Poems esteemed Manley above Aphra Behn:

Read proud Usurper, read with conscious Shame,
Pathetic Behn, or Manley's greater Name;
Forget their Sex, and own when Haywood writ,
She clos'd the fair Triumvirate of Wit.³

As late as 1794 Boswell mentioned Manley in his Life of Samuel Johnson.⁴

¹Henry Fielding, "Joseph Andrews," in The Complete Works of Henry Fielding, 16 vols. (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967), 1:214.

²Alexander Pope, "The Rape of the Lock," in Poems of Alexander Pope, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson (London: Methuen & Company Ltd., 1966), p. 181.

³James Sterling, commendatory verses to Eliza Haywood, Secret Histories, Novels and Poems, 4 vols. (London: D. Browne Jr. & F. Chapman, 1725).

⁴James Boswell, The Life of Samuel Johnson, 6 vols., ed. L.J. Powell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 4:199-200.

From this contemporary fame, Mrs. Manley slipped into almost total oblivion. Patricia Koster offered moral objections as the explanation:

The sensational aspects of Mrs. Manley's writing, with accounts of drunkenness, orgies both hetero- and homosexual, seduction, rape, and incest are the main reasons why her works have so long remained in obscurity.... But now that twentieth century fiction has far surpassed Mrs. Manley in sensationalism, we can give our attention to other aspects.¹

Koster was referring specifically to the novels, on which what little notice Mrs. Manley is granted is usually based. Herbert Carter discusses a possible justification for the fate of the plays. He asked: "Why Mrs. Manley, who had a gift for satire stuck to Tragedy? Her conception of tragedy was pure rant.... Some of the expressions of passion are fine bits of poetry, but they are rarely motivated, except in Lucius."²

Anderson summed up his estimation of Manley's importance at the conclusion of his biographical dissertation, championing her as "the foremost woman of letters in Queen Anne's England."³

Any fame that Manley might claim in modern times would be based on her novels and political pamphlets over her prowess as a playwright. If, as Carter suggested, her satiric talents had been applied to comedies for the stage, she might have been the successor of Behn and the rival of Centlivre. The injury inflicted by The Female Wits was not terminal; she did write four more plays. The two that were produced were after the Dryden influence. With her sincere commitment to the

¹Koster, Intro to Manley, The Novels, 1:xiv.

²Carter, "Three Women Dramatists," p. 96.

³Anderson, "Mary de la Rivière Manley," p. 325.

political cause she served, and with the runaway success of the first volume of The New Atalantis demanding sequels, added to the financial uncertainty of writing for the theatre at the time, it is not surprising she should pick her shots, so to speak, with something she considered worthwhile--serious drama. They were her artworks in a commercial career. In her will she had ordered all her manuscripts to be burned, including what may have been a draft of a fifth volume of The New Atalantis, saving only the two plays which she hoped "might turn to some account."

Synopses of Works and Criticism

The Lost Lover opened at Drury Lane around March of 1696.¹

Manley signed the play, as she had the verses before Trotter's Agnes de Castro. The play was a total failure, prompting Manley to add a very informative preface to its published version:

This Comedy, by the little success it met with in the Acting, has not at all deceived my Expectations; I had ever so great a Distrust, and so impartial an Opinion, that nothing but the flattery of my Friends (and them one would imagine Men of to[o] much Sense to be so grossly mistaken, and without whose persuasion I never designed publishing it) could have in the least held me in suspense of its good or evil Fortune; and to confess my Faults, I own it an unpardonable one, to expose, after two years reflection, the Follies of seven days (for barely in that time this Play was wrought) and myself so great a Stranger to the Stage, that I had lived buried in the Country, and in the six foregoing years had actually been but twice at the House.... That knowledge I had of the Town was the gentile part, which does not always afford Diverting Characters; my design in Writing was only to pass some tedious Country hours, not imagining I should be so severely repay'd....

¹LS, 1:459-60.

I am now convinced Writing for the Stage is no proper Way for a Woman, to whom all Advantages but mere Nature are refused; If we happen to have a Genius for Poetry, it presently shoots to a fond desire of Imitation.... Had I confined my Sense, as before, to some Song of Phyllis, a Tender Billet, and the freedom of an agreeable Conversation, I had still preserved the Character of a Witty Woman.

... Here I should most justly reproach myself if I did not make all due Acknowledgements to Sir Thomas Skipwith's Civility, his Native Generosity, and Gallantry of Temper, took care nothing on his part shou'd be wanting to make it pleasing.

Once more, my Offended Judges, I am to appear before you, once more in possibility of giving you the like Damning Satisfaction; there is a Tragedy of mine Rehearsing which 'tis too late to recall, I am content it meet with the same Fortune....

They object to the Verses wrote by me for Agnes De Castro, where, with Poetic Vanity I seemed to think myself a Champion for our Sex.... After all, I think my Treatment much severer than I deserved; I am satisfied the bare Name of being a Woman's Play damned it beyond its own want of Merit.

The verses for Agnes de Castro had been published three months before her own debut.

The prologue, spoken by Mr. Hordern, made a complaint later echoed by Manley in Rivella, that because she was a woman some people doubted that she had actually written The New Atalantis. It speaks of a critic

Who if our Play Succeeds, will sorely say,
Some Private Lover helpt her on her Way
As Female Wit were barren like the Moon,
That borrows all her influence from the Sun.
(lines 14-17)

The Curtain's drawn now by a Lady's Hand
The very Nature you'll cry boads Impotence,
To fringe and tea they shou'd confine their Sense.
(lines 2-5)

Act 1, scene 1 is indicated as set at Lady Young Love's house, but the first brief scene between Wildlove and his servant was probably played in a limbo area on the apron. While waiting for his friend Wilmore, Wildman dispatches a letter to Olivia, whom he had been courting before her forced marriage to an old merchant, Smyrna. As they clear the stage, the

scene at Lady Young Love's begins. Marina, who has just returned from the country, is chatting with Belira about the sort of lascivious yet hypocritical women who people their society. Marina, who is Lady Young Love's daughter, also makes remarks about her sojourn in the country that parallel those made by the bored young wife in Letters Written on a Stage-Coach Journey to Exeter (1696) and doubtless expressed the recently returned Manley's view: "'Twas rough cast, and hung heavily on every Spoke, neither Park, nor Play, nor Basset Table, to call rugged Time along" (p. 2). It is revealed that her mother is about to marry Marina's own former suitor Wilmore the next day. Her mother has likewise arranged for Marina's match with Wilmore's father, the aging country squire Sir Rustick Good-Heart. After imparting this baleful news, Belira cheerfully orders entertainment. The song, "Ah Dangerous Swain," is the poem Manley wrote to Skipwith, and which she reprinted in Rivella.

After the interlude the Lady makes her entrance with Wilmore in tow. Belira notices in an aside that he cannot take his eyes off Marina. Squire Good-Heart also arrives and delivers a lecture on the superiority of country men over those in London, and of the old over the young. After he leaves, Marina expresses her opinion of the mismatch: "What with 12 thousand, a great deal of Youth, no contemptible stock of Beauty, besides an untainted Reputation, that outweighs them all. Believe me Belira, I'm not so far ignorant of my own worth, to bury it in him" (p. 4). (The authoress was ruefully aware of the importance of reputation.) Belira reminds Marina that her wealth is contingent upon her mother's consent to her marriage. As Marina goes off to

change for the Park, Belira, alone, confides that she is conniving against Marina, though she doesn't reveal the cause of her antipathy.

Act 2, scene 1 is set in St. James Park. A stock "park" set was likely used, with the sets of couples entering and reentering through the proscenium doors. (There is nothing scenically demanding about the play, as there would be in the case of Manley's tragedies.)

In the beginning of the act it is disclosed that Wilmore is only marrying Lady Young Love in order to safeguard Marina's fortune and that Belira is his cast-off mistress, now set on revenge. An evening of entertainment is planned, and Wilmore persuades his friend Wildman to make a play for Belira in order to distract her so that he may rendezvous with Marina. Wildman fears that it may ruin his chances with Orinda. Shortly, Orinda encounters Belira and Marina in the park. Her characterization is a satire on a pretentious poetess, who is in fact a notorious coquette. She considers herself a harsh critic of others, but is quite enamored of her own work. Even her speech is mannered:

O Gud, I've been at the Play-House where there has been the odioussest Play, so dull, that o my Conscience, I shan't abide to set foot in it again this Twelve Month.... I've finished a Copy of Verses last night which I have sent to half a score of my Friends for their Approbation. (pp. 12-13)

This character could be a take-off on Manley's friend, Catherine Trotter. The name Orinda was already associated with the famous poetess Katherine Philips, whom Trotter admired, as well as being similar to Trotter's nom de plume, "Orinda," in her novel two years before. The parody is also similar to the one of her in The Female Wits. It is not a bad-natured spoof, and in the end Orinda gets paired off with a gallant, Wildman.

Wildman is introduced to Sir Amourous Courtall, a professional fortune-seeker, and gets the inspiration of inviting him to that evening's soirée to woo the wealthy Lady Young Love away from Wilmore. The part of the inveterate womanizer was not taken by any of the clowns in the company, but by George Powell, who played both romantic and tragic heroes as a rule. Perhaps the character was too self-aware to be classified as a fool type.

Act 3, scene 1 begins in what is apparently the antechamber of a fortune-teller. The obsessively jealous Smyrna has dragged Olivia there seeking assurance from the medium that he is a cuckold. "The Scene opens and discovers Knowlitttle behind a long Table, Books, Globes, Compasses, Pen, Ink, Paper, etc." (p. 18). Knowlitttle declares Olivia to be innocent, and when Smyrna won't accept a simple answer, "He uses postures of Conjuraton, Stamps his Foot; when Tim (his assistant) arises, dress'd like a Fury, with a Wand in his Hand, strikes Smyrna thrice over the Head with it. Olivia shrieks, Smyrna trembles, looks affrighted, and sinks down as such in a Chair. Tim chants and descends." (Foot stamps were the standard cue for a trap door effect. For a person who claimed to have attended the theatre only twice over a period of six years, Manley seems somehow to have garnered at least a fair knowledge of stagecraft.)

The next scene returns to Lady Young Love's house. She has decided to move the wedding up to that very night, and Wildlove comes up with a counter-plot which he describes in "theatrical" terms. "We will try to turn our Modern Comedy Plots into good, sober, earnest, and make her marry one for another" (p. 22).

Act 4, scene 1 opens on "Song and entertainment of Dancing" (p. 22). As couples drift surreptitiously off to their garden appointments, Sir Amorous woos Lady Young Love. The scene changes to a garden, as Belira, who has followed Wilmore, confronts him. As was so often the case in tragedies of the period, the spurned mistress has become vengeful. If Belira cannot have Wilmore, she will make sure that he and Marina are married off to others. In another part of the garden Wildman receives a note from Olivia to come to her home disguised as an apothecary.

Act 5 opens on Wildman's arrival. He is disappointed to learn that Olivia has sent for him only to tell him to stop writing and pressing his suit. She explains that she is, after all, an honest woman. Wildman comes to the realization that he respects her for it.

The scene changes back to Lady Young Love's, where the action picks up exactly where it left off at the end of Act 4, with Amorous and the Lady. Amorous exposes Wilmore by leading the Lady into the garden, where they overhear him and Belira arguing about their affair in the past and his current love for Marina. Belira runs off in a rage, and shortly Wildman enters, bringing Marina. He relates that Belira had tried to stab Marina, but when he intervened had run off. Wilmore expresses compassion for her. In an unusual show of sympathy for a fallen woman on the part of a gallant, he muses, "My Pity is due to an unhappy Woman, who had never bin [sic] such, if she had not known me" (p. 37).

Lady Young Love comes to her senses and contents herself with Sir Amorous, while allowing Marina freedom of choice. Sir Rustick, robbed of his bride, goes off to the country in a huff. The lovers

are united, and Wildblood decides to resume his pursuit of Orinda.

The original critical reaction to The Lost Lover was evident from Manley's preface; it was condemned on the first night. The play was mentioned in A Comparison of the Two Stages, a theatrical satire reviewing current seasons which has been attributed to Charles Gildon. It was not discussed directly as to its merit, but was used to kick off a diatribe against women writers in general. The critical work was in dialogue form, framed as a conversation between three "Wits"--Sullen, Critick, and Ramble:

Sullen: Oh, this is a Lady's!

Critick: How's That? Audetque viris contendere virgo?

Ramble: See how Critick starts at the naming of a Lady.

Critick: What occasion had you to name a Lady in the work you're about?

Sullen: Here's a play of hers.

Critick: The Devil there is; I wonder in my Heart we are so lost to all Sense and Reason: What a Pox have Women to do with the Muses? I grant you the Poets call the Nine Muses by the Names of Women, but why so? not because the Sex had anything to do with Poetry, but because in that Sex they're much fitter for prostitution.

Ramble: Abusive, now you're abusive Mr. Critick.

Critick: Sir I tell you we are abused: I hate these Petticoat-Authors; 'tis false grammar, there's no feminine for the Latin word, 'tis entirely of the Masculine Gender, and the language won't bear such a thing as a She-Author.¹

Giles Jacob, however, had some praise for the writing: "The dialogue of the Play is very Genteel, tho' it did not succeed in the Representation."² John Genest found The Lost Lover an indifferent comedy, and

¹[Gildon,] A Comparison, p. 26.

²Jacob, Poetical Register, 2:169.

in view of the haste with which it was composed, thought Mrs. Manley "very imprudent in allowing the Play to be acted."¹ In Biographia Dramatica, Baker was more lenient:

If we make proper allowances for the sex of its author, the time it was written in, and its being a first essay in that arduous way of writing it may justly be confessed that it deserved a much better fate than it met with.²

Doran, while mistakenly reversing the order of Manley's first two plays, noted The Lost Lover's contribution to the trend toward sentimental comedy: "The Lost Lover introduced what the public had been taught to appreciate--a virtuous wife."³

The modern critic, Joseph Wood Krutch, elaborated on this aspect of the play in his Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration:

The Lost Lover shows some distinct traces of sentimentality. The hero is a complete cad... but he tends to be a moralizing rather than a cynical one, indulging in some heroics and exclaiming: "Oh the curse of lewdness! What woman's fair after we find her faulty?" He is halfway to becoming Joseph Surface, a typical product of the eighteenth century, when the libertine has abandoned cynicism and taken to hypocrisy.⁴

John Harrington Smith, in The Gay Couple in Restoration Comedy, discussed the play in the light of the disappearance of the successful rake in the face of the rise of the virtuous heroine, citing The Lost Lover as an early example. He said that it attempted to appeal to the "boxes" where the ladies were becoming the rising power in the audience, through the

¹Genest, Some Account, 2:75.

²Baker, Biographia Dramatica, 2:380.

³Doran, Their Majesties' Servants, p. 241.

⁴J.W. Krutch, Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), p. 206.

character of Olivia.¹

Allardyce Nicoll saw the only interest in the play in its context within the evolution of comic forms:

Intrigue seems, in this age, to have been peculiarly acceptable to women writers. Mrs. Pix and Mrs. Manley uniting with Mrs. Behn in presenting dramas of this type [Intrigue comedies] with, running through them, threads of sentiment and moralization.... Mrs. Manley's The Lost Lover is almost negligible, hastily written, short--belongs to the same tradition.²

Cotton did not recognize anything innovative in the piece. She summed up, "The characters and dialogue are worn; the structure and motivation are poorly handled."³ Morgan, who reprinted The Royal Mischief, also included in her essay on Manley the Wilmore/Belira argument scenes in Acts 4 and 5 in their entirety.⁴

Both the main female characters in the play are departures from the Restoration mode: Olivia in her unexpected faithfulness despite all circumstances and odds, and Belira, the fallen woman sympathetically treated.

The reason for Manley's sympathy for the rejected seduced woman is obvious. She was writing from experience and thus from the heart. And yet, it may be seen that Manley invested some of herself in Marina as well, as a fantasy alter-ego. Just returned from the country, she, as had the heroine of Manley's just-published Letters, scorns it and longs for the sophisticated entertainments of London. She is witty, and the

¹John Harrington Smith, The Gay Couple in Restoration Comedy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948), p. 168.

²Nicoll, Restoration Drama, pp. 224-25.

³Cotton, Women Playwrights, p. 86.

⁴Morgan, Female Wits, pp. 36-39.

targets of her raillery are hypocritical women who hide behind a false veneer of virtue while deriding others--the kind of women who must have been Manley's nemesis. But Marina, unlike Manley, was invulnerable. Listing her assets, she concluded with, "an untainted Reputation, that outweighs them all." Manley placed the words in the mouth of the hero that Belira "had never bin [sic] such, if she had not known me." The statement Manley was making was that, had it not been for her ruin at his hands, Belira would have been in Marina's shoes--a theme reiterated throughout her subsequent works. In this case, the disproportionate emphasis on the heavy relationship between Belira and Wilmore created an imbalance in the otherwise slight comedy.

The resolution of the Olivia plot, wherein a young wife chose to remain faithful to an old difficult husband despite the blandishments of a likely young rake, makes this piece an early example of sentimental comedy. Colley Cibber's Love's Last Shift, heralded as the first, had debuted only two months previously.



The Royal Mischief, Mrs. Manley's second play, did not open at Drury Lane, as had been announced in the preface of The Lost Lover. There were disagreements during the rehearsal period which resulted in Manley's cancelling the production and taking the script to Lincoln's Inn Fields, where Betterton promptly mounted it.¹ That episode, although presented in a biased and satirical version, makes up the main action of The Female Wits.

¹LS, 1:461.

Manley's patron was William Cavendish, Duke of Devonshire, and her dedication to him is rather flirtatious in tone: "Your Grace, who is so justly the admiration of our Sex... it Seems particularly adapted to our Sex, to describe the Graces of your Person; what has employed our Wonder should our Expressions." Anderson suggests that the following verses, "said to be by a Great Hand" and reprinted in Rivella, were written by the Duke, who was known to dabble in poetry.

What! all our Sex in one sad hour undone?
 Lost are our Arts, our Learning, our Renown,
 Since Nature's Tide of Wit came roulling down:
 Keen were your Eyes we knew, and sure their Darts;
 Fire to our Souls they send, and Passion to our Hearts!
 Needless was an addition to such Arms.
 When all Mankind were Vassals to your Charms:
 That Hand but seen, give Wonder and Desire,
 Snow to the Sight, but with its Touches Fire!
 Who sees thee yeilding Queen, and would not be
 On any Terms the blest and happy He;
 Entranc'd we fancy all his Extasie.
 Quote Ovid now no more ye amorous Swains.
 Nature in her alone exceeds all Art;
 And Nature sure does nearest touch the heart.
 Oh! might I call the bright Discoveror mine,
 The whole fair Sex unenvy'd I'd resign;
 Give all my happy hours to Delia's Charms,
 She who by writing thus our wishes warms,
 What Worlds of Love must circle in her Arms?¹

The two other poems were by her sister "female wits," Pix and Trotter (see above, p. 41, and below, p. 197).

There was yet another set of verses inspired by The Royal Mischief, though not printed with it. Edmund Curll reprinted the poem, which he said he had found written in a blank-leaf of a copy. They were written by Bevil Higgons, whose verses for Catherine Trotter appeared with The Fatal Friendship.

¹"Rivella," pp. 42-43; Anderson, "Mary de la Rivière Manley," p. 93.

They all talk of Love, but few the Passion feel,
 Till thy warm Lines the sacred Power reveal;
 Such Mysteries of Love thye Scenes convey,
 That 'tis enjoyment--but to read the Play.
 All Sex and Age attend thy moving Song
 Which Virtue brings to All, confirms the Strong,
 Recruits the Weak, and makes the Dotard young.¹

The Royal Mischief enjoyed a run of six nights, which reaped two authors' benefits.² Manley's preface for the publication of the play is more confident than that for the first offering. She addressed the main objection made by some of the ladies in the audience who were offended by the intensity of its sexuality and complained of the "warmth" of it. Manley, as Aphra Behn had done before her, insisted that they were prejudiced because the play was written by a woman. She used Dryden as a comparison: "Leonora in the Double Distress, and part of Aurence-Zebe have touches as full of natural fire as possible."³ She also explained that her version of the tale was more correct, in employing poetic justice, than the historical ending: "I am sorry to say there was a Princess more wicked than Homais." She justifies herself in "punishing her at the last, which the Historian is silent in." (Manley's source was John Chardin's Travels [1686].)

Nevertheless, Manley confesses that she had had trouble persuading Mrs. Barry to play Homais: "My Obligations to her were the greater, since against her own approbation, she excell'd and made the part of an

¹Curll, An Impartial History, p. 47.

²[Gildon,] A Comparison, p. 20.

³The Double Distress is the half-title of Dryden's The Spanish Friar (1681). Aurence-Zebe contains the situation of a woman falling in love with her step-son. The London Stage says both plays may have been revived in the season of 1693-94 (1:426-27).

Ill-Woman, not only entertaining, but admirable" (preface). The role, containing six rants, was obviously tailored to Barry's bombastic style, and the desire for her to play the impassioned anti-heroine may have decided Manley to move the play to her theatre. The result of her performance, according to Manley, "exceeded that perfection which before she was justly thought to have arrived at."

The prologue was spoken by Betterton himself, who played the sympathetic Osman, and in it he enlisted the support of the women in the house: "My last kind Wishes Ladies are for you,/ Espouse your Sexes cause, and bravely too" (lines 20-21).

Act 1 is set in a royal apartment in the castle at the capitol of Phasia. A war has just ended in victory for the general, Levan Dadian, and the Vizier, Osman. In the opening scene Homais is seen struggling with a Phèdre-like passion. She confides in her eunuch Acmat, "the wound is love. But such a Love,/ So helpless, so fantastic, all my stock/ Of youth and charms cannot forbid despair" (p. 2). Acmat describes the hopelessness of the situation. The object of Homais's lust is Levan Dadian, nephew of her husband, the Prince of Limbardian. He has recently married a beautiful young lady and is known to be steadfastly loyal to his uncle. Manley's stage directions reveal a directorial tendency: As Acmat lists the obstacles, Homais "Seems disordered during this speech, and at length sinks down in a chair." Recovering from her swoon, Homais expresses her determination to press her suit: "my life, my soul, my All is fixt upon Enjoyment/Resistance but augments desire" (p. 4).

The exposition goes onto reveal that Homais has had two previous infatuations. Osman gave up his suit when she coyly resisted, which left her frustrated and easy prey for Ismael, whom she enjoyed but briefly until he was sent off to war.

Trumpets announce the arrival of the Prince. He keeps Homais virtual prisoner in her chambers. After castigating her for the coldness of her welcoming embrace, he refuses to let her out to greet the home-comers, who are encamped nearby. As the act ends, Homais is temporarily frustrated but more determined than ever.

Act 2 is set in a royal pavilion. (This was the sort of stock setting that provided a neutral space for characters' various encounters.) Osman, who is married to the Prince of Limbardian's sister Selima, confides to Ismael that he is passionately in love with Bassima, Levan Dadian's bride. Ismael encourages Osman to pursue. When Osman goes off, Ismael makes it clear, in an aside, that he covets Osman's position as Vizier. Acmat comes to enlist Ismael's help in procuring Levan for Homais. He is amazed, since the two have never even met, but Acmat explains that she has fallen in love with Levan's lifesized portrait. As Levan approaches, Ismael engages him in conversation. Levan confides his wife's civil coldness, and Ismael suggests that the explanation can only be that she has another lover. Levan is quick to suspect it, and thus primed is vulnerable to Acmat's blandishments on Homais's behalf. He gives Levan a picture of her, which instantly excites him. As Levan kisses the portrait, Acmat describes Homais's reaction to his likeness:

Thus she bears her when she sees your Picture,
Which drawn at length, almost as graceful as
The Original, is the chief Ornament
Of her Apartment, answering

Exactly to her waking Curtains.
 How often I have seen this lovely Venus
 Naked, extended in the gaudy Bed,
 Her snowy Breasts all panting with desire,
 With gazing, melting Eyes, survey your Form,
 And wish in vain 't had Life to fill her Arms.
 (pp. 17-18)

Levan hesitates out of reverence to his uncle, but when assured that the elderly Prince has never consummated the marriage and Homais is a pining virgin, he cannot resist and sets off for the assignation.

The opening of Act 3 finds Homais, having drugged her husband, preparing herself for Levan with a narcissistic reverie spoken into her looking-glass. She withdraws, and Levan is greeted with the song "Un-guarded lies the wishing Maid." The lovers' encounter is rapturous. Homais swoons from Levan's kiss. "She sinks down in a Chair, he falls at her feet. Acmat discreetly Shuts the Scene" (p. 22).

When the stage has been cleared, Selima enters. She has been informed of Osman's plan to visit Bassima, and, having arrived first, conceals herself to overhear them. Osman woos ardently, but Bassima, who admits that she returns his love, will not violate her vows. She breaks into a complaint in rhymed couplets against their fate. As they go their separate ways, Selima vows vengeance against Bassima for robbing her of her man. She leaves, and the scene reopens on Homais and Levan. The sated and doting lovers enjoy a "Dance Performed by Indians," before going off to the victory banquet" (p. 26).

The stage directions for the opening of Act 4 are interesting in that they raise technical questions. It would have been very difficult to mount the spectacle as described in the script on the small stage and with the limited facilities to which Betterton's company was reduced

with the move to the old Lincoln's Inn Fields house. The play was written before the split of the United Company, and the Drury Lane's was the stage Manley had in mind when she conceived it. The practice of closing the curtains between acts was also very unusual.

The Curtain flies up to the sound of Flutes and Hautboys, and discovers the River Phasis, several little gilded Boats, with Musick in them, a Walk of Trees the length of the House, Lights fixed in chrystal Candlesticks to the Branches, several Persons in a Walk, as in Attention.
(p. 27)

A song is being sung: "The Sweets of Peace succeeds our Toils of War."

Homais and Ismael come forward. The scheme has been hatched that Acmat will poison Bassima, but Homais wants her husband killed as well. Ismael agrees to do it, but only if she agrees to sleep with him again as his reward. They seal the bargain with a kiss. As the two move off to dispatch their victims, Levan arrives. Selima has told him of Bassima's love for Osman. He calls a council to condemn them both, but Selima is aghast at the thought that Osman will also be condemned to death. Osman learns about the anticipated trial and begs Bassima to flee, with or without him. She, valuing her honor more than her life, will not make a move that might make her seem guilty. The Prince suddenly enters. He has been hiding in the garden and has overheard all Homais's schemes. He offers the pair refuge in his palace and goes off to seize Homais by force. "Shrieks within," and the Prince returns to announce, "The Tray'tress is secur'd" (p. 36).

As Act 5 opens: "Homais is discovered Bound. Then enter four Mutes, three with Bow strings, the other with a Bowl of Poison" (p. 37). The Prince bids her choose her death, but she pleads with him effectively,

promising to reform. He is swayed by her beauty and releases her. He is about to rush off and plead with Levan to mitigate the sentences passed upon Bassima and Osman. She is to be blinded, her nose, lips, and hands cut off; he is to be shot live out of a cannon. But Homais stops him and they go off together. But after a brief interval with off-stage sound effects--a long alarm and repeated shouts of "Long live the Princess Homais," etc., she returns triumphant as the result of a civil uprising. Acmat has managed to poison Bassima upon her arrival at the palace. The two go off to find and kill the Prince.

"The Scene draws, and discovers the Princess Bassima fainting upon a Couch" (p. 41). Osman comes to beg her, at the moment of their immanent deaths, to consummate their love: "Alas, we have not time to lose." She shames him with, "Ah heavens, is this a time to deal for Guilt,/ When others would repent them of their sins?" (p. 43). Osman is seized and executed as Bassima dies of the poison. But as Homais and Levan embrace, the Prince rushes in and runs her through with his sword. Homais flies into a rage at the Prince, splashing him with her own blood as a curse. She seems almost to relish the prospect of Hell: "I'll meet and sink him [Ismael] in the hottest Lake,/ Nay, plunge to keep him down. Oh I shall Reign/ A welcome Ghost, the fiends will hugg my Royal Mischief." "She reaches to strangle Levan, but in the effort, dies." An officer appears and announces that Selima "ranges the fatal plain,/ gathering the smoking relics of her Lord" (p. 46). Levan is overcome with self-disgust and falls on his sword, leaving the Prince to conclude: "O horror, horror, horror!/ What Mischief two fair Guilty Eyes have wrought" (p. 47).

The epilogue, spoken by child-actress Miss Bradshaw, had nothing to do with the play.

Lucyle Hook, who wrote an introduction for the Augustan Society Reprint edition of The Female Wits, commented on the ample potential for facile satire in The Royal Mischief:

There is no need to point out that The Royal Mischief invited parody. Everything was in excess. No woman had ever been so lustfully wicked as Homais (played by Elizabeth Barry), no heroine so pure as Bassima (Anne Bracegirdle), no hero so faithfully platonic (Thomas Betterton), no husband so duped as the Prince of Libardian, no wife so weakly jealous as Selima (Elizabeth Bowman), no man so easily a prey to lust as Levan Dadian (John Bowman), so much a creature as Ismael (John Hidgson), so vile a tool as Acmat (John Freeman). Each character was a stick figure for a single quality. Incidents happened so rapidly that continual surprise is the predominant emotion if one discounts the miasma of hot surging sex that hovers over the entire production. But it must have been effective when played by the greatest actors in London.¹

This is not to say that it wasn't taken seriously by critics in its own time. Giles Jacob attested to the play's success with the contemporary audience: "This Play was acted with great Applause: the Rules of Aristotle being observed, and the Metaphors and Allegories are just."²

Gildon provided what may well have been an eyewitness impression: "There is force and fire in her Tragedy, that is the Soul that gives it Life."³

The contradiction between that thoughtful and positive evaluation and the general praise of Manley and her works and the dismissal of her plays in A Comparison of the Two Stages, also attributed to Gildon, raises the question of their being by the same writer. Gildon, however, was one of

¹Hook, intro to "W.M.," Female Wits, p. viii.

²Jacob, Poetical Register, 2:169.

³Langbaine/Gildon, Lives and Characters, pp. 90-91.

the most prolific hacks in Grub Street and may have been equally facile writing on both sides of an argument.

Ramble: Whose is that?

Sullen: This is Mrs. Manley's; it made shift to live half a dozen days, and then expired.¹

Genest gave the play qualified praise: "This is a strange play, but not a dull one--it should have been called Love and Murder."² Baker compared the play to its source: "She has improved the catastrophe, by punishing the criminal characters for their illicit amours," and went on to comment on the effect it had on her life: "The unbounded incense which the great success of this play procured Mrs. Manley from the witty and gay, in the end proved fatal to her virtue."³ It would seem to be this success to which Steele was referring when he wrote about this time congratulating Manley on her new-found wealth.⁴

The success of The Royal Mischief, more than its heroic excesses, may have been the impetus for the rival company's attack on it. Those excesses did not escape notice from a later reader. Doran, who mistakenly thought it to be Manley's first play, described The Royal Mischief as "all desperate love, of a very bad quality, and indiscriminate murder, relieved by variety in the mode of killing."⁵

¹[Gildon,] A Comparison, p. 31.

²Genest, Some Account, pp. 92-93.

³Baker, Biographia Dramatica, 3:230.

⁴Steele, Correspondence, p. 427. This is quoted from Letter no. 14 in The Lady's Pacquet Broke Open.

⁵Doran, Their Majesties' Servants, p. 241.

Two modern scholars have offered specific interpretations of the character of Homais. Anderson said, "Mrs. Manley conceives of her as a she-Alexander bent on making her passion prevail throughout the world as Alexander had his valor."¹ Fidelis Morgan's feminist interpretation finds more than one dimension in the characterization:

Homais, the central character, is a sympathetically studied femme fatale. Had the play held to the black and white morality of earlier heroic drama, she would have been a cartoon villainess, along the lines of Settle's Empress of Morocco (who boasted in couplets back in 1673, "Let single murders common hands suffice,/ I scorn to kill less than whole families"). But it was in recoil from captivity imposed during her pregnancy that Mrs. Manley became a writer. Like her creator, Homais endures confinement from her husband, and it is this that sparks the action of the play. Not merely sensual and frustrated, beautiful and ruthless, Homais gains a third dimension in her devastating candour.... Homais is a passionate intelligence.¹

As for the genre of the play, Morgan classifies it as heroic tragedy, but altered by the "near-elimination of the heroic code with its abstract demands and absolute virtues."³ Nicoll also commented on the play's roots in earlier forms: "With The Royal Mischief of Mrs. Manley, we are back again at the Fordian blood-tragedy, again with elements of heroics, not only in the setting, but in the language of the piece."⁴ Hume placed it within a trend in its time:

¹Anderson, "Mary de la Riviere Manley," p. 116.

²Morgan, Female Wits, pp. 209-10. Morgan supplies no documentation for her supposition that The Royal Mischief was written during Manley's pregnancy.

³Ibid., p. 209.

⁴Nicoll, Restoration Drama, p. 157.

In the 1690s villain and especially villainess plays, replete with shock tactics, enjoy a vogue. Banks's Cyrus The Great has a character shredded by hooked wheeled chariots: his lady lovingly reconstructs the body on stage. Mrs. Manley's The Royal Mischief has a man shot out of a cannon: we are told that his lady bestowed "burning kisses" on every bit of the "Horrid Pile."¹

Manley was admittedly indebted to Dryden for elements of her version of heroic tragedy. In the preface she wrote defending The Royal Mischief she cited both Aurenge-Zebe (1675) and The Spanish Friar, the latter under its subtitle The Double Discovery (1681). Homais's resemblance to Nourmahal in Aurenge-Zebe is obvious. Both shamelessly indulged incestuous passions, and, like Nourmahal, Homais was unrepentant at her death. In The Spanish Friar there is a frank description by the heroine Leonora of the joys of lovemaking. Lyndaraxa in The Conquest of Granada (1669-70) was also a villainess model worthy of being a predecessor of Homais. That conscienceless vixen also met her death just at the moment of her apparent triumph. Although Lyndaraxa was a conniver, she lacked the obsessive passion of Homais, the throes of which are reminiscent of the archetype Phaedra, the subject of Jean Racine's neo-classic tragedy of 1677.

Hooks asserted that the model for the character was Manley's hostess shortly before she began writing, the Duchess of Cleveland, "whose lineaments are certainly to be seen in the character of Homais in the warmer passages of The Royal Mischief."² The Duchess's reputed sexual voraciousness could have supplied the novice writer with insight into

¹Hume, Development of English Drama, p. 201.

²Hook, intro, p. iii.

the psychology of a woman who would go to extremes for gratification. Perhaps it was intended that such comparison would be made.

Whatever patent absurdities of incident there are in The Royal Mischief, the stature of the character of Homais sustained the action. The play was successful enough and famous enough to earn the backhanded compliment of parody.



Manley returned to dramatic writing after more than a ten-year lapse with Almyna; or, The Arabian Vow. It was the first English play to be based on the newly translated Arabian Nights' Entertainments.¹ It was also based on the life of Calif Valid Almanzor, and Manley credited Dennis's Essay on Operas (1706) as having influenced her concept of her heroine, who was as good as Homais was bad.

Manley did not sign the play, quite possibly for fear of possible harassment inspired by political factionalism. The epilogue refers to the author as a man: "Unknown, unfriended as our Poet is,/ No factions formed to save him from your hiss" (lines 1-2). If a play appeared known to be by Manley, as the author of Zarah, it might have been cried down by a clique of Whigs.

Almyna opened December 16, 1706 at the Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket. It received an elaborate production, "and by reason of the Extraordinary Charge for Habits," admission prices were raised. Whether this conspired with the other known causes to deter attendance is not

¹Anderson, "Mary de la Riviere Manley," p. 116.

known, but Almyna had a disappointing run of three performances.¹ The dedication was to the Countess of Sandwich, who was the daughter of the famous Restoration wit and playwright John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester. Manley complains to the Countess of all the difficulties encountered during production. She has been out of town at the time and unable to supervise the production, which, while it was beautifully mounted, was put on at a bad time, the week before Christmas, and in competition with a hugely successful opera, Camilla, at Drury Lane.² Once opened it lost two leading cast members--Robert Wilks, who played Abdalla, the hero of the subplot, was out due to illness, and Anne Bracegirdle retired from the stage shortly after the third performance, precluding the planned rerepresentation that season.

The plot of Almyna provided a framework for Manley's feminist arguments. Caliph Almanzor's first wife was unfaithful, so he has concluded that women, like beasts, have no mortal souls, and has adopted the practice of marrying a different maiden every night only to execute the bride the following morning. His brother Abdalla, who in love with Almyna, describes her as an exception to the Sultan, emphasizing her education:

Well she has too, employed her early years.
Joyn'd Art to Nature and improved the whole.
Whatever Greek or Roman eloquence,
Egyptian learning and philosophy can teach;
She has by application made her own.

(p. 10)

¹LS, 2:134-35.

²Ibid.

This argument provokes a tirade from the Sultan:

So much the worse, she's still the greater ill,
 A contradiction to her very nature.
 Born to obey, to know, they nothing know;
 Would they usurp our just prerogative,
 Add to their native pride of ignorance,
 The double pride of seeming knowledge,
 Vain of their outward forms they well may be.
 But when with notions of philosophy,
 The languages, and eloquence they sight
 Entrenched; with false quotations, History,
 And the mistaken learning of the schools,
 There's not another such forbidding wretch!
 The very error of Creation!
 (p. 10)

Nonetheless, Almanzor and Almya fall in love at first sight. They marry and enjoy an unparalleled wedding night. She sees herself as a champion for her sex, who will save all future would-be victims from the Caliph's wrath. In fact, when the time to execute her arrives, the Caliph is so impressed by her nobility and courage in the face of death that he spares her and rescinds his evil vow.

In the subplot, Zoradia is secretly pining for Abdalla, who was her former lover and has abandoned her to pursue his unrequited love for Almya. Almya advises Zoradia in sisterly fashion on the nature of men:

And yet his [Abdalla's] Crime is but Inconstancy.
 A trifle of a Vice in Men's Esteem:
 Because so natural to all the Sex;
 Inconstancy, the practice of their lives,
 Sure from each other, may expect indulgence.
 (p. 27)

In the published version both Zoradia and Abdalla are accidentally killed, but Manley explained in the dedication that Bracegirdle has "so far Acted herself into the kind Wishes of the Town, that in Compliment to their better opinion, the Author has thought fit to make her happy in her Lover." She also acquiesced in the Countess's request that a ritual

scene ending the first act be dropped.

There was spectacle left in the production, however. In Act 4, as was the case in The Royal Mischief, a curtain was employed for a scenic effect. In this instance it remained drawn during the first scene, with the apron serving as the antechamber to the royal bedchamber. The curtain was raised to reveal the Sultan's seraglio. The sliding flats, called screens, opened and closed for different locales throughout the act until, at the end, the full stage was employed, and the Caliph ascended to a "window," which would have been above the proscenium door.¹

Genest acknowledged that Almyna was generally attributed to Mrs. Manley and judged, "On the whole this is not a bad T[ragedy]."² Baker commented on the character having been drawn from Dennis's Essay on Operas, "wherein is given a view of what heroic virtue ought attempt, not what it naturally is."³ Doran commented sardonically, "Mrs. Manley, in Almyna recommended what she had so little practised--unlimited exercise of heroic virtue."⁴

Of the modern readers, Nicoll cited Almyna with Lucius as examples of the heroic mode in the eighteenth century, reviving the "Storm and Stress of Drydenesque tragedy."⁵ Barbour, who judged Manley's tragedies "undistinguished examples of the heroic drama of

¹Summers, Restoration Theatre, p. 161.

²Genest, Some Account, 2:361.

³Baker, Biographia Dramatica, 2:21.

⁴Doran, Their Majesties' Servants, p. 280.

⁵Nicoll, History of English Drama, 2:79.

the day," found Almyna

Somewhat important as a social document ... a thoughtful discussion of woman's right to humanity and to education.... The courage and patriotism of Almyna and the hard-won understanding of the Sultan make this tragedy vastly superior to Manley's other attempts.¹

Anderson found the character Almyna "the imaginative archetype of Mrs. Manley's dreams as a feminist," and dubbed it her masterpiece.²

This time in Manley's styling of a "Drydenesque tragedy," she fashioned a woman of true heroic stature, a staunch idealist without insipidity. A more multidimensional personality than that usually afforded a villain had to be given to the Caliph in order for him to be accepted as a hero at the end. Rather than being a tragedy, Almyna gave serious treatment to a comedy theme. Her Caliph was an exotic version of the reformed rake.

Almyna is devoid of the ludicrous sensationalism of The Royal Mischief, which might provoke laughter in a modern audience, yet the play provides opportunities for eye-filling splendid settings. With a single, formidable conflict, and the argument of the play vindicating feminism, this strong melodrama might stand up to a modern revival.



Manley's final play, Lucius, the First Christian King of Britain, again over ten years distant from the previous one, was acted at Drury Lane beginning May 11, 1717. The London Stage indicates only three

¹Barbour, "A Critical Edition," p. 129.

²Anderson, "Mary de la Rivière Manley," p. 133.

performances, although Benjamin Defoe had credited it with an extremely profitable run of fifteen performances.¹

The dedication and prologue document Manley and Steele's reconciliation. Her apology is straightforward:

The plain and honest business of this, is, to do an Act of Justice, to end a former misunderstanding between the Author and Him, who, she, here, makes her patron.... I have not known a greater mortification than when I reflected upon the severities which have flow'd from a Pen, which is now, you see, disposed as much to celebrate and commend you.... Be then the very memory of disagreeable things forgotten forever, and give me leave to thank you for your kindness to this Play.

The prologue was one of only two pieces Steele wrote that year, the other being a dedication to a new edition of his own plays, The Funeral (1701) and The Tender Husband (1705):

NAT. Lee--for Buskins fam'd--wou'd often say,
To Stage-Success he had a certain way;
Something for all the People must be done,
And, in some Circumstance, each Order won:
This be thought easy, as to make a Treat,
And for a Tragedy gave this Receipt.

.....

But the ambitious Author of these Scenes,
With no low Arts, to court your Favour means.
With her Success and Disappointment move
On the just Laws of Empire and of Love!
--In wanton Ease--ye Britons, learn to know,
Nor slight, in present Welfare, distant Woe!
Rescu'd from foreign Bonds, the happy Age
Sees no Abuse of Power, but on the Stage;
The Briton here, beholds the Tyrant bleed,
The Just, thro' all the Mazes of their Fate succeed;
Our opening Earth, and our descending Sky,
Our Bowl, our Dagger, ready Wrath supply,
And, at the Poet's Nod, Kings reign, or die.
On such dire Forms, long shall this happy Isle,
As only Stage-Events, in Safety Smile:
While her great King magnificently spares,

¹LS, 2:399.

Conquers, and wins, and Deeds of Grace prepares!
 On Dungeon-Guilt, He Gleams of Mercy throws,
 And his each Action, Heav'n's Viceregent shows.
 (prologue)

The plot turns on two true lovers, Lucius and Rosalinda, reportedly played with outstanding success by Barton Booth and Anne Oldfield, who are kept apart until the end by the machinations of two other suitors for each. Lucius' father, King Vortimer of Britain, and the Prince of Albany both love Rosalinda, while Albany's sister and the Princess of Gallia both pine for Lucius. Lucius vows to protect Rosalinda against any threats from Vortimer, even though it means opposing his father. After he converts to her faith, Christianity, they are secretly married. Vortimer is, in fact, an usurper, who murdered for the crown. He captures the couple and condemns them to death as heretics. He decrees Rosalinda be raped by the executioner before being burned. He then disguises himself as the executioner. Lucius, who escapes, kills him, but on discovering that the corpse is his father, sinks into a trance. It finally turns out that Lucius is really the son of the late slain king, and thus the rightful heir. All other schemes have been thwarted, resolving in a happy ending.

Matthew Prior's epilogue was a facetious threat that women were taking over literature:

Approve of what One of us presents to Night
 Or every mortal Woman here shall write.

 As long as we have Eyes, or Hands, or Breath,
 We'll Look, or Write, or Talk you all to Death
 Unless ye yeild for Better or for Worse:
 Then the She Pegasus shall gain the Course;
 And the gray Mare will prove the better Horse.
 (lines 39-40, 46-50)

Lucius was technically remarkable, like The Royal Mischief and Almyra before it. Again a curtain was used for a surprise spectacle effect. Act 5 opened with the curtain being drawn up to reveal a tableau at the altar of Jupiter.¹

Lucius was well-received in its time. Giles Jacob was effusive in his praise:

This play is founded upon the legendary Account of this Monarch given by the Monkish writers, and an agreeable fiction of her own.

The Diction of her Tragedy is purely Dramatical and I think Mr. Pope's Observation on this subject is justly her due; for upon reading her Two Tragedies [The Royal Mistress and Lucius] it will appear that 'She wakes the Soul by tender Strokes of Art,/ Raises the Genius, and impresses the Heart.'²

Baker paraphrased Jacob's comments and added a comment refuting Defoe's account of the run. He concluded, "It was acted only three nights."³

In 1720 Lucius was revived and reprinted in a second edition. Steele advertised it on two occasions through the vehicle of The Theatre, the first English theatrical paper. In number 10, on February 2, he reprinted his prologue, and number 26, March 29, contained his formal apology for his lapse of gallantry in the case of Mrs. Manley:

He [Steele] had the impertinence to write something like satire in return to the Liberties that ingenious Lady took with him in certain of her Writings.... I will atone for this Crime in some measure, and signify to the Town, that her Tragedy of Lucius is now in Rehearsal on the Stage, to be acted for her Benefit.⁴

¹Summers, Restoration Theatre, p. 163.

²Jacob, Poetical Register, p. 168. He is quoting from Pope's prologue to Addison's Cato (1713).

³Baker, Biographia Dramatica, 2:399.

⁴Steele, The Theatre 26 (29 March 1720).

This play of Manley's maturity is clearly the work of a woman who, as she announced in Rivella, hoped to obliterate the unsavory reputation of her youth, and gain respect for her "good behavior and regularity."¹ The play is very correct, indeed, if lacking in excitement and fire. The leading characters, as with Almyra, are more psychologically rounded than stock heroic types. The problems of the plot are largely the results of misunderstandings between the hero and heroine (both of whom are equally noble and well-intentioned) caused by conniving rival lovers. Rivella's claim that she had put aside politics when she set out to write another tragedy for the stage is questionable. There is a discernible Tory statement in the ending, in which a usurper on the throne is replaced by the natural heir.



Attributions can always prove problematical in the case of that age of frequent use of anonymity and pseudonymous authorship. In addition to Atalantis Major by Daniel Defoe, an honest copy, and The Court of Atalantis, sometimes attributed to John Oldmixon, which was designed to turn the political tables,² other titles have been connected with Manley. Charles Gildon stated, "The Lady has Publish'd several other Books, which have not her name to 'em, and which, for that reason, I shall forbear to mention their titles." Anderson suggested four titles: Vertue Rewarded (1693); The Adventures of the Helvetian Lover

¹"Rivella," p. 108.

²Daniel Defoe, Atalantis Major, a Political Satire (Edinburgh: n.p., 1711); [Oldmixon,] The Court of Atalantis.

(1693); The Rival Mother (1694); and The Unhappy Lovers (1694).¹

Patricia Koster, upon inspecting The Helvetian Hero, has found similarities with incidents in Manley's first novel, Letters Written on a Stage-Coach Journey to Exeter (1696).²

Robert Adams Day, in Told in Letters, tentatively attributed the novel Love Upon a Tick (1724) to Manley on the bases of similarity in style and of the coincidence of the narrator's experience with Manley's life. In addition, the plot parallels the story Manley had related about Beau Wilson in The Lady's Pacquet of Letters.

The story tells of Urganda, an older woman who, for a lark, conducts a passionate correspondence with a silly young man, Philander, sending him on wild goose chases after his fantasy loved one. Urganda was once the favorite of a great lady, but was callously discarded, just as Manley had been by the Duchess of Cleveland. Day found the style perhaps the most convincing evidence: "The author is a woman who writes with an unusually masculine, ironic style, and knows it."³

Edmund Curll said that Manley was preparing a second volume of novels after The Power of Love, but that "Barber's latter behavior put a stop to her finishing it." He promised to publish "pieces of hers" with her three plays (he was unaware of Aimyna as Manley's).⁴ In the year of Manley's death he had also written to Prime Minister

¹Langbaine/Gildon, Lives and Characters; Anderson, Mary de la Rivière Manley, p. 107.

²Koster, intro to Manley, The Novels, 1:ix.

³Day, Told in Letters, p. 141.

⁴Curll, An Impartial History, p. 47.

Walpole that he had in his possession a "letter under Mrs. Manley's own hand, intimating that a fifth volume of the Atalantis had been for some time printed off and lies ready for publication." The letter went on to solicit a civil service appointment for the information.¹

Manley herself wrote to Harley after the death of Queen Anne in 1714 proposing "a true account of the changes made just before the death of the Queen."² Since Manley requested in her will the destruction of all manuscripts of hers, with the exception of two plays, it cannot be known if these projects were ever undertaken.

The plays mentioned are lost. Manley's last play had been a success, and it would have been an easy matter for Barber to bring them out since he was a printer, but for some reason he never did so. The DNB entry mentions two other works attributed to Manley "without due warrant," Bath Intrigues, signed by J.B. in 1725, and The Mercenary Lover (1726). Bath Intrigues has since been attributed to Eliza Haywood.³

There is one script attributed to Manley to this day, a ballad opera, The Court Legacy (1733).⁴ The posthumous production claimed to be by the author of the Atalantis, and the dedication was signed "Atalia." However, the *dramatis personae* lists a "Princess Huncamunca," a character invented by Henry Fielding for The Tragedy of Tragedies; or, The Life and

¹Straus, Unspeakable Curll, p. 94.

²LMC, 5:491.

³Day, Told in Letters, p. 43.

⁴DNB, 12:922.

Death of Tom Thumb the Great, in 1731, seven years after Manley's death.

There was one anonymous play produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1698, The Unnatural Mother, written by "a young Lady," who the prologue indicated was concealing her identity because of a past unfortunate experience:

A Woman comes to reform the Stage,
Who once has stood the brunt of this unthinking Age:
Yet should her Pen, her Beauty cannot fail;
But Oh! She vows she'll not her Charms unvail,
Nor shall you know, harsh Man, at whom you rail.
(lines 16-20)

The play resembled The Royal Mischief in several aspects. It was set in The Kingdom of Siam. The spectacle elements included A Dance after the Indian Manner, and a tableau scene (a ritual at a funeral pyre). There was an incest theme, exploring a brother's rape of his sister. The archvillainess Callapia poisons her husband, and when she is called to account at the end, her rants, like Homais's, relish the prospect of Hell: "Ceres will send her winged Dragons for me and bear me back through the air. I'll get into the Zodiac, turn the Bear out of her skin, and creep into it.... Tell 'em I'm coming, bid old Charon be ready with his Boat" (pp. 49-50).

Nicoll has tentatively suggested Ariadne as the authoress, perhaps because the prologue suggested the authoress had written a previous play, but there is no resemblance with Ariadne's She Ventures and He Wins (1695).

Chapter IV

MARY GRIFFITH PIX

Of the three writers, least is known about the life of Mary Griffith Pix (1666-1709), though she was the most consistent in writing for the stage. Unlike Delarivière Manley and Catherine Trotter, she did not leave works that allow modern scholars to reconstruct her biography. Neither Pix nor any contemporary wrote anything about her history; one has to put together a picture from the sparse local statistical records and the casual remarks of her contemporaries. Although she had about a dozen plays produced (subject to variant attributions), some of which had repeated revivals in the early eighteenth century, the lack of information about her was clear as early as 1764, when Mrs. Pix's entry in David Erskine Baker's Biographia Dramatica noted: "In what year she was born, or to whom married, or when she died, are particulars which seem buried in obscurity and oblivion."¹ The Dictionary of National Biography does supply some generally agreed upon data, but even this doughty source is indefinite as to the date of her death, which has since been established as 1709 (see below, pp. 210-11). The DNB does, however, give us the documented information that Mary Pix was born in 1666, in Nettlebed, Oxfordshire, the daughter of the Reverend Roger Griffith and Lucy Berriman Griffith. She married George Pix, a merchant tailor, in 1684. They had one child, who died in 1690 and was buried in

¹Baker, Biographia Dramatica, 1:575.

Hawkhurst, Kent.¹

Using Guildhall Library and Harleian Society sources, Paula Louise Barbour, in her biographical notes to "A Critical Edition of Mary Pix's The Spanish Wives," augments the information about the marriage of Mary Griffith and George Pix. The ceremony took place on July 25, 1684, at St. Benet Fink Parish, London. The license describes Mary as a spinster of about eighteen and George as a bachelor of about twenty-four. It states that they were both from St. Augustine's Parish, Watling Street, and were married with the consent of Mrs. Lucy Griffith, a widow.² It is not known when the Reverend Mr. Griffith died, or when the family moved to London. The last record of George Pix is of his marriage, and it is not known when he died.

Perhaps within the heart of every researcher there buds a latent novelist. It seems only natural to want to construct a subject's life out of the available evidence, however sketchy. From the above information Barbour has tried to account for Pix's entrance into the world of the theatre at the age of thirty. She postulates:

As her freedom from maternal duties might have established the possibility for Mary Pix's career, the early death of her husband would have imposed the necessity for self-support, and thus a reason for her sudden productivity once she decided to write.³

In Women Playwrights in England, Nancy Cotton is more flexible. While considering that Mr. Pix may have died, or that financial distress

¹DNB, 15:1274.

²Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 4.

³Ibid.

may have prompted her to take this "unusual step for the wife of a London merchant," she allows that Pix may have written merely to please herself.¹ Cotton refers to the dedication to The Spanish Wives (1696) Pix's statement to Colonel Tipping of Whitfield, "You have known me from my childhood, and my inclination to poetry."² The same remark contains the hint that Pix's productivity was not as sudden as it might have appeared. The fact that she brought out a tragedy, a comedy, and a novel, all in 1696, suggest that she already had a reserve of material. As early as 1688 there is a commendatory poem prefacing the anonymous feminist tract attributed to Richard Ames, called Sylvia's Revenge, signed M.P., the form of signature she used in her commendatory poem to Sarah Fyge-Egerton's Poems on Several Occasions (1706). Sylvia's Revenge was an answer to Robert Gould's A Satyr Against Women.³ Pix's poem is similar to her other commendatory poems in tone and refers to "A Warr between our Sex and Man."⁴

Mary Pix's marital status during her career is difficult to determine, since the only two primary sources referring to it are contradictory. In the anonymous Session of the Poets Holden at the Foot of Parnassus Hill, July the 9th, 1696, she is dubbed a "spinster."⁵ (Yet the author accords this same status to the bigamously married

¹Cotton, Women Playwrights, pp. 88-89.

²Mary Pix, The Spanish Wives (London: R. Wellington, 1696).

³Gould, A Satyr against Women.

⁴[Ames,] Sylvia's Revenge.

⁵Anon., The Session of the Poets, p. 43.

Mrs. Manley.¹⁾ In The Players Turned Academicks, anonymously published in 1703, she is described as "A tool of a Scribe, and a Poetress [sic] Great,/ That was said to Write well, because well she could Treat/ And for her [Mrs. Barry] had written her husband in Debt."² It is as likely as not that Mrs. Pix was married and was fairly comfortable financially. It was a prosperous time for London merchants in general. Many historians have attested to the rise in prosperity and power of the bourgeois class after the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

It is tempting to search for biographical hints within an author's works. In Mrs. Pix's The Beau Defeated (1700), the merchant's widow, Mrs. Rich, is far more extravagantly accoutered than the Duchess who slights her.³ Mr. Rich, her brother-in-law, is a man of sense and substance, and he closes the play with a salute to merchants which pre-dates Lillo's famous The London Merchant by thirty years:

The Glory of the world our British Nobles are,
The Ladies too renowned and Chaste and Fair,
But to our Citizens, Augusta's sons,
The conquering wealth of the Indies runs.⁴

Could this character have been modeled on Mrs. Pix's husband?

Mary Pix may very well have been the happy wife of that rare avis of the age, a liberal husband. Her first comic offering, the farce The Spanish Wives, has a well-developed character (rare in this

¹Ibid., p. 39.

²Anon., The Players Turn'd Academicks: Or, A Description (In Merry Metre) Of their Translation from the Theatre in Little Lincolns-Inn-Fields, to the Tennis-Court in Oxford (London: n.p., 1703).

³Pix, The Beau Defeated; or, The Lucky Younger Brother (London: W. Turner & R. Basset, 1700), p. 1.

⁴Ibid., p. 47, lines 1-4.

genre), the Governor of Barcelona, a husband who has traveled to England and "gives his wife more liberty than is usual in Spain."¹

Pix's penchant for treating is hardly indicative of a woman alone striving for subsistence. Perhaps the proceeds from her third-night benefits may have been "pin money" to lavish upon her friends.

It has been implied that as the wife of a merchant she was not in the same class as her sisters in the Triumvirate, since both Manley and Trotter were gentlewomen.² It has also come down to us by hearsay, or rather by scholars reading the same scanty general sources and perpetuating the same opinions, that she was also somewhat of a "dummy," inferior to the others in education and possibly in intelligence, but much of so-called history is just repeated gossip.

In regard to Pix's social status, the DNB says that her mother had blood connections with the "very considerable" family of John Wallis in Oxfordshire.³ The previously mentioned dedication to Colonel Tipping is familiar in tone and refers not only to their acquaintance since her childhood, but to a recent encounter as guests at Soundess House, the home of the well-to-do Wallis family. The Colonel Tipping addressed is presumed to be Sir Thomas, a member of Parliament, from nearby Whitfield.⁴ Pix then was accepted in the local polite society. As her career progressed, the patrons to whom she dedicated her plays included

¹Pix, The Spanish Wives, *dramatis personae*.

²Cotton, Women Playwrights, p. 88.

³DNB, 15:1275.

⁴Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 179a.

a viscount (John Fitz-Harding, Double Distress [1701]), a duchess (Bolton, Beau Defeated [1702]), and two countesses (Burlington, False Friend [1699], and Salisbury, The Different Widows [1703]). Her novel, The Inhumane Cardinal, was dedicated to Princess Anne of Denmark. Of course, dedications, which were always petitions for financial favors, don't necessarily reflect personal acquaintance, but Pix testifies in her dedication to The Deceiver Deceived (1698) that she has shown the manuscript to Princess Anne: "Nay even her Royal Highness shew'd such a benign condescension as not only to pardon my ambitious daring, but also Incouraged my Pen."

Charles Didbin, who in his Complete History of the English Stage (1800) takes every opportunity to denigrate the women writers, concludes that Pix's having friends in high places is the only conceivable reason for her plays having been produced: "Indeed it should seem as if all her productions had been foisted on the public through the medium of connections."¹

Mary Griffith, then, seems like her mother to have married beneath her social station. But vicars' daughters proved hard to dispose of in the marriage market because of their relatively noncompetitive dowries. Other possible explanations for the union with George Pix might be a love match, a decline in the family fortune due to Mrs. Griffith's being widowed, or simply that a fat, not-too-attractive girl of the ripe age of eighteen would be grateful for what she could get.

It has generally been accepted by historians and critics that Mary Pix was the mental lightweight among the poetesses. Edmund Gosse,

¹Didbin, Complete History, 4:345.

in his DNB entry, takes a clue from a quotation in Baker's Biographia Dramatica, which is from The Female Wits itself, spoken by the malicious Marsilia, that "She is foolish and openhearted."¹ He adds his own assessment: "The style of Mrs. Pix confirms the statements of her contemporaries that ... she was without learning of any sort."²

It is true that Mrs. Manley went on to become a periodical writer and political pamphleteer and that Mrs. Trotter delved into and wrote philosophical treatises, while Mrs. Pix confined herself mostly to the relatively frivolous task of writing plays. She herself contributed to the image of a woman of little education and modest talent in her self-deprecating dedications, prefaces, prologues, and epilogues. She apologizes for her first produced play, Ibrahim, The Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks (1696) in her dedication to Richard Minchall of Bourton: "I am often told and always pleased when I hear it that the work's not mine; but I fear your closet view will soon find out the woman, the imperfect woman there." In the preface to the printed play she consciously corrects her historical gaffe--Ibrahim was actually the twelfth emperor of the Turks. She writes, "I am very sensible those that will be so unkind to criticize upon what falls from a woman's pen may soon find more faults than I am ever able to answer." The epilogue calls for kindness from the critics on the basis that "The author on her weakness, not her strength relies/ And from your justice to your mercy flies." Queen Catherine; or, The Ruines of Love (1698) dealt with some of the charac-

¹"W.M.," The Female Wits, p. 3.

²DNB, 15:1275.

ters depicted in Shakespeare's history plays; in the prologue, Pix shows herself a reader and admirer of Shakespeare:

Shakespeare did oft his countries worthies chuse,
Nor did they by his pen their lustre lose.
Hero's revive thro' him, and Hotspur's rage,
Doubly adorns and animates the stage,
But how shall woman after him succeed,
And what excuse can her presumption plead.
Who with enervate voice dares weak [sic] the
mighty dead

(lines 1-7)

The reference made in The Female Wits itself to Mary Pix's lack of learning have been the chief source for perpetuating her reputation as a simple woman. This fact is informative because the person or persons who wrote the satire surely knew her, but then one must make allowances for the fact that satire deliberately exaggerates. The self-insight of the character who represents Pix, Mrs. Wellfed, saves her from being a stock fool. When asked, "Madam, are we not to expect some more of your work?" she replies, "Yes; I am playing the fool again" (p. 3). She admits to Marsilia (Mrs. Manley) that she is virtually ignored by "The Cabals of Poets and Judges" of the theatre set (p. 7). When the pseudo-intellectual Calista, the caricature of Mrs. Trotter, deliberately baits her about her lack of Latin, she unabashedly admits her ignorance: "Faith Madam, I must own my ignorance, I can go no further than the eight parts of Speech" (p. 15). Yet she is shown to know her Shakespeare. When she is introduced to Mr. Praiseall, a fawning fop in Marsilia's retinue, this repartée occurs.

Mr. Praiseall: Mrs. Wellfed, tho' last, not least.
Mrs. Wellfed: That's right, Mr. Praiseall.
Mr. Praiseall: In Love I meant, Mrs. Wellfed.
Mrs. Wellfed: Prithee, add "Good Tribonius," don't

steal by halves, Mr. Praiseall.
Mr. Praiseall: Lord, you are so quick!
(p. 8)¹

Though this is a compliment from a "fool," it is apt. In addition, the only compliment about any works of the parodied writers' work is accorded to her. As she leaves for the theatre to hear Marsilia's rehearsal, Praiseall remarks: "A bouncing Dame! But she has done some things well enough" (p. 11). No doubt he was referring to The Spanish Wives, Pix's farce produced at Drury Lane about a month previously and which had "Had the good fortune to please."²

After Pix's death, Richard Steele, who through his close association with Mrs. Manley must have been acquainted with her, published a censure of the plays of Pix and Aphra Behn. Though the emphasis of the criticism was on licentiousness, his premise was that "It is remarkable that the writers of least learning are best in the luscious way."³ Another contemporary, the anonymous author of Animadversions on Mr. Congreve's Late Answer to Mr. Collier (1698) comments on "The insufferable Dullness of P-x."⁴

The best evidence that Pix's literary acumen may have left something to be desired is internal. The so-called blank verse of her tragedies is actually heightened prose, arbitrarily chopped up into lines of more or less iambic pentameter form. A particularly outrageous example occurs in her first produced play, Ibrahim:

¹The paraphrasing is from Julius Caesar, Act 3, scene 1, line 189.

²Gildon/Langbaine, Lives and Characters, p. 112.

³Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, The Spectator 51 (28 April 1711).

⁴[Powell?] Animadversions, p. 14.

Name it no more! The Royal Blood
 Of the offender hath cleansed and washed out
 Thy Honours Stains, and white as thy
 Robes, thy innocence appears.
 Shall I forsake the Christal Fountain,
 Because a Rough-hewn Satyr there
 Has quencht his Thirst? No! The
 Spring, thy Virgin Mind was pure!¹

Still, there is also evidence that Pix was in fact well-educated. She may not have been as accomplished as her sisters in the "Triumvirate," but with a vicar for a father and genteel associations on her mother's side she would have been exposed to literature and culture. If her "inclination to poetry" was known to the family's acquaintances since her childhood, one can surmise that this tendency was fostered through reading and was not discouraged by her parents. In the preface of Ibrahim she tells of the occasion of her having been exposed to the source of the play: "I had read ago some years at a relation's house in the country Sir Paul Ricault's Continuation of Turkish History."

Though The Beau Defeated is unsigned, and there has been some question about attributing it to Pix (see below, pp. 208-209), modern historians give the credit for it to her. In the dedication she states that the play is "Partly a translation from the French." A minimum of "social" French was de rigueur among English gentlewomen, but a translation of this sort would require a more advanced command of the language.

One of Pix's few nondramatic works is Violenta; or, The Rewards of Virtue: Turned From Boccace into Verse (1704), a translation of the eighth novel of the second day from the Decameron. It is tempting to take the phrase "Turned from" to mean, literally, translated. This

¹Pix, Ibrahim, p. 39.

would credit her with having Italian. However, the Decameron had been translated into English as early as 1620, evidently from the French version of Antoine Le Macon, and its fifth edition came out in 1684, so she may have had access to it.

Pix had read the works of Shakespeare, at least the history plays which she refers to in the dedication of Queen Catherine. Beaumont and Fletcher's plays were familiar to her; she took elements for three of her tragedies from them. The central situation of Ibrahim, a ruler's rape of an innocent subject, mirrors that of Fletcher's Valentinian (c. 1609-14), while The Double Distress (1701) has virtually the same story as A King and No King (Beaumont and Fletcher, 1611). Both plots trace the hopeless, incestuous love between the hero and heroine, who are finally happily revealed to be unrelated. And The Conquest Of Spain (1705) contains the theme of Fletcher's The Loyal Subject (1618), a general's incredibly intrepid loyalty to his king despite any atrocity committed against him.¹ If Pix remained in London from the time of her marriage, she could have seen revivals of The Loyal Subject in the season of 1684-85; A King and No King (1686-87); Valentinian, which was revived in 1689, in the season of 1691-93, and possibly in 1693-94.²

Pix's plays reveal some grounding in world history, especially the history and customs of Spain, where she set two of her intrigue comedies, after the manner of her idol, Aphra Behn.

¹Cotton, Women Playwrights, pp. 117-18.

²LS, 1:332, 1:345, 1:400, and 1:412.

All in all, in an age when a "young Lady's" education consisted of fine needlework, social dancing, a smattering of conversational French, and what could be gleaned from reading translations of French and Spanish romances, Pix was relatively learned. She was very prolific; only training and discipline can account for the steady output over her ten-year career.

If the scholar must speculate about many aspect of Pix's life, he/she can at least be certain that she was fat. Almost all contemporary comments refer to her girth. Thomas Brown, satirist, translator, and all-around Grub Street hack writer, remarked more than once on Pix's obesity. In Brown's "Letters to the Living from the Dead" (1700), "speaking through the persona of the deceased comic actor Joseph Hayns, he reports an encounter Hayns had, claiming to have met a woman in a tavern in Hell: "Three times as thick and bulky as Mrs. Pix."¹ The twentieth-century editor added insult to injury with his footnote: "Mary Pix, wife of a city tailor, wrote exceedingly dull plays and novels. She acquired notoriety by her great obesity and fondness for wine."² In another letter "To The Living Heraclitus" (1704), Brown identifies Pix as one of the "nine Muses," and a "thundering piece of man's flesh."³ In Brown's "A Criticism of Several Plays," he writes teasingly about Pix's love of food and drink, and generosity:

¹Thomas Brown, Amusements Serious and Comical, and Other Works, ed. Arthur L. Hayward (London: G. Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1927), p. 215.

²Ibid.

³Thomas Brown, A Letter to the Living Heraclitus from the Dead Thomas Brown (London: n.p., 1704).

The jolly poetess scribbles neither for fame nor money,
But for the charms of Bacchus and Ceres; if the third day
produce a Bottle and Cacklers, she has her end; and treats
Madam B----- as her great benefactress.¹

This is a very similar description to that in the dramatic personae of
The Female Wits:

Mrs. Wellfed, One that represents a fat Female Author, a
good sociable well-natur'd Companion, that will not suffer
Martyrdom rather than take off three Bumpers in a hand.

Even more recent critics have alluded to her bulk. John Doran, in Their Majesties' Servants (1865), begins his assessment of her work by describing her as "a woman of genius and much flesh."² Walter J. Macqueen-Pope, in Ladies First (1952), praises her with the qualification, "She was a very fat woman, but a living example that fatness and stupidity do not go together."³

In an unpublished paper delivered at a convention of The American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, Paula Louise Barbour summed up the impression of Pix's personality that has come down to us:

One can almost be thankful to those who tried to ridicule Pix, because they have in the end literally fleshed out her biography. To an arid list of dates one can add the picture of a laughing, obese pub patron who gesticulated with a drumstick as she ordered drinks all around. It is obvious that even the misogynist pundits had to like her.⁴

¹Thomas Brown, The Works of Mr. Thomas Brown in Prose, Verse: Serious, Moral and Comical, 4 vols. (London: S. Briscoe & B. Bragge, 1707-11), 4:241. "Madam B" refers to the actress Elizabeth Barry.

²Doran, Their Majesties' Servants, p. 166.

³Walter James Macqueen-Pope, Ladies First: The Story of Woman's Conquest of the British Stage (London: W.H. Allen, 1952), pp. 130-31.

⁴Paula Louise Barbour, "Mary Pix, 1666-1709?--The Losing of a Playwright," paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, Chicago, 1978, p. 4.

In The Female Wits itself there are numerous allusions to Pix's bulk and propensities.

In the main, Pix was spared the sexual innuendoes which permeated the criticism of women writers. This fact may have been due to her appearance, or possibly the protection of a husband. Barbour makes the assertion that Pix was "virtually the only female playwright, in that age that delighted in equating women writers with prostitutes, who escaped all imputation of unchasteness."¹ There are, however, some instances of sexual innuendo. The prologue to The Spanish Wives was spoken by William Penkethman, a popular clown, and concluded with the lines:

As for you spruce Gallants, pray ben't too nice,
But show you can oblige a woman twice.
The first time she was grave, as well she might,
For Women will be damned sullen the first Night;
But Faith, they'll quickly mend, so ben't uneasy:
Tonight she's Brisk, and tries New Tricks to
please ye.

(lines 26-31)

In the prologue to The French Beau, a new version of The Deceiver Deceived (1697; published in 1699), Pix is directly tied in with a reference to sexual intercourse, asserting that she "Would strip off twenty winters for that pleasure,/ And melt down twice as many pounds she has above Beau-measure."² The sentence meted out to Pix by Apollo, the judge at her trial in The Session of the Poets, is eternal sexual frustration: "She shall be desperately in love with several Persons, but not one of them shall regard her but despise and laugh at her

¹Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 7.

²George Thorn-Drury, "An Unrecorded Play Title," Review of English Studies 6 (1930): 318.

Passion."¹

The tendency to self-parody characterized in The Female Wits is conceivably demonstrated in one of her own characterizations. In The Innocent Mistress (1697), a young girl, Peggy, described as "ill-bred,"² makes her first entrance eating a plum cake. She speaks with a country accent and describes herself through the criticisms of others: "She [Arabella] says eating between meals will spoil my shape, and I snatched a book out of her hand, and she said a primer was fitter for me" (p.). Peggy surreptitiously guzzles her parents' wine throughout the play (a hiccup is actually written into the stage directions.) Though only in her teens, she is more than eager to get married and is hilariously drunk at her wedding. One of the chief boons of marriage, it seems, is that she will be able to drink as much as she wants--in the open. She also intends to be extravagant: "I'll long for everything I see... I'cad, I'll long for green peas at Christmas, so I will" (p. 45). She proves to be good-natured in the long run. When she finds out that she has been tricked into marrying a penniless adventurer, she is content to keep him. Is this a partial self-portrait of the young Miss Griffith?

Pix had friends among the other women writers and the leading actresses of the day. There is no known personal correspondence such as a collection of familiar letters, but a scrutiny of the commendatory letters, collaborative efforts, and references by satirists over a span of

¹Anon., Session of the Poets, p. 44.

²Mary Pix, The Innocent Mistress (London: J. Orme, 1697), *dramatis personae*.

years attests that Pix sustained friendships among the wide social range of women in the literary and theatrical worlds whether anything resembling a cabal or actual salon ever existed cannot be known, but there seems to be a consistent theme in the encomiums the female wits exchanged with each other. Lauding Katherine Philips (Orinda) and Aphra Behn (Astrea) as their champions, they describe each other's efforts as contributions to a battle of the sexes. In praising her "sister muses" Pix abandoned her own self-effacing modesty and proved boldly feminist, employing war imagery in her verses. One example is the following commendatory letter, which appeared alongside another by Catherine Trotter in the publication of Manley's The Royal Mischief (1696):

As when some Mighty Hero first appears,
And in each Act excells his wanting years,
All eyes are fixed on Him, each busy tongue
Is employed in the triumphant Song.
Even pale Envy hangs her dusky wings,
Or joins with brighter Fame, and hoarsely, Sings,
So you, the unequal'd wonder of the Age,
Pride of our Sex, and Glory of the Stage
Have charmed our Hearts with your immortal Lays,
And tuned us all with everlasting Praise.
You snatch Laurels with undisputed Right,
And Conquer when you but begin to Fight.
Your infant strokes have such Herculean force,
Your Self must strive to keep the rapid Course,
Like Sappho Charming, like Afra Eloquent,
Like Chast Orinda, sweetly Innocent.

Ten years later, the verse she contributed to Sarah Fyge-Egerton's Poems on Several Occasions (1706) had a similar ring:

Hail to Clarinda, dear Euterpe hail:
Now shall we Conquer, now indeed Prevail
Mankind had long upheld the learned way
And Tyrant Custom forced us to obey.
Thought, Art and Science did to Them belong,
And to assert Ourselves deemed wrong,
But We are justified by thy Immortal Song.
(lines 1-7)

Manley's poem before Trotter's Agnes de Castro (see above, p. 67), and, likewise, Trotter's before Manley's The Royal Mischief (see below, p. 197), are couched in equally militant words.

The Female Wits exploits the cliché of cattiness and competitiveness among the women, but they were (in print at least) consistently supportive of one another. Wits has Wellfed/Pix already friendly with Marsilia/Manley, but just meeting Calista/Trotter for the first time. This may have been just to facilitate the exposition, because all three made their debuts at Drury Lane within six months of one another, and in the small theatrical world, with the burgeoning notoriety which accompanied the phenomenon, it is unlikely that they would not have encountered one another. In her chapter on "The Female Wits," Nancy Cotton finds it hard to account for the friendship between what "seem to be an oddly assorted trio--the wife of a London merchant (Pix), a rakish cast wife (Manley), and a genteel girl of sixteen (Trotter)." She ascribes the association to the fact that the theatre world was small; their bond may have been a purely literary one, born out of a camaraderie as women playwrights. They "expressed that feeling publicly in verses about their desire to fill the vacant female laureateship."¹

Pix was certainly friendly with Manley from the time of their debuts in 1696, at least through 1700, when she contributed to The Nine Muses, the collection of elegies to Dryden which Manley may have organized.² Yet the two "oddest" of likely companions, the fat

¹Cotton, Women Playwrights, p. 92. The laureateship she refers to is Aphra Behn's.

²Bowyer, Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre, p. 32.

citizen's wife of thirty and the teenaged intellectual, are linked in the sparse records repeatedly over a span of years. Trotter wrote an epilogue for Pix's Queen Catherine in 1698. In that same year they are paired in three separate references in Animadversions. In the preface, a verse diatribe on current writers, the author, now supposed to have been George Powell, actor/playwright for the rival Drury Lane and a personal "enemy" of Pix's, derides the "Two Female things" with scandalous double-entendre. Pix is easily identified through a reference to "Queen Ca_____ne," and Trotter through a paraphrase of her dedication of The Fatal Friendship (1698) to Princess Anne of Denmark. Even more obvious is the reference within the commentary to "The unsufferable dullness of P--x, and "The lightness both in head and tail of the presuming T-----r."¹ Lastly, in the company of Congreve in an unfriendly visit to the rival house are seen "the She-Things called Poetesses which write for his House."² Both contributed eulogies to The Nine Muses.

Two other friendships of Pix's are presented in Thomas Brown's "Letter to Heraclitus"--a "Madam Fi-ld," who would be Sarah Fyge-Egerton, and "one Mrs. C-r-ll," or Carroll, which was Susanna Centlivre's name until her marriage in 1707.³ In 1706, the last year when Pix is known to have written anything, Mrs. Carroll, as well as Pix, wrote a commendatory poem for Fyge-Egerton's Poems on Several Occasions.

¹[Powell,] Animadversions, p. 14.

²Ibid., p. 34.

³Brown, Letter to Heraclitus.

Perhaps her little-noted relationship with Susanna Centlivre was the most significant friendship Pix had among her colleagues. When Pix is mentioned at all in English literature studies, she is placed under Restoration women writers, while Centlivre is categorized as belonging to the Augustan period, when in fact their careers overlap by six years. They are not given the same classification in criticism either. Centlivre is generally acknowledged as the first major woman playwright after Aphra Behn, while Pix is ignored or dismissed as minor. Pix and Centlivre were close in age, though the latter did not write for the theatre until 1700 (The Perjured Husband), the same year as The Nine Muses project. It is possible that Pix encouraged Centlivre to write plays at this time, since by 1703 they are portrayed as fast friends and colleagues. The anonymous author of The Players Turned Academicks describes the parting of the two as Pix was driving off with the Betterton Company to a semi-season at Oxford:

The first that took coach and had often took ---,
 Was the fam'd Mrs. B--- with P--x at her A---.

 While Carrol, her Sister-Adventurer in print,
 Took her leave all in tears, with a curt'sie and squint,
 And would certainly take the same journey as she,
 Had she not given away Médecin Malgré Lui.¹

Contemporary references point to collaboration between the two. Thomas Brown's Criticism credits Pix with, or rather blames her for,

¹Anon., Players Turn'd Academicks, p. 3. "Médecin Malgré Lui" refers to Centlivre's Love's Contrivance (1703), based on the Molière comedy. The ellipsed words are probably: "tarse," contemporary slang for penis; Barry; Pix; and "arse," slang for buttocks.

The Stolen Heiress (1702), unsigned, but presumed to be Centlivre's work.¹ The author of the announcements for a benefit for Pix's family after her death, which appeared in both The London Gazette and The Daily Post Boy, attributes "the Greatest part" of both The Busy Body (1709) and The Gamester (1705) to Pix.² In The Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre, biographer John Bowyer allows the possibility of their collaboration.³

Among the actresses of Pix's close acquaintance were two major stars, Mrs. Barry, for whom she wrote her tragic heroines, and Mrs. Verbruggen, the leading comedienne at Drury Lane. Mrs. Barry, along with Thomas Betterton and Mrs. Bracegirdle, left the Theatre Royal in 1695 to set up their rival troupe in Lincoln's Inn Fields, for which Pix wrote from 1697 on. While previously mentioned references to Pix and Barry as fellow revelers and traveling companions speaks of more than a formal working acquaintance, the roster of roles Pix created for Barry is especially impressive.⁴

John Verbruggen played the title role in Pix's debut, the tragedy Ibrahim. His wife was the former Susanhah Percival and the widow of William Mountfort, who throughout her career had specialized in breeches roles in comedies. Pix wrote for her the part of Acmat, a eunuch. It

¹Brown, Works, 4:237.

²Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 10.

³Bowyer, Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre, p. 94.

⁴Comedy roles were: Bellinda in The Innocent Mistress (1697); Olivia in The Deceiver Deceived (1698); Clarinda in The Adventures in Madrid (1706). The tragic vehicles, which were Mrs. Barry's forte, were: Adeltaida in The False Friend (1699); Zarianna in The Czar of Muscovy (1701); Leamira in The Double Distress (1701); and the title roles in Queen Catherine (1698) and Zelmane (1704).

was Mrs. Verbruggen's only known tragic role.¹ The same season she created the role of the Governor's Lady in The Spanish Wives. Judging from descriptions of Mrs. Verbruggen, the "brisk and airy lady" was tailored to her talents.² It is quite likely that her husband played opposite her as the Governor. The Verbruggens had originally planned to join the seceding company at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1695, but the Lord Chamberlain ordered them to remain at Drury Lane.³ In fact, they both appeared in The Female Wits, she taking off Mrs. Manley, and he in a role satirizing Betterton. Whether this strained the relationship cannot be known, but John Verbruggen received permission to go over to the Betterton company the following January, while Mrs. Verbruggen stayed on for primarily monetary reasons.⁴ The Spanish Wives was revived in 1699 and again in 1703.⁵ It may have been the role of Mrs. Verbruggen's last performance, for she died in that same summer.⁶ John Verbruggen died in Dublin in 1708 while rehearsing The Spanish Wives for the Smock Alley production.⁷

An interesting clue to the possibility of a continuing relationship is that when Zelmane, attributed to Pix, was brought out in

¹Genest, Some Account, 2:278.

²Pix, The Spanish Wives, *dramatis personae*.

³John Harold Wilson, All The King's Ladies (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 179.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵LS, 1:508; LS, 2:877.

⁶Cibber, An Apology, p. 166.

⁷William Smith Clark, The Early Irish Stage (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 124.

1704, the dedication stated that "The following play was a piece left unfinished by Mr. M____t," Mrs. Verbruggen's first husband. In her discussion of Zelmane, Barbour notes: "Both Mrs. Verbruggen and her second husband had been associated with Pix since the days of Ibrahim, so it is not unlikely that part of a play in their possession would fall into Pix's hands for completion."¹

Pix was congenial enough with some of the male writers of her generation to be the recipient of literary favors. Pierre Motteux contributed both the prologue and the epilogue to The Innocent Mistress (1697), and two incidental dialogues to The Deceiver Deceived (1697). William Burnaby wrote the epilogue to The Czar of Muscovy (1701).

Pix's most distinguished friend among the literati, her mentor and even champion, was William Congreve, who was at the height of his success when she entered the profession, and whose Love for Love had launched Betterton's break-away company at Lincoln's Inn Fields.² The DNB credits Congreve with influencing Pix's The Innocent Mistress (1697), her first play for Lincoln's Inn Fields.³ He was her staunch defender during a critical event in her career, a battle over plagiarism with George Powell, leading actor at Drury Lane and sometime playwright.

There is more information on this single incident than on all the rest of Pix's life. Both plays were published with the authors

¹Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 102.

²Cibber, An Apology, p. 110.

³DNB, 15:1275.

giving their respective sides of the story. There is also an account of an incident related to the Drury Lane production in Animadversion, supposed by modern scholars to have been written by Powell. The story emerges that Pix had originally submitted her comedy, The Deceiver Deceived, to Powell at Drury Lane before her affiliation with Lincoln's Inn Fields, but it had not been put into production, although the script was obviously not returned, since Drury Lane opened its 1697-98 season with The Imposture Defeated; or, a Trick to Cheat the Devil, by George Powell, a comedy with two plots, one of which was exactly the same as Pix's, even to the main character's name.¹ Congreve led a heckling party to a performance, described below, albeit by a member of the opposing faction, possibly Powell himself:

The mighty Man of Wit at the representation of this Play was seen very gravely with his Hat over his Eyes among his chief Actors and Actresses, together with the two She-Things called Poetesses, which write for his House, as 'tis noble [sic] called, thus seated in state among those and some other of his ingenious critical Friends, they fell altogether upon a full cry of damnation, but when they found the malicious Hiss would not take, this very generous, obliging Mr. Congreve was heard to say we'll find a new way for this Spark, take my word there is a way of clapping a Play down.²

Pix's prologue castigated the other company for the theft:

Deceiver deceived and Imposture cheated!
 An audience and the devil too defeated!
 All trick and cheat! Pshaw, 'tis the devil and all,
 I warrant ye we shall now have cups and a ball;
 No gallants, we those tricks don't understand;
 'Tis t'other house best shows the sleight of hand...

¹LS, 1:485.

²[Powell,] Animadversion, p. 34.

Our Authoress, like true woman, showed her play
 To some, who like true wits, stol't half way.
 (lines 1-6, 23-24)

In Pix's dedication to Sir Robert Marsham, she had complained, "I look upon those that endeavored to discountenance this play as enemies to me."

In Powell's preface to the reader of Imposture Defeated, his defense was lame, if not impudent. He denied ever having read Pix's version, citing a novel as the common source of both plots. He bragged that his own play had had a longer run. But, just to satisfy "The Publick cry," he conceded:

'Tis true, such a one she brought into the house, and made me a solicitor to the company to get it acted, which when I had obtained, she very mannerly carried the play to the other house; and if I had really taken the character from her, I had done no more than a piece of justice.

Thus he attempted to put the onus on her for having committed a work to one house and taken it to the other as well. His argument does not hold up. It is unlikely that Powell would recommend a play that he had never read for production, particularly one by a "female wit." (He had been a performer in the recent The Female Wits and has been put forth by Lucyle Hook as a possible candidate for its authorship [see below, p.

].) Powell's production came out first--before one was planned for the other theatre--and with his name on it. Further, he went on in his preface to denigrate the material itself.

As this trifle of a Comedy was only a piece of scribble, purely designed for the introduction of a little Musick, being no more than a short week's work, to serve the wants of a thin Playhouse, and a long vacation, under those little circumstances it needs no apology either for the plot or the writing part of it. It neither sets up for a Play, nor the Author for a Poet.... I would not willingly be thought so poor a Plagiary.

It was all a matter of a tempest in a teapot, since neither version was a real success, although Deceiver was brought out again in 1699 under the title The French Beau.¹ Pix could, however, rejoice in her friend's loyalty and the support of Betterton and his company. In her dedication to Princess Anne she went on to say she was "pleased and treated by those who please every spectator with a candour and a sweetness not to be expresst." Congreve had just dedicated The Mourning Bride, his only tragedy, to Princess Anne, and it may have been through his intercession that Pix showed Her Highness the script of Deceiver Deceived. However, forgotten or ignored Pix was after her death, what is known of her friendships and associations attests to her standing in the literary community of her day.

It is hard to discern what Pix's political leanings were. Even the plays which deal with actual historical events revolve around personal crises rather than political issues. Her friendships crossed the sharply defined Whig and Tory lines, and suggest a person of political tolerance if not ambivalence. For example, Manley was a rabid Tory, while Trotter and Congreve were staunchly Whig. As she was a member of the merchant class, so one would suppose that Pix would have Whig sympathies. The final speech in The Beau Defeated (1700) extolls a city merchant as the very backbone of the nation. Both Queen Catherine and Zelmane end with speeches emphasizing a monarch must rule justly, with the people's consent, and with their welfare as a primary concern.

¹Thorn-Drury, "Unrecorded Play Title," p. 316.

Ibrahim and The Conquest of Spain, on the contrary, present characters who advocate blind loyalty to the monarch. Of Ibrahim, Genest comments: "Mrs. Pix is very loyal, and makes Amurat say that if the Sultan should send the bowstring, he would fall on his obedient knees and die blessing him."¹

Thomas Brown considered The Czar of Muscovy a political play. "Here comes the Czar of Muscovy, an occasional Drama, for Mrs. Pix slips no occasion of Political Plays."² The Czar ends with a tyrannical usurper being replaced on the throne by the rightful heir. The Double Distress concludes as the ruling monarch steps aside upon the revelation that another man is the true king. In 1702 Pix wrote a commendatory poem for Bevil Higgons on the publication of The Generous Conqueror,³ which had come under fire from a hostile faction which considered the play Tory propaganda.

A Comparison of the Two Stages contains a lengthy critique of The Generous Conqueror, alluding to Pix's support:

Sullen: Has he not two Copies of Verses before his Play?

Critick: Yes, a sign his Cause wanted Support. Those persons seem to be Friends to him and to the Faction, but their flattery is fullsome and unjust. The first says ... The next Copy (which under the rose I take, by the M.P. to be Mary Pix) says what is stranger; I'll read the Verses "Thy first Essay has entertain'd us more/ Than all the Muses finish'd toil before." However it comes to pass, the Verses are smoother than hers commonly are; her Muse was wont to hobble like a young Negro Wench, that had just learnt to wear Shoes and Stockings; Some of her Verses are worse than Prose,

¹Genest, Some Account, 2:75.

²Brown, "A Criticism of Several Modern Plays," in Works, 4:241.

³Pix, Commendatory verse, in Bevil Higgons, The Generous Conqueror (London: S. Briscoe, 1702).

she knows not what scanning means, nor did she ever use her Ear to judge their awkward running: But what she affirms of this Play, is very hard upon all the rest; that this should be the only good one that ever was, when I'll be hanged if upon the comparison she'll allow her own darling Ibrahim to submit to it.¹

It seems peculiar that after battling so vehemently over the authorship of one of her plays, Pix reverted to anonymity, and from 1699 on signed only one play, The Double Distress, in 1701. Total attributions to her range from a mere six to twelve plays in the view of most twentieth-century scholars, with the inclusion of Zelmane bringing it to thirteen. Six attributed plays are unsigned, with the dedication of The Beau Defeated and the prologue of The Conquest of Spain representing the author as a man.

The Beau Defeated, now generally accepted as Pix's, was once attributed to another writer. Giles Jacob in The Poetical Register named a Mr. Barker as author.² Biographica Dramatica noted that "Some of the catalogues ascribe it to a Mr. Barker."³ Allardyce Nicoll calls this an error and gives the play to Pix in his History of the English Drama.⁴ No one has challenged it since. However, on a back page of The Beau there is a list of books "Printed for Richard Basset." Items 12 through 16 (The Innocent Mistress; Ibrahim; The Spanish Wives; The Deceiver Deceived; and Queen Catherine) are listed as "all written by Mrs. Pix." Since the publisher was obviously not averse from publishing plays

¹[Gildon,] A Comparison, pp. 81-82.

²Jacob, Poetical Register, p. 203.

³Baker, Biographica Dramatica, 2:52.

⁴Nicoll, History of English Drama, 2:171.

with Pix's name on them, the question arises, why was that one play released unsigned? Again, when Basset published the anonymous The Nine Muses, his advertisement page in the back listed The Beau separately from the series of plays included credited to Pix.

The two most disputed attributions are The Czar of Muscovy (1701) and Zelmane (1705). Edmund Gosse, in his article on Pix in the DNB, does not mention either The Different Widows or Zelmane, and debunks the attribution of Czar:

An anonymous tragedy The Czar of Muscovy, published in 1702, a week after her play of The Double Distress, has found its way into lists of her writings, but there is no evidence identifying it with her in any way.¹

Apparently Gosse was unaware of Brown's contemporary attribution.

Zelmane is not included in most lists of Pix's works. Allardyce Nicoll states that Zelmane was left unfinished by William Montfort, and says that Pix has been credited with it, without confirmation since 1704. He does not specify the source, but it may have been a notice in the Diverting Post of October 28, 1704, announcing "Zelmane; or, The Corinthian Queen. Written by Mrs. Pix, a short tragedy...." Such a primary source, printed during Pix's career, would seem validation enough. Barbour puts forth a good argument for Zelmane being Pix's, citing the "emphasis on public theme, as well as the play's fascination with jealousy, rape and marriage laws." This plus the fact that the play was "produced at Pix's usual theatre with her usual stars and printed by William Turner, who was involved with three of her other plays, and John Nutt, who printed

¹DNB, 15:1275.

her poem Violenta that same year."¹

Since what we know about Pix's life and work outside of the extant texts and baptismal and marriage records is conjecture based on scattered references and comments, it is not surprising that until recently the year of her death was unknown. The few sources of information about Pix differed widely in their estimates of the date. The DNB suggests 1720, but very tentatively--following that date with a question mark.² The possible source for this guess may be an editor's note to Thomas Brown's Amusements, Serious and Comical. Brown's reference to Pix's bulk is footnoted with a castigation of her work and lifestyle, followed by the blunt statement, "She died about 1720."³

Musgrave's Obituaries Prior to 1800 gives the date of Pix's demise as 1710 at the age of fifty. It also mysteriously dubs her a "poet and actress."⁴ This may be a confusion of Pix with Susanna Centlivre, who was an actress as well as a playwright.

Pix was forty-three in 1709, the now-established year of her death; she probably died in the late spring. The information about Pix's death comes from three newspaper announcements of a benefit performance of Centlivre's The Busy Body. The Daily Courant of May 25, 1709 states that there will be a performance "for the benefit of Mrs.

¹Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 102.

²DNB, 15:1275.

³Brown, Amusements, p. 215, n. 2.

⁴William Musgrave, Obituaries Prior to 1800, 49 vols., ed. Sir George Armytage (London: Harleian Society, 1899-1901), 5:71.

Pix's executor."¹ The London Gazette and The Daily Post Boy specify that the performance will be "for the benefit of the Family of Mrs. Mary Pix, deceas'd."²

Who were the remaining family of this woman whose career has been explained on the premise that she was probably a widow with no surviving children? The word "executor" implies a competent adult; "family" usually implies surviving children. Was Mary Pix survived by her widowed mother? Did she have brothers or sisters? Did George Pix survive her? Had they children other than the one who died in 1690? This information poses more questions than it answers.

Though little is known about Pix's life, all of her known plays and nondramatic works are extant, including a novel, The Inhumane Cardinal, generally assumed to be lost. Actually, a copy of the novel is contained in the Newberry Library special collections in Chicago.

The body of playscripts shows a variety of influences. Pix's models, like most of her contemporaries', were Beaumont and Fletcher's tragicomedies, Dryden's heroic tragedies, and, in Pix's case especially, the intrigue comedies of Aphra Behn. Congreve, master of the comedy of manners, was a mentor.

¹The Daily Courant, 25 May 1709.

²The London Gazette, 16-30 May 1709; The Daily Post Boy, 26-28 May 1709.

Critical Overview

The critical assessment of Mary Pix's work has come down to us from the judgments of a few of her contemporaries. Until the publication of The Innocent Mistress in a collection in 1981,¹ none of her plays had gone beyond a first edition except The Deceiver Deceived (1697), brought out two years later as The French Beau. Since she was not considered a major playwright, few historians read her plays, and they adopted and perpetuated the few generalizations available, i.e., that Pix wrote obscene comedies and dull tragedies.²

Pix's contemporary criticism centered more on the issue of morality than on literary merit. In A Comparison between the Two Stages (1702), a critical run-down on the recent seasons of the rival companies in dialogue form, the character Sullen makes a play on words to characterize The Innocent Mistress: "Tho' the title calls this innocent, yet it deserves to be damned for its obscenity."³ An anonymous but adamant reformer of the theatre cited both The Different Widows and The False Friend in his diatribe A Representation of the Impiety and Immorality of the English Stage (1704).⁴ A detailed attack was made on both Pix and Aphra Behn by Richard Steele in The Spectator in 1711 (gratuitously, since they were both dead):

¹Morgan, Female Wits, pp. 263-328.

²In addition to the microprint collection Three Hundred Years of British and American Drama, Pix's plays are available in a Garland reprint, The Plays of Mary Pix and Catherine Trotter (1982).

³[Gildon,] A Comparison, p. 32.

⁴Anon., A Representation of the Impiety and Immorality of the English Stage (London: n.p., 1709).

We are obliged to the lady who writ Ibrahim for introducing an introductory scene to the very action, when the emperor throws down his handkerchief as a signal for his mistress to follow him into the most retired part of the seraglio.... This ingenious gentlewoman, in this piece of bawdry refined upon an author of the same sex who, in The Rover makes a country squire strip to his Holland drawers.¹

However, Pix had a defender among her contemporaries, Charles Gildon, in his continuation of Langbaine's Lives and Characters of the English Dramatic Poets (1699):

There is a Lady yet living, and in this poetic age, when all Sexes and Degrees venture on the Sock and Buskin, she has boldly given us an Essay of her Talent in both and not without success, tho' with little profit to herself.²

In Biographica Dramatica (1812) Pix is allowed to be "A woman of considerable genius and abilities."³ On the other side, in a so-called Complete History of the English Stage (1800), Charles Didbin dismissed Pix as one of "a triumvirate of lady-wits who enjoyed a great deal of the admiration of the namby-pamby critics, and the indifference, and sometimes ridicule of those heaven vouchsafed to endow with taste and judgment."⁴

In 1832, John Genest in Some Account of the English Stage made the declaration that has stigmatized Pix ever since. He summed up, "Mrs. Pix should have stuck to comedy and not have meddled with tragedy."⁵

John Doran obviously studied Pix's plays thoroughly enough to give the following assessment in Their Majesties' Servants (1865):

¹The Spectator 51 (28 April 1711).

²Langbaine/Gildon, English Dramatic Poets, p. 111.

³Baker, Biographica Dramatica, 1:575.

⁴Didbin, Complete History, 4:343.

⁵Genest, Some Account, 2:240.

She wrote eleven plays, but not one of them has survived to our time. Her comedies are, however, full of life; her tragedies more than brimful of loyalty; later dramatists have not disdained to pick up some of Mrs. Pix's forgotten incidents; and, indeed contemporary playwrights stole her playful lightning, if not her thunder; her plots were not ill-conceived, but they were carried out by inexpressive language, some of her tragedies being in level prose, and some, mixtures of rhyme and blank verse. She herself occasionally remodeled an old play, but did not improve it; while, when she trusted to herself, at least in a farcical sort of comedy, she was bustling and humorous.¹

The DNB article carries the judgment into the twentieth century:

Her comedies, though coarse, are far more decent than those of Mrs. Behn, and her comic bustle of dialogue is sometimes entertaining. Her tragedies are intolerable. She has not the most superficial idea of the way in which blank verse should be written, pompous prose, broken irregularly into lengths, being her ideal of versification.²

Myra Reynolds, who uncovered the works of Pix in the 1920s, devoted almost her entire brief entry on Pix in The Learned Lady in England from 1650 to 1760 to a criticism of her tragedies:

In Mrs. Pix's tragedies the heroic play of Dryden's day could look upon its enfeebled and distorted image.... Passion is torn into exclamatory tatters from the first scene to the last. We have rant and bluster and tortured similes, until taste, good sense, and correct English suffer the same fate as the chief characters.³

Yet Reynolds conceded that the plays did enjoy a measure of success in their time, and this she credited to theatrical craftsmanship. This is, at least, an acknowledgement that these were pieces intended for staging, and not closet literature.

¹Doran, Their Majesties' Servants, pp. 166-67.

²DNB, 15:1275.

³Reynolds, The Learned Lady, pp. 132-33.

Also writing in the 1920s, Bonamy Dobrée considered the "scribblings of Mrs. Pix" proof that the period was a decadent one.¹ However, another writer of the same period, Herbert Carter, while enumerating her faults, found Pix a more seemly candidate to fill Aphra Behn's shoes than either Manley or Trotter.²

But even Barbour, her sometime champion, drew a sharp distinction between Pix's tragedies and comedies:

Mary Pix was always on surer ground when she attempted to write comedies. Her tragedies are set pieces--exotic, peopled with noble characters, ringing with passionate speeches, but lacking in conviction. There are too many clichés in each play; and taken as a whole, Pix's tragedies come to fall into expected patterns. Pix seems to have had fewer set ideas about what comedy should be. Since she was not confined by any particular dramatic rules and regulations in this "lower mode," she was able to take more risks, provide more believable actions, and create a more credible set of characters.³

While Jean Gagen in The New Woman (1954) and James Sutherland in English Literature of the Late Seventeenth Century (1969)⁴ joined ranks in disapproving Pix's tragedies, Walter J. Macqueen-Pope in Ladies First praised her skill for structure, if not dialogue.⁵

¹Bonamy Dobrée, Restoration Comedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), p. 140.

²Carter, "Three Women Dramatists," p. 97.

³Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 15.

⁴Jean Gagen, The New Woman: Her Emergence in English Drama (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1954), p. 76; James Sutherland, English Literature in the Late Seventeenth Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 34.

⁵Macqueen-Pope, Ladies First, pp. 130-31.

One has to go all the way back to Gildon again to find a kind word about Pix's serious endeavors. While criticizing Ibrahim's "want of harmony in numbers and the sublimity of expression," he attested as an eyewitness that "The distress of Morena never failed to bring tears into the eyes of the audience, which few plays, if any since Otway's have done."¹ It is perhaps significant that this critic was passing judgment on a Pix play as a theatre experience rather than as printed drama.

Coming full circle, the historian to comment most recently on "the female wits," Nancy Cotton in her Women Playwrights in England (1980) makes a theatrical assessment: "Of the plays offered by women in the 1695-96 season, Pix's are the most entertaining and stageworthy." She credits Pix with "a knack of alternating scenes of rant with melting love scenes."²

In her critical summation, Paula Louise Barbour praises the subject of her dissertation's "vitality, variety and dramatic instinct." While she acknowledges that Pix was a hack who wrote for the star system of her day, she maintains that:

At the very least she was workmanlike and knowledgeable in her craft. At her best, she wrote some excellent comedies, and for that she deserves more than the obscurity to which she has fallen.³

Pix's role in the history of world literature can be seen as more important than this last assessment would indicate if she is viewed as

¹Langbaine/Gildon, Lives and Characters, p. 111.

²Cotton, Women Playwrights, pp. 90, 119.

³Barbour, "A Critical Edition," pp. 120-21.

the link between the women writers of the Restoration and those of the Augustan Age. Pix, like her sister playwrights, emulated and compared herself to Aphra Behn.

F.P. Locke, in an article entitled "Astrea's Vacant Throne," stated, "Between Mrs. Behn's death and the production of Mrs. Centlivre's first play in 1700, Mary [sic] Manley (1663-1724) [sic], Mary Pix (1666-1709) and Catherine Trotter (1679-1749) consciously strove to fill the place vacated by Behn."¹ Locke took the title of his essay from the verses Manley wrote for Trotter's Agnes de Castro:

Orinda and the Fair Astrea gone,
Not one was found to fill the vacant Throne
.....
Till you (Nature's third start) in favour of your kind.
(lines 1-2, 5)

Locke did not, however, find any satisfactory bridge in their work between "The Incomparable Astrea" and "The Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre."

If it can be maintained that Pix's comedies continue Behn's structure and themes and that her relationship with, influence upon, and even possible collaboration with Centlivre demonstrates a continuity from the Restoration women writers to Centlivre, who is dubbed "Augustan," then (it may be deemed that) Astrea's throne may never have really been vacant.

Robert D. Hume and Allardyce Nicoll are more concerned with categorizing Pix's plays than with evaluating them. Hume sees Ibrahim qualifying as horror tragedy on the basis of Morena's slicing her hands.² In a later discussion he terms it "vigorous melodrama" and

¹F.P. Locke, "Astrea's Vacant Throne," The Dramatic Mirror 3 (1879): 25.

²Hume, Development of English Drama, p. 201.

again includes it in a list of examples of the revival of the Heroic mode."¹ The Czar of Muscovy is considered heroic melodrama, while The False Friend and The Double Distress are specimens of the pathetic school despite royal settings.² Queen Catherine is dismissed as "an historical tear-jerker."³ Of the comedies, The Spanish Wives is "hard comedy turned fairly mushy"; The Deceiver Deceived and The Beau Defeated are "new comedy." By that term Hume means a laundered form of the old (i.e., Restoration) comedy, half-heartedly sentimental in compromise with the new moral sensibility of the audience.⁴

Nicoll sees both The Innocent Mistress and The Deceiver Deceived as intrigue comedies, but with threads of sentiment and moralizing running through them.⁵ The False Friend, which he describes as "an amalgam of pseudo-classical pathos, heroic and pseudo-Shakespearean, is classified under "Augustan."⁶ The Czar of Muscovy and The Conquest of Spain, on account of the treatment of their heroines, are called symptomatic of the "Sentimental movement."⁷ The Double Distress, The Czar of Muscovy, and The Conquest of Spain all present "mixed characteristics of classicism, heroes and pathos."⁸

¹Ibid., pp. 423, 448.

²Ibid., p. 453.

³Ibid., p. 451.

⁴Ibid., pp. 418, 435.

⁵Nicoll, Restoration, p. 212.

⁶Idem, History of English Drama, 2:96.

⁷Ibid., 2:181.

⁸Ibid., 2:97.

In summation, Nicoll considers that Pix's tragedies "have interest solely because they provide early examples of that union of the separate dramatic forces which was to dominate the tragedy for well over fifty years."¹

Synopses of Works and Criticism

Mary Pix was the last of the "female wits" to make her debut. Ibrahim, the Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks was presented by Rich's company at Drury Lane in late May or early June 1696 according to the estimate in the London Stage, which is based on an advertisement having appeared in the June 27-30 issue of The Post Boy.²

The original number of performances is not known, but it was well-received, at least by the company, since it was revived in October of 1702, twice in 1704 (January 8 and February 18), and again in March of 1715. At this last performance the play was advertised as "not acted this past six years," which suggests a revival in 1709 as well.³

Hume has called Ibrahim an "obvious imitation of the Lincoln's Inn Fields Barry and Bracegirdle pattern in tragedy."⁴ The roles of Sheker Para and Morena are so typical of these designed for Barry and Bracegirdle respectively that it is more likely that the play was written

¹Ibid.

²LS, 1:462.

³Ibid., 2:347.

⁴Hume, Development of English Drama, p. 423.

before the split, with them in mind. Powell had been taking over heroes' roles from Betterton before the company split; in fact, that has been mentioned as one of the reasons for Betterton's discontent with Rich's management policy. But Mrs. Knight and Mrs. Rogers slipped into the role-types of the famous duo only after their departure. For example, in April 1694 all four appeared in Settle's The Ambitious Slave.¹ Knight played a virtuous Queen, hapless victim of the beautiful conniver played by Barry. Rogers was cast as a eunuch, as Bracegirdle carried the role of the romantic heroine.

Spoken by Mrs. Cross, the prologue appears to speak for the author. It woos the women in the house and makes a point of the tragedy's historical credentials.

I'm hither sent, but Heaven knows what to say,
Or how t'excuse a dull Heroick Play;
Here's nor poignant Repartee, nor taking Raillery,
No Feast for Critick Pit, or Graduate Gallery.
No Beau, who in his very affected Dress,
Does all the nonsense of his Character express;
This play on solid History depends,
Old fashion'd stuff, true Levity, and faithful
Friends;

.....
Strict rules of Honour still she kept in view
And always when she wrote, she thought on you.
Then, Ladies own it, let not Detractors say,
You'll not protect one harmless, modest Play.
The Hero to our Sex is still inclin'd
Securing you, we're sure of all Mankind,
If in that charming Circle you will oft appear,
An Empty House we shan't have cause to fear.
(lines 1-8, 17-24)

Herein is the frank admission of having written a work with a specific market in mind. Pix would seem to be courting the appellation of "Hack." She dubs the piece "Heroick," and indeed it is after the fashion of

¹LS, 1:442.

Dryden's heroic plays. She did present the "Strict rules of Honour," notably shown through the character of the heroine Morena, but after the viewing some of the ladies present may have had cause for second thoughts about the play's being advertised as "modest." There is quite a bit of what was euphemistically referred to as "warmth" in it.

As the play opens, two areas of the stage are in use. "At a distance: The Mufti and Mustapha appear. Near the Audience Achmet and several Eunuchs Enter" (p. 1). Achmet gives the orders for the Sultan's arrival. Incense is to be burned, Persian rugs laid down, and the virgins "In all their brightest glories be array'd,/ For their Sun, the Mighty Ibrahim approaches" (p. 1). As they go off, the religious leader and the Janissaries' Aga come forward. They bemoan the state the empire has sunk into under "this degenerate man," with his "ill-acted Scenes of Pomp and show, instead of real greatness" (p. 1). The main characters are mentioned and characterized by the two sages. Mustapha's son, "the God-like Amurat," is ostracized from the court, while the Sultan is advised by a "fawning sycophant" of a Vizier, and his mistress, the "vile" Sheker Para (p. 2). The latter is so despicable that the Mufti's disillusionment with the entire sex is allayed only by his daughter Morena's perfect virtue.

Their conversation is cut off by the sweeping entrance of Ibrahim with his entourage of the Vizier, Sheker Para, Achmet et al. The Mufti sues for permission for Amurat, just returned from vanquishing Babylon, to be allowed to remain at Constantinople. The Sultan agrees to consider it, but orders everyone but the eunuchs and Sheker to leave. She has made preparations: "twenty fair Virgins, whom yet your eyes ne'er

saw,/ I have picked and readied from a thousand" (p. 4). "The Scene draws and discovers the Ladies set in Order for the Sultan's Choice, who takes out his Handkerchief, and walks round them; whilst Sheker Para talks to Achmet" (p. 4). The above must have created a stunning scenic effect. The business which follows was the example used for Richard Steele's censure of Pix in The Spectator fifteen years later:¹

The Sultan drops his Handkerchief, which the Lady falling prostrate, kisses, and takes up, and is led off by two Eunuchs; The Sultan following, the Scene shuts upon the rest. (p. 4)

Sheker Para is left alone with Achmet to confide, "Thou know'st my raging fires/ How Passion like a Vultur prays upon my heart,/ And the hot flames of love drink up my Spirits" (p. 4). The object of her love is Amurat. She blames the Sultan for giving her "great Privilege/ Than ever woman had in the Ottoman Court" (p. 5). Otherwise, she would never have been tempted. (The theme of unusual freedom granted to a woman figures strongly in the plot of Pix's next play, the comedy The Spanish Wives [1696], but with less dire consequences.). Amurat has ignored her advances, and Achmet is to spy on him to find out if the reason for this is another woman: "Revenge would take the place/ Of Injur'd Love" (p. 5).

Act 2 begins with a conversation between Amurat and his close friend Selyman. He reveals his love for Morena. Despite his achievements, he spurns ambition, here and throughout the play. "If I acquired glory, 'twas for Morena's sake" (p. 6). This scene was likely played in front of the proscenium, for no sooner have the two left than the Mufti and Mustapha enter, and Amurat reenters to meet them, now with his

¹The Spectator 51 (28 April 1711).

attendants, among them Achmet disguised as a mute. The Mufti gives Morena in troth to Amurat, who swears that, "Though our Law allows Plurality of Wives/ And Mistresses, yet I will never practice it" (p. 9).

Achmet brings back to Sheker the news that Amurat is indeed a lover, but there is no time to discuss it, for he is even now on his way back to his galley, and only if she rushes can she catch him. "The Scene changes to the prospect of the Sea" (p. 11). Amurat enters and is met by Sheker. She flatters and woos him, even trying to make him jealous of the Vizier, but to no avail. She still does not know who her rival is, but vows his ruin in a rant which closes the act.

As Act 3 opens Achmet has obviously just finished relating the events of Amurat's betrothal to Sheker, who cries, "Hold, for I can bear no more" (p. 13), and yet presses him to know if her rival is beautiful. This prompts a rapturous description, which, while painful to Sheker, gives her the idea of using Morena's very beauty against her. There is no "exeunt" indicated in the text for this scene, which concludes with Sheker vowing revenge in three sets of couplets. But immediately the direction follows: "The Visier sitting by a table, whereon lie Books of Accounts, Rises" (p. 14). He is ruminating on the general censure he suffers from the populace, and specifically from the Mufti, whom he sees as hypocritical and ambitious, and that "hot-brained Youth," Amurat. As he is raging, Sheker enters behind him and overhears, "On these I'll be revenged" (p. 14). Discovering that they have enemies in common, they join forces. They will procure Morena for the Sultan. After their exit the stage directions read: "The Sultan upon a Couch, Achmet by him" (p. 16). (This indicated

another scene begun with a "discovery." How the couch appeared is easily accounted for by a pre-set behind shutters, but how the equally practical prop, the Vizier's desk was removed, is harder to visualize. Pix was usually careful to make her locales, encounters, and even musical interludes plausible. The following action is an example.)

The Sultan awakes from a troubled sleep and calls for some music to cheer him. Pix's song is a paean to his omnipotence. A second song follows; however, it is by another author and is a nonsequitur. "'Dialogue Song'--Suppos'd to be between an Eunuch Boy and a Virgin. Made for Boyn and Mrs. Crosse. Written by Mr. D'Urfey" (p. 16). Putting prurient lyrics into the mouths of very young performers was a fashion of the day. (The 1704 revivals of Ibrahim appear to have contained whole musical programs which were inserted in various plays.) D'Urfey's number depicts an adoring boy spurned by a maiden who is quite frank when asked the reason:

The Reason is, I only guess,
By something in thy Face and Voice,
That thou art not made like other Boys.
.....
That singing gift has cost thee dear.
(pp. 16-17)

The Sultan's malady is satiety, and when the Vizier and Sheker come to tempt him with a luscious description of Morena, his enthusiasm is revived. He demands to see her at once. The scene changes to the Mufti's apartment as Ibrahim sweeps in, and, granting his request for Amurat's return, asks in return to meet his daughter. The Mufti, who has kept her secluded in order to avoid just such an encounter, pleads that she is unfit. The reason he gives for her unworthiness is that she

is a learned woman; that disappointed in not having a son, he tried "To mend the Sex: and she, instead of 'coining looks'/ And learning little Arts to please, hath Read/ Philosophy, History, those rough Studies" (p. 19). What the author puts in the mouth of a Turkish male as a criticism is obviously a backhanded compliment to the character of Morena. She is peremptorily sent for, but the Mufti warns that it is a violation of Holy Law to force one who is freeborn. When Ibrahim sees Morena, he is so enthralled that he offers her his hand, but she declines on the grounds of previous contract. He puts her into Sheker's hands to be persuaded, but to no avail. Her recalcitrance only fuels his desire, and he threatens to force her to her own "happiness" (p. 23). This provokes an outburst which gives even the Sultan pause: "Punish my disobedience with Wracks with Gibbets,/ With anything but loss of honour!/ Tear out my eyes, stab, mangle my face," etc., etc. (p. 23). A eunuch is moved to offer to search the world for a substitute, but is promptly stabbed. At this point Morena clutches "The Sultan's naked Scimitar" (p. 24). This is the scene described in The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatic Poets as so moving to the contemporary audience.¹

Before she swoons from her wounds, Morena vows to stir up a general rebellion and is carried off to the royal bed. The act ends with Ibrahim graphically describing what is to follow:

¹Langbaine/Gildon, Lives and Characters, p. 111. Fidelis Morgan offers a misreading of this scene in her synopsis in The Female Wits. She identifies the eunuch who is killed as Achmet, who does not in fact die until the last act and represents him as offering himself in Morena's place as a sexual partner. She also describes the action following as if the Sultan drew his scimitar through Morena's hands, when the stage directions indicate that the wound was self-inflicted.

I'll rush thro' all, and seize the trembling prey:
 Rifle her sweets, till sense is fully cloy'd;
 Then take my turn to scorn what I've enjoy'd.
 (p. 25)

The scene was certainly a "blockbuster," with perverted lust, raging resistance, a murder, a self-mutilation, and imminent rape. Although it was common enough to see someone stabbed on stage, the surprise spurt of blood as Morena sliced her hands must have had a shocking impact. Morena is shown, with her imperious manner and physical courage, as a far cry from a pathetic, passive heroine.

As Act 4 opens on the Mufti's apartment, the rebellion is already afoot. Morena is sent back in a distracted state and led within. Amurat, unaware of what has preceded, arrives joyously, looking forward to reunion with Morena. He is outraged at the thought of an uprising, declaring his patriotism so absolute that he would gladly suffer death at the hands of the Sultan and die blessing him. He states, "Oh! I know not whether I, the Sultan/ Most Revere, or my Morena Love?" (p. 27). Mustapha tests this assertion with an elaborate "supposition," in which he reiterates all that had happened on stage, embellishing it with a description of what ensued in the Sultan's chamber:

The savage Ravisher twisting his (hands)
 In the lovely Tresses of her Hair,
 Tearing it by the smarting Root,
 Fixing her by that upon the ground,
 Then--(horror on horror!)
 On her breathless body perpetrated the fact.
 (p. 28)

"The Scene draws, and discovers Morena upon the ground disorder'd as before" (p. 28). This was staged as if she were observed while unaware of their presence. She raves and cries to the Holy Prophet and Amurat for justice. "The Scene shuts upon her" (p. 29). Amurat, of course, is

moved to revenge and sends his constant friend Solyman off to gather troops while he and Mustapha join the principal conspirators.

The act ends with Ibrahim having a messenger who has summoned him to the council of state strangled. He stands on the right of an absolute monarch, charging "an easie king, whose People give him Law," to be no more than a "Royal Slave" (p. 31). Such a sentiment from the mouth of a villain might show the author to be of the opposite view, or writing to cater to an audience which was predominantly "Whig."

The cast of villains is assembled as Act 5 opens, Achmet bringing the news the mob is at the door. Ibrahim throws the hated Vizier out to them as a sacrifice, hoping to distract them, but he must now hide. "A shout without" (p. 33). In this last extreme Sheker and Achmet remain faithful. She voices the sentiment, "Oh! That I were a Man to face/ These Devils, and save my Lord" (p. 33). Ibrahim appreciates the irony of his predicament:

I, who but yesterday commanded Armies,

 Have now but one poor trusty slave
 An Eunuch, who for his unhappy
 Lord, will venture Life!
 (p. 33)

As they flee, Solyman and soldiers cross the stage in pursuit. The next scene finds Ibrahim and Sheker apparently cornered in an inner chamber. Achmet, who has been barring the door, is forced in by Solyman, and, on the line, "That for poor Morena," is killed (p. 34). As Ibrahim and Solyman engage, both fall, Ibrahim dying instantly. Amurat enters (apparently backing in), ordering his followers to sheathe their swords and not to harm the Sultan. Dying, Solyman says that he has performed the treasonous act out of "excessive friendship"

(p. 36). Amurat sums up the tangle of love and loyalties of which he is the victim: "My Mistress Ravish'd;--the cruel Ravisher/ My Emperour's dead,/ My Friend, the Author, and punished too with death!" (p. 36).

Amurat is offered the crown but insists it be given to the rightful heir, Ibrahim's infant son. Sheker confesses her part in the rape of Morena and asks Amurat to kill her. He refuses, condemning her to live with her shame. She prefers to join Ibrahim and stabs herself. Amurat orders "the Polluted wretch" to be borne away, and one assumes that soldiers removed the other corpses in the general exit (p. 37). Immediately, Morena enters "Drest in White" (p. 37). Though no drawing or opening of shutter is indicated, the setting is obviously Morena's chamber. (It would seem logical at this point that the way for the reunion of the lovers would be clear. Not all tragedies, so-called, in this period ended in total catastrophe. One wonders if there was an element of suspense for the audience.) When Morena hears that Ibrahim is killed, she assumes that the culprit was Amurat, and she must atone by offering the Prophet her own life. She sends her servant for the "Golden Bowl" (p. 38). No sooner has she swallowed poison than Amurat arrives, hailing her joyfully, followed by the Mufti, Mustapha, et al., who proclaim him Vizier. He dismisses the last impediment to their union, her nonvirginity, making the magnanimous moral distinction, "Thy Virgin Mind was Pure!" (p. 40). (The juxtaposition of this jubilee scene at a time when Morena, and, of course, the audience, knows that she is dying, must have been a powerfully poignant effect.)

It finally becomes clear that Morena is failing. The poisoning is revealed and an antidote sent for. It is too late. Despite urgings

to put aside his personal grief for the great business of the empire, Amurat stabs himself, leaving the bereft fathers, the Mufti, and Mustapha to carry on with the resolve: "Let's not through grief neglect the public care" (p. 41).

In her preface to Ibrahim, Mary Pix went to some length to explain the error of her subject's being the twelfth, not thirteenth, emperor of the Ottoman Empire. She disclosed her source as Sir Paul Ricault's Continuation of Turkish History. This was contained in a beautifully produced and illustrated three-volume edition that came out in 1687. Rycaut (as his name is spelled in that edition), a former Consul of Smyrna, contributed the section covering 1623 to 1676. (The following section, from 1676 to 1686, was signed "Sir Roger Manley, Knight," Delarivière's father.¹)

Ibrahim succeeded to the throne after his brother Amurat died owing to a wine-induced fever. He had been kept imprisoned for years, which was not uncommon treatment for superfluous royal brothers, and upon his accession made up for lost time by becoming a total voluptuary. He was weak-brained and not interested in the affairs of state, as his mother actually ruled, and he became "a Sultan wholly given up to his pleasures, and so swallowed in sensuality, that all these luxurious and wanton actions... outdid all other examples of former Ages."²

"A principal Instrument of his Delight, and engine to compass his Amorous Designs, was a certain wench of his, which he named Sheker

¹Knolles, Turkish History, p. 58.

²Ibid.

Para, which signifies a little piece of sugar."¹ Despite the large number of devoted women within the seraglio, Ibrahim became sated, and Sheker Para, an eager procuress of new recruits from the town, who were either seduced or forced. "Sheker Para, travelling over all the Baths in the Town, to discover new delights for her Master, at length had the fortune to cast her Eyes on the Daughter of the Mufti, a Maid of incomparable Beauty and Features of Countenance and proportion of Body, which she reported to Ibrahim so sensibly, as if she her self had been in love."² Ibrahim became rabid with passion, but since this was no ordinary prey, had the respect to approach her father with an honorable offer of marriage. The Mufti was opposed, for since Ibrahim already had sons to succeed him, he feared his daughter's offspring would suffer a fate as bad as, or worse, than that the Sultan himself had suffered. An out-and-out refusal would be dangerous, so elaborate negotiations were entered into. But the Sultan lost patience and "at length resolved to break through all Considerations of Respect, either to the Father as the Mouth and Oracle of the Law, or to the simple and foolish innocence of the Maid; and therefore ordered the Grand Visier to cause a Watch to be set on the Girl, either going in or coming out of the Bath, and without further ceremony, to bring her unto him."³ After enjoying her for several days, he tired of her tears and reluctance and sent her back to her father. The Mufti began to hatch a

¹Ibid., p. 76.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 77.

conspiracy for revenge. He found easy allies in the Aga and the General of the Janissaries, and even convinced Ibrahim's mother, who was jealous of Sheker and smarting from some personal grievances, to go along to the extent of "temporarily" re-imprisoning Ibrahim. When the siege of the Janissaries took place, Ibrahim sacrificed the Vizier to them as a gesture of placation, but when summoned to the Divan himself, he tore up the orders and threatened the head of the Mufti. Finding that he himself was in danger of death, he consented to a return to prison, and shortly after was strangled by four mutes. His seven-year-old son Mohamet was made emperor.¹

The real-life drama of this story needed little adaptation to make it stageworthy. In fact, the strictures of the dramatic form rob it of some of its color. The character of the royal mother, a strong and intriguing personality, was omitted. Amurat was invented to provide the axis of a triangle and, of course, the hero figure. The raped damsel provided ready-made material for a tragic heroine. The characters of Ibrahim and the Mufti are much the same as those in the original account. The Sultan's ignominious death, however, is dramatized by an on-stage duel. But Sheker Para, a mere playmate and pimp in the original, is transformed into the scheming prime mover of the tragedy.

Nancy Cotton mentions the similarity of Ibrahim to John Fletcher's Valentinian.² In that play Lucina, the beautiful young wife of a great Roman soldier, staunchly resists all bribes and blandishments of the

¹Ibid., p. 89.

²Cotton, Women Playwrights, p. 89.

emperor's bawds. He is characterized as greedy, lazy, and licentious, and he rapes her. The incident adds fuel to an uprising, and in the end Valentinian is assassinated. Lucina has referred to Lucrece as a role model, the legendary Roman woman whose suicide after being raped by a son of Tarquin brought about the overthrow of the Tarquins and the establishment of a republic. Morena invokes her as well.

If Charles Gildon appears to have been an eyewitness at more than one performance of Ibrahim, Richard Steele was also a contemporary of Pix's. Although he did not write for the stage himself until 1701, he had come down from Oxford in 1694 and could have seen the premiere or any of the revivals. It was not until 1711, two years after Pix's death, that his critical remarks appeared in The Spectator, linking Pix with Aphra Behn, who had died in 1688, but whose The Rover was periodically revived. Steele could have been working from a text; however, the business he describes is contained in the printed stage directions:

It is remarkable that the writers of least learning are best in the luscious way. The poetesses of this age have done wonders in this kind; and we are obliged to the Lady who writ Ibrahim for introducing an introductory scene to the very action. When the Emperor throws his handkerchief as a signal for his mistress to follow him into the most retired part of the seraglio... this ingenious gentlewoman, in this piece of bawdry refined upon an author of the same sex who, in The Rover makes a country Squire strip to his Holland drawers.¹

In 1832, John Genest gave a synopsis of the play with the terse critique, "[the plot of this T[ragedy]]. is unexceptionable, but the language is poor."²

¹The Spectator 51.

²Genest, Some Account, 2:75.

No more specific discussion of the merits of this play appears until the current assessments of the scholars Cotton, Hume, and Barbour. Cotton grants the grudging praise, "Ibrahim contains some stageworthy scenes."¹ She quotes Gildon's as a fair appraisal. Hume owns that while "lust and the macabre fascinate Mrs. Pix... in this case Amurat and Morena give the play a considerable pathetic interest."²

Barbour's approach to the play is descriptive rather than judgmental. She gives a synopsis accompanied by pertinent quotes and comments on production and thematic elements:

Pix wrote this tragedy for Mr. and Mrs. Verbruggen, who played Ibrahim and Achmet, Chief of the Eunuchs. The appearance of Mrs. Verbruggen in breeches was calculated to cause a sensation. Other characters betray Pix's fascination with the exotic.³

Barbour notes the connection with the following play: "As in The Spanish Wives, Pix is interested in the idea of pre-contract. But unlike her next play, Ibrahim affords a fanciful glimpse of the content of 'Holy binding vows.'"⁴

Since it has a factual basis, Ibrahim can be considered an historical tragedy. It is a "villain tragedy" in that the title character is unrelentingly evil and causes everyone's downfall, including his own. And also in a twofold sense, because of Sheker Para's manipulation of the circumstances which bring on the inevitable catastrophe. It has

¹Cotton, Women Playwrights, p. 89.

²Hume, Development of English Drama, p. 423.

³Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 91.

⁴Ibid., p. 92.

many of the trappings of Dryden's heroic dramas of the 1670s: the exotic setting, a beautiful heroine obsessed with honor, an idealistic hero of fantastic accomplishment. It also has the sensational elements of Beaumont and Fletcher: titillation, rape, revenge, and violence. In the prologue it is presented as an "Heroick Play."

Can Ibrahim be considered a pure tragedy? Critics whose taste is offended by the relatively poor quality of the tragedies of this period, compared to those of the great Elizabethans, would withhold the lofty appellation. But if one uses the yardstick of the components necessary to comprise a tragedy, rather than an argument based on aesthetic quality, a case can be made, one way or the other. If a tragedy can be loosely understood to be a tale about great people who suffer tremendously, and who, as often as not, have a hand in their own destruction, then certainly elements of tragedy are to be found in Ibrahim. All the main characters are of the requisite stature, and certainly catastrophe abounds. The question becomes not so much as whether it is a tragedy but rather whose tragedy is it? Ibrahim knowingly commits the sacrilegious act which serves as justification for the mutiny of his previously adoring populace. Sheker Para, who enjoyed more freedom than any woman before her time in Turkey, is shamed into suicide. Amurat, the champion of the army, is hopelessly caught in the classic dilemma of conflicting loyalties. He is not at fault for what he suffers. He has not been an agent in the rape of his lover, the deaths of the Sultan, Sheker, his friend Solyman, or Morena. Yet, in the end, when he is made Vizier, and offered the reins of the nation, it is his decision to kill himself for lost love. Finally, Morena,

who has suffered the "horror of horrors," rashly commits suicide at the very moment before her reunion with her beloved. The latter two characters are totally noble in intention, and there is a special poignancy to Morena's mistaken self-sacrifice. It was her plight which moved the audience for which the play was written. A most telling assessment of what they expected of a tragedy is Gildon's critique:

This play, if it want the Harmony of Numbers, and the Sublimity of Expression, has yet a Quality, that at least balances that Defect. I mean the Passions; for the Distress of Morena never fail'd to bring Tears into the Eyes of the Audience; which few Plays, if any since Otway's have done; ... which is the true end of Tragedy.¹

A paraphrase of this appears in the Biographia Dramatica: "This play has not much sublimity of expression, or harmony of numbers, yet the distress of Morena is truly affecting, and the conduct of the play far from contemptible."² (This last phrase is Baker's own observation.)



The Spanish Wives, Mrs. Pix's second offering, was a comedy described on its title page as a farce, and in that tradition it was in three acts. The London Stage estimates that its opening was at the Dorset Garden in late August of 1896, because the prologue comments: "Drolls will shortly amuse thee at the Fair," and the Southwark Fair was known to have been under-way that year by the first week in September.³ There is some question about the date, however, because the Daily Post Boy did not advertise The Spanish Wives until the October 15-17 issue. Plays were usually published soon after their opening, especially in the case of a success in order to cash

¹Langbaine/Gildon, Lives and Characters, p. 111.

²Baker, Biographia Dramatica, 2:317.

³Nicoll, History of English Drama, 2:97.

in on the current interest.

Dating the production of The Spanish Wives at the end of August, the editors of the London Stage also surmise that The Female Wits was likely "Acted first in the late summer or early autumn."¹ This conjecture would have the satire opening right on the heels of Pix's piece. References in the text of The Female Wits itself would make a later date more likely (see below, p.).

The source of the plot of The Spanish Wives is a novel written by Gabriel de Brémont and translated from the French by Peter Belon as The Pilgrim in 1680. Belon also wrote a continuation of the story in 1680.² The assignment of only one role is absolutely certain, since Mrs. Verbruggen delivered the epilogue in the character of the Governor's Lady. William Penkenthman presented the prologue dressed as a pressmaster (recuiting officer). Barbour feels it likely that he was also in the play, since he was the right type for the role of Hidewell, a wily comic servant. Though still a member of the company in 1711, he was not listed in the cast. Barbour accounts for this by pointing out that he was acting at his own summer theatre in Greenwich at that time. Mrs. Verbruggen had died in 1703.³

Barbour assumes that the surviving company members recreated their original roles, since it was the custom of players to hold onto roles they had created. So, any cast member of the 1711 production who was a company member in 1696 is assumed to have created the role. The veterans were: Benjamin Johnson as the Governor; John Mills as Count Camillus; William Bullock, Friar Andrew; Frances Maria Knight, Elenora; and Mrs. Powell, Orada.⁴ (Barbour, in casting Johnson as the original Governor, is unaware

¹LS, 1:464.

²Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 24.

³Cibber, An Apology, p. 166.

⁴Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 19.

of the Smock Alley prompt book of 1707-1708.) It is also possible that there was a revival in 1705, when Verbruggen was still at Drury Lane. The London Stage quotes an advertisement for the 1711 production as "Not acted these six years."¹ In 1696 Johnson was a newcomer with Rich's company, and unlikely to have been entrusted with such a meaty leading role. It is more probable the Verbruggens played opposite each other.

Another leading role in question is that of the Marquess, taken by Henry Norris, who did not join the company until 1703. Barbour puts forth Powell as a possibility based on the actor's reputation for bombast, a requirement for the role of the violent villain.²

The prologue, spoken by Penkethman, had no relevance to the play to follow it. The comic actor, dressed as a recruiter for the Navy, threatened to "press to Sea all those who Damn this Play." The speech was an extended analogy, comparing a critical audience to the enemy, the French with references to the War of the League of Augsburg, which had been in progress since 1689. Only the last eight lines refer not to the play but to its authoress, emphasizing her sex in heavy-handed double-entendre, which compared Pix's first play, a tragedy, to a virgin's first sexual encounter, and the farce about to be performed to the "New Tricks" a more experienced mistress will try to please a lover.

The location for the first scene in Act I is merely "Barcelona" --no chamber is specified. It becomes clear that the action is taking place somewhere in the Governor's palace. The Governor and the Marquess of Moncado enter, already full tilt into a heated discussion of Moncado's

¹LS, 2:252.

²Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 20.

obsessive fear of cuckoldry. In the *dramatis personae* the Governor has been characterized as "A merry old Lord, that has traveled, and gives his wife more liberty than is usual in Spain." The Marquess is described by his humour, "a jealous Lord, guest to the Governor." The Marquess, appalled at the liberality of the Governor's household, is keeping his wife behind eleven locks during their visit. He vehemently argues that the Governor is leaving himself wide open to be cheated, to which the latter counters that it is the confined wife who has committed adultery "In Imagination with every Don she [has] thro' any Peep-hole seen" (p. 2). In a spontaneous burst of song (a habit of his repeated throughout the play), he presents the theme of the play:

Give but a Woman her Freedom still.
Then she'll never act what's ill:
'Tis crossing her, makes her have the Will.
(p. 2)

The Governor's nonchalance and joviality only fuel the Marquess's impotent rage. He pounces on a simple-looking country fellow coming out of his wife's apartments, who pleads, in rustic accent, that he has only been selling oranges to the maids. Sure that the man is a courtier, the Marquess drags him off to be stripped and searched.

Enter the Governor's Lady. She has been described as "brisk and airy." The Governor hails her affectionately with the nickname "Tittup," while she calls him "Deary" (p. 3). When asked if she heard serenading under the palace windows the previous night, she openly admits that an English colonel was wooing her and asks her husband if he is angry. He assures her in another ditty that he is not, yet warns her to be careful of the colonel. She assures him that because he trusts her so she

will never go farther, at the same time reminding him that the Colonel will be dining with them that afternoon. He kisses her good-bye and leaves.

Alone, in a long aside, the Lady admits that she is torn between the honest affection and gratitude she feels for her old husband and her sexual attraction to the young rake. The scene concludes with her self-serving rationalization: "Where's the Harm to give a Worthy, Begging Stranger a little Charity from a Love's Store, when the kind old Governor can never miss it?" (p. 4).

In this brief scene, possibly performed in the limbo-like apron with the players entering and leaving by proscenium doors, the personalities of three main characters are revealed, the theme is stated (often to be reprised), and the exposition for the major conflicts to follow is provided. The first intrigue, furthermore, is seen to be already underway.

Some of the evident occasions for laughter are the extreme contrast between the Governor and the Marquess, the former's derision of the latter's anguish so as to drive the Marquess almost to a state of raving. The comic playing the fruiterer could make the most of the laughs to be gotten out of mocking a country accent, as well as the slapstick opportunities in his forced exit.

The second scene is assigned the location "a Palace" (p. 3). This is puzzling, since it is clearly not the Governor's palace, and a palace setting does not seem appropriate. It reads more like the sort of scene that takes place on a street. The Count Camillus has just arrived in Barcelona and does not intend to stay. He enters in the

company of Friar Andrew, who has accompanied him from Rome, with the purpose of helping him abduct Elenora, the Marquess's wife. At one point the Friar sees a man approaching from a little distance: "Oh, here he comes," and the Count's exit line is, "We'll in, and consider on't" (p. 7). (Barbour speculates that both scenes 1 and 2 were played on the apron in front of a palace exterior.¹) Count Camillus, despite his kidnapping plot, protests he is no mere rake:

You know there's Justice in my cause,--Elenora was, by
Contract, mine, at Rome; before this old Marquess had her.
And cou'd I agen Recover her; I don't question but to get
Leave of his Holiness for a Divorce, and marry her my
self. (p. 5)

The Friar's motives are less elevated--his "natural Inclination to Cuckoldom" and revenge for a blanket-tossing he received the last time he was caught trying to slip a note to Elenora (p. 5). For fear of recognition, the Friar has enlisted the help of a local expert, who turns out to be the "fruit seller," who, in fact, turns out to be Hidewell, a talented pimp. He drops his accent as he tells of his ordeal at the hands of the Marquess and produces a note from Elenora, hidden in his hollow stick. The contents reveal that she is being moved that night to apartments overlooking the palace gardens; an escape may be possible during the shift. A low whistle will be the signal. The Friar volunteers for the mission and the three go in to make plans.

Thus the second intrigue is launched in this short scene, which may have played longer if Penkethman made the most of the pantomime possibilities of his having been stripped. Camillus is established as

¹Ibid., p. 54.

a completely straight character, and one simply has to accept his liaison with the corpulent and jocularly corrupt Friar. The young comic actor who played Friar Andrew, William Bullock, went on to play Dryden's Friar in revivals of The Spanish Friar.¹

The first half of the third scene in Act 1 is largely a musicale. Its opening must have been scenically quite effective as the wing flats opened to discover a crowded stage, with several ladies and gentlemen and musicians. A dance is in progress between the Governor's Lady and the English Colonel to "Alas! When Charming Sylvia's gone." The lyrics to the Daniel Purcell tune concern the fervent wooing of a lady by her gallant. Throughout the dance the Governor cheers his wife on: "Ha boy, Tittup! Well done Tittup!" (p. 8). He does balk, however, when the caper concluded, the young man attempts to sit next to his wife for the forthcoming entertainments. He cautions his lady not to endanger their campaign for more freedom for all Spanish wives by a personal faux pas. Assorted songs and dances follow, which are not credited in the text, but however motley the medley, being within a party scene, the interlude is tied into the plot. After the show, the Governor is called away on matters of state. He leaves, promising to return shortly. The crowd disperses, leaving the Colonel alone with the Lady and her woman, Spywell.

The opportunity is not wasted. The Lady posts Spywell at the door to watch for the Governor's return. The Colonel presses his suit with egregious ardor, the main argument of which is that her "sapless"

¹Ibid., p. 21.

old husband has deprived her of the "Extasies, Pantings, the Joys unutterable, of vigorous Love" (p. 9). She feebly wards him off, but is plainly tempted. The Governor's return is announced, and the Lady raises her voice and switches the conversation to his favorite subject, the comparative emancipation and consequent honor of Englishwomen. The Governor, noting them together, decides to eavesdrop for a bit. Even though he protests that he is not jealous, "'Tis convenient to hear a little what their Conversation is" (p. 13). Of course, what he hears is exemplary, and when he enters they all three bemoan the barbaric treatment of the Marquess's wife. The Governor jubilantly announces, "But I'll set 'em an example, if Tittup holds her ground," and leads them off, spouting another ditty:

Merrily, merrily let's pass our Time,
In Freedom, Joy and Plenty:
At Sixty appear but in our Prime,
Whilst the Thinking Sot is old at Twenty.
(p. 11)

The opening scene of Act 2, set in "a Chamber," resumes the romantic plot with Elenora's first appearance. She proves to be no mere passive heroine as she curses her cruel guardians who condemned her to marry an old jealous madman. Her practical woman, Orada, reminds her, "Complaints won't break Locks; we must set our Wits at work to free ourselves" (p. 12). It seems that Orada has gained the trust of the Marquess by pretending to take his side, an advantage in an escape attempt. To "groan the melancholy time away" till the appointed hour of Camillus' arrival, Elenora sings "Begone, be gone thou Hagg despair" (p. 13). As her song ends, the off-stage noise of unlocking doors warns the two of the Marquess's arrival, and in a conversation clearly meant to be

overheard, Orada admonishes Elenora to be content and submit to her fate. As always, when they meet, a furious argument ensues between the Marquess and Elenora, who holds her own in the name-calling. The upshot is that as soon as his business in Barcelona is finished, Moncada will immure her permanently in a remote castle. After he storms off, the ladies retire to view the site of the planned rendezvous.

The next scene is set in "a Hall" (one of those neo-classic limbo-like settings where various people can plausibly encounter and conduct their business). The Marquess enters, looking for the Governor. He spies the Lady approaching with Colonel Peregrine and ducks aside to eavesdrop. The Lady protests the Colonel's fervid advances with feigned modesty, for it is she who comes up with a scheme whereby he can remain in the palace and they can thus have access to each other. He is to pretend that he is in danger of his life and beg sanctuary. The Lady's expectations of the nature of the affair are a bit ambivalent: "But sure you would not be such a naughty man to ruine me.... I wou'd fain love ye, and preserve my Honour" (p. 16). Upon their exit, the Marquess reenters, railing against women and gloating over the Governor's folly. The Governor enters, singing, ironically, "Let her have her will" (p. 16). The Marquess taunts the Governor about being a cuckold, but seeing him ready to draw his sword at a direct insult stops short of telling him what he has seen and heard. The two go off to conduct business, with the Governor merrily singing of the torments of jealousy as opposed to the blessings of the contented man.

The following scene finds Camillus, Friar Andrew, and Hidewell entering a chamber with "a Ladder of Ropes" (p. 17). It has been planned

that Camillus and the Friar will climb the ladder to Elenora's room when Hidewell, as lookout, gives the whistle to tell that the coast is clear. A servant comes from Peregrine to ask if Camillus will see him. While they await his arrival, the Friar takes the opportunity to brag about his prowess as a pimp. Hidewell resents the competition: "If once the Priests take up the office of Procuring, there will be no bus'ness for a Lay-Pimp" (p. 18). As a gesture of courtesy, the Colonel has brought along his entertainers, and there is another divertissement at this point, with Hidewell contributing a jig. Throughout the entertainment Peregrine and Camillus pantomime having a discussion. The feature attraction is a dialogue-song, "Betwixt Mr. Leveridge, a Spaniard, and Mrs. Cross, an English Lady." The vignette reiterates the theme of the freedom necessary to English women. The would-be wooer is warned: "Spaniard, thy suit is all in vain;/ I was born where Women reign." He persists, but as she describes what he would be expected to tolerate, his jealousy gets the better of him, and he laments, "I cannot share thee, so I am undone" (pp. 19-20).

At the conclusion, the young gentlemen presumably having discussed their romantic projects, the Colonel dismisses the singers and dancers. He asks Camillus for the loan of one of his retainers the following day to aid in his own schemes. This request sparks a competition between the Friar and Hidewell, as each vies for the post by topping the other with fabulous tales of his past achievements at pimping. They are impatiently ushered off to deal with the business at hand.

The very brief scene which followed, set at the palace, may have been played on the forestage, with shutters masking the elaborate garden scene and interior scenes to follow. Orada is vainly trying to keep the Marquess in conversation to allow time for the elopement. He dashes off and returns, dragging Elenora, whom he has found leaning out the window hoping for the arrival of her lover--unfortunately, aloud. She tries to cover up by saying that, knowing he was behind her, she did it just to torment him. Locking her in under Orada's watch, Moncado goes off to fetch his pistols, "that I may give this Midnight Guest the Welcome he deserves" (p. 23).

The next two scenes are actually one, as the slapstick action literally overflows from outdoors into the palace. "Scene changes to an Orchard. Count Camillus and Friar Andrew come down the Hall by a Ladder of Ropes." At the signal of the whistle, the Marquess appears "above" and "Shoots off a pistol. Friar Andrew falls flat." As a cry of "Thieves! Thieves!" is heard within, "Camillus gets over the ladder. When the Friar is half-way up, the ladder breaks and falls down." The Friar manages to scramble up a tree, just as the Marquess and his servants run on. The Friar is spotted by a servant, who climbs up after him, but--"As the Fellow gets up (the Friar) throws his Bottle of Holy-Water full in his eyes, and pulls his cowl over his face, and roars out; They both fall from the tree together." The panicked servant cries out, "The Devil! Oh, my eyes are out!" "The rest cry, 'The Devil!' They drive the Marquess off. The Friar follows 'em roaring" (p. 23).

The hilarity of this short action-packed scene speaks for itself, but it must have posed a scenic challenge. It was mounted at

Dorset Garden, larger than Drury Lane and equipped for the staging of operas. There had to be at least three scene pieces capable of bearing the weight of men: the wall, the tree, and the balcony effect from which the Marquess shot (though the last could have been a permanent gallery). The lot had to be portable enough to slide off instantly, since the next scene begins simultaneously, as the fleeing characters reenter the Marquess's apartments. The scene opens on mayhem, as follows: "Several Servants enter in Confusion.--A great knocking at the Door, and a cry of 'Fire! Fire!' One of the Servants open[s] the Door:--Enter Hidewell, Men and Maids, as from their Beds--some crying, 'Fire,' some 'Murder, Treason,' etc. After them--Enter Friar Andrew, driving several Servants, who run out, crying, 'The Devil! The Devil!'" (p. 24).

It turns out that Hidewell has yelled "Fire" and set off the confusion which allowed the Friar to escape. The Governor rushes on, wearing his nightcap and waving a sword. When he discovers that all the fuss is merely over the Marquess's jealousy, he is disgusted, and orders him out of the palace. Moncado says that he will leave in the morning but requests an interview before his departure. Hidewell is brought in and questioned. He reverts to his role as the fruiterer, claims that he has heard the racket and has just come to help out. He is rewarded with permission to vend his fruit at the palace and dismissed. In an aside, Moncado reveals that he will tell all he knows about the Governor's Lady in the forthcoming interview. The Governor leads his Tittup back to bed, closing the scene with the sung promise:

I'll rouse ye, and mouse ye, and touse ye as
long as I can,
Till squeaking I make ye confess:

There's heat in a vigorous Old Man,
 When he loves to excess, when he loves to excess.
 (p. 26)

In the beginning of Act 3, set in a chamber, presumably Camillus' lodgings, he confides his despair to the Friar. But then Hidewell comes and tells of his free access to the palace. He assures the distraught young Count that he will come up with a scheme that will win Elenora for Camillus and Orada for himself into the bargain. Colonel Peregrine pays a call in order to borrow a helper for his own intrigue. The two compare the relative moral merits of their quests. Camillus reiterates that Elenora is rightly his by "Holy Vows" and "Sacred Contract" (p. 28). Peregrine accepts with equanimity Camillus' censure that he is only after "The huddled raptures of a few tumultuous moments" (p. 28). Their brief exchange outlines very sharply the contrast between a Restoration rake and a sentimental hero.

The Friar immediately offers allegiance to the true rake: "I'll stick to thee. I hate these whining Romantic Lovers. Nor wou'd I have trudg'd to Barcellona, had I thought the Count only fix'd on Honora--Psha, I can get it out--Honorable Love" (p. 28). The Colonel takes the Friar off to disguise him as a swashbuckling bully. Orada arrives to propose a plan: If the Marquess were informed that Camillus was in town, in his fright he might send Elenora away in the night, giving them an opportunity to rescue her. Hidewell takes this opportunity to make an audacious pitch for Orada's attentions, but she brushes him off with haughty disdain.

In the next scene, as the Marquess enters a hall with the Governor and his servant Diego, it is clear that it is the morning

after the fracas, and the news about the Lady and her Colonel has just been broken. The Governor defends his Tittup, right or wrong, and threatens revenge on the Marquess if the scandal is not proven.

Once alone with his trusted servant, however, he confides that he fears it is true. In this moment of dejection he sings, in a broken voice:

Lock up a Woman, or let her alone;
Keep her in private, or let her be known;
'Tis all one: 'tis e'n all one.
(p. 31)

But suddenly, he shakes off this mood and announces that he has come up with a scheme to save the situation even if the Colonel does come. He enlists Diego's aid, but just as he is about to divulge the plan they are interrupted by a hue and cry from off-stage. The Colonel enters, leaning on his servant and claiming to have been wounded by four attackers avenging a man he had killed in a duel. The Governor plays along with the act, receiving him graciously, having him installed in a room, and promising to send Tittup up to visit him presently. However, when Friar Andrew arrives, disguised as the ringleader of the pursuers, he is literally unmasked, the Governor pulling off his whiskers. On confessing that he is a pimp, he is threatened with two hundred lashes. Claiming priestly immunity, he threatens all with excommunication as he is dragged off by servants to be thrown upon the mercy of the mob.

The Lady enters, obviously anxious to go to the Colonel, but she is instructed to wait. She will be sent up in due time. The Governor then directs Diego to follow him to his closet to be let in on his plan.

No locale is designated for the scene which follows, nor is there a separation from the previous action in the text. But since Elenora is present and she is in confinement, it is presumably her chamber. Orada returns from her conference with Camillus, but before she can divulge the news the Marquess interrupts and announces that she will be removed that night. The honest fruiterer is allowed in on the pretext of having urgent information for the Marquess. He tells of having been offered a gold piece by a handsome nobleman to show the way to the Marquess's wife. Hidewell drops obvious hints, and Moncado guesses it is Camillus. Terrified to "Lose her, and what I value more, her large Fortune" (p. 37), he asks Orada's advice. She suggests that he send Elenora off at once, in a litter, without any equipage. The fruiterer just happens to have one handy. Going out to prepare to accompany the litter, Moncado bids Hidewell ready a horse. Orada tells Hidewell to lame the horse. As soon as the litter is out of sight, it will double-back another way.

For the next episode, "The Scene draws and discovers Col. Peregrine upon a bed, and his man by him." The Governor enters, and after instructing Diego, in an aside, to remove the Colonel's sword, hat, and peruke, launches in full dudgeon into a rebuke of the "damned dissembling handsome Toad," who would dare to "design to cuckold one that hopes to be a Grandee of Spain!" (p. 38). The totally abashed suitor is eager to leave, but his honor makes him hesitate to "leave a Lady to the resentments of a Spanish Husband" (p. 38). After assuring him that the loss of her liberty will be the sole punishment she will suffer, the Governor promises secrecy and releases him unharmed.

Donning the peruke, and taking the young man's place in bed, the Governor now sends Diego to inform the Lady that he has gone out and has requested that she pay a visit to the ailing Colonel. The Lady comes immediately, yet confides to Spywell, "I swear I love this old Governor, and nothing but this charming Englishman could have tempted me to break my vows" (p. 39). After this brief hesitation she approaches the bed, and her husband leaps out. She attempts a weak recovery (paralleling that of Elenora earlier). She claims she knew it was he all along and was doing it to make him jealous. His reply is a wistful "I would be deceived, but cannot" (p. 40).

The Lady's punishment is to be exiled to the back apartments with only an old duenna for companion. But through a series of methods, ranging from affectionate wheedling to threat of suicide, she brings him around. He admits defeat: "Thou resistless, ruler of a doting, fond, old fool!" (p. 41). The scene finally concludes thus: "Exeunt hugging."

The above scene is an interesting parallel and contrast to the Restoration format of an old fool of a husband being out-witted by a brisk young wife. The Governor, though mollified, is open-eyed to his situation, and the Lady seems sincere in her promise to be faithful in the future, as she leaves proclaiming:

Good humour shall supply your want of Youth;
 You shall be always Kind, I full of Truth.
 (p. 41)

In the next scene, the Marquess spirits Elenora away in a litter actually bound for the English Ambassador's house. Hidewell stalls him from following with various ploys, finally feigning a broken leg from a horse's kick. When the Marquess goes off for help, Hidewell makes

his own getaway. Returning, Moncado realizes that he has been tricked. He is about to set off in pursuit when the Governor enters, his Lady at his side, with a letter in his hand. Moncado laments, "My wife, nay more, a great Estate, lost! lost!" (p. 45). The letter confirms that Rome has acknowledged the contract between Camillus and Elenora. The Marquess goes off--raving.

The Governor is called to the English Ambassador's, and Tittup, knowing that the Colonel is likely to be there, pleads to go along and is granted this final concession.

At the Ambassador's house, Elenora and Count Camillus are reunited. The Count rewards Orada who henceforth "shall be used like a friend." Hidewell will be provided for "like a gentleman," which assures him he will make a match with Orada (p. 46). The Colonel congratulates Camillus and vows he will never approach the Lady again, for which he, in turn, is congratulated by the moralizing Count: "In your Age you will never repent an uncommitted sin" (p. 47).

At this point, Friar Andrew comes straggling on: "His clothes torn, and covered with dirt, and his face scratched" (p. 47). Even he, however, is provided for. Elenora and Peregrine give him gold for his efforts, and Camillus promises to take him under his wing and keep him out of trouble. At the announcement of the Governor's arrival, he skitters within.

The Governor's Lady dutifully approaches Colonel Peregrine and charges him never to see her again. With all this resolved, a jubilee is called for. Musicians come on, and after songs and dances, the play concludes with a short verse recited by Camillus expressing his consum-

mate joy, followed by the Governor's closing couplet:

Like you, here stands a happy Man:
And I'll keep my Tittup,--that is, if I can.
(p. 48)

The epilogue to The Spanish Wives appears to have been written by Pix herself, who addresses the audience through Mrs. Verbruggen, in the character of the Governor's Lady:

Our Author, by me, puts up her humble Pray'r,
This Farce, this Trifle of a Play, you'll spare.
I'll try your good Nature: but Oh! I fear
You are not like my fond Old Husband here.
Then, first, my Character who will admire?
Some will think it too cold; others too full of Fire.
I dare swear every Spark here will say,
Damn it, that cursed baulk has spoil'd the Play.
Then the Ladies my Staggering won't allow;
They'll cry, "Where's her strict Rules of Virtue now?"
But the Ladies are not so ignorant; All know
The Difference 'twixt a Spanish Husband, and a Beau.
With Submission our Author still appears;
Courts your Indulgence, and your Judgement fears.
Lives on your Smiles, and at your Frowns despairs.

In contrast to the masculine bullying tone and bawdry of the prologue, Pix's epilogue courts the approbation of the women in attendance, a faction within the playgoing public whose censure was of growing importance during this period, when increasing moral pressure was being exerted upon the theatre.

The Spanish Wives was somewhat of a success. Although the only critique of it given in the London Stage is from the highly biased A Comparison Between the Two Stages, in which it is judged a "most damnable farce,"¹ the author, in her dedicatory epistle, claims that it was "kindly received by the audience." Contemporary Charles Gildon, a

¹LS, 1:464.

possible eyewitness of a performance, infers a longer-than-average run with the comment, "This farce had the good fortune to please. And it must be own'd, there are two or three pleasant turns to it."¹ A crowd pleaser would be likely to last beyond the third night's benefit for the author. The Spanish Wives is known to have been revived in 1699, 1703, and 1711 in London, and, as mentioned before, was done at Dublin's Smock Alley in the season of 1707-1708.²

Pix selected and juggled the characters and events from Belon's versions to serve her own ends in The Spanish Wives. Paula Louise Barbour's dissertation contains a detailed discussion of the similarities between Pix's play and the original source and her departures from it, pointing out the changes made, not only in adapting the French material to suit the English sensibilities of the audience, but in the structural realignment necessary to adapt a novel's plot into dramatic form. She sums up:

Mary Pix adapted her characters and their motives to the tastes of an English audience by downplaying the irreverent satire on the Roman Catholic Church, creating native English types, making almost everybody just a little bit more lovable and capable of improvement, and expanding the roles of two of her characters into a major statement about marriage... as she multiplied characters and added nuances to characterization, Pix streamlined the original plot.³

Pix shares her source with a distinguished colleague. John Dryden also borrowed the comic subplot of his tragicomedy The Spanish Friar (1681) from The Pilgrim. Barbour suggests that Pix may have read Dryden's play

¹Langbaine/Gildon, Lives and Characters, p. 112.

²Clark, Early Irish Stage, p. 124.

³Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 44.

as well as The Pilgrim, since, like Dryden, she too made the would-be seducer of an old man's wife a "Colonel." Pix may also have had an opportunity to see Dryden's play. Though she was only sixteen and not known to reside in London in 1681, the London Stage hints at a possible revival of The Spanish Friar in the 1693-94 season.¹

If The Spanish Wives owes elements of its plot to a French novel, the theme clearly shows the influence of Aphra Behn. The themes of the evils of forced marriages, true love triumphing over other bonds, the sympathetic treatment of women--even those who were not models of conventional virtue--permeate Behn's works. Her The False Count (1681) is also set in Spain, and like Wives has an insanely jealous old husband who keeps his wife locked up.² In the end he is shamed into giving his wife over to her young lover. A previous contract has been made between the pair, and, as in Wives, the mismatch has been consummated, but there is no mention of a legal separation. Owing to the stricter social mores of her time, Pix had to clean up Behn's act, so to speak. She included the sanction of a legally viable precontract, and the resolution of an annulment, plus a cooling-off period in order to reunite her lovers. Again, while in Behn's Sir Patient Fancy (1678) Lady Fancy, married to an old fool, has a lover all along, and in the end can openly admit it and live in sin with her husband's resigned consent, Pix's wife is, albeit reluctantly, faithful until she is freed by a morally acceptable deus ex machina, a Papal mandate. However, in The Spanish Wives, we not

¹LS, 1:427.

²Henry A. Hargreaves, "The Life and Plays of Mrs. Aphra Behn" (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1960), p. 180.

only have a heroine, no longer a virgin, reunited with her true love, but also, in the character of the Governor's Lady, a wife who "would have if she could have" and who is forgiven and reinstated, not punished, when she is discovered. The stuff of potential tragedy is shaped into commendable sentimental comedy. Colley Cibber's Love's Last Shift, produced in the same season, has often been heralded as the first "sentimental comedy," in that it centered on the reform of a rake and his return to the fold of marriage.

Pix was turning the coin with her female penitent. A discussion of The Spanish Wives as sentimental can be found in James M. Edmunds's "An Example of Early Sentimentalism."¹ Although Edmunds bases his categorization on the Elenora-Camillus plot, sentimentalism may also be seen in the happily resolved "working marriage" of the Governor and his Lady.

Allardyce Nicoll sees The Spanish Wives as directly in the line of Aphra Behn's comedy of intrigue, while noting the arguments for its having elements of sentimentality presented by Edmunds, and also those against by J. Harrington Smith in The Gay Couple in Restoration Comedy. Nicoll sums up:

Intrigue seems, in this age, to have been particularly acceptable to the women writers, Mrs. Pix and Mrs. Manley uniting with Mrs. Behn in presenting dramas of this type with, running through them, threads of sentiment and moralization. The Spanish Wives, of the former, which mingles Restoration Tiscene with touches of sentimentalism...²

However many influences, derivations from specific works, or merely applications of the popular formulas of the time Pix shared with

¹James M. Edmunds, "An Example of Early Sentimentalism," Modern Language Notes 48 (1933): 94-97.

²Nicoll, History of English Drama, 1:224.

with the other professional "hacks" of the day in the search for a crowd-pleasing recipe, there is one element in The Spanish Wives that is not only original but unique. As Barbour has astutely observed, The Spanish Wives "offers an example unparalleled in Restoration Comedy--a young woman contentedly happy with an old husband."¹



It was six months after The Female Wits that Mary Pix presented her comedy The Innocent Mistress at the rival Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre with Betterton, Barry, and Bracegirdle in the leading roles.² In this nineteen-character play with many threads of plot, the description of the main characters is helpful to the reader: "Sir Charles Beauclair, a younger brother who has been married off while young to a rich ill-favoured widow and has afterwards come into his own estate. Now in love with Bellinda; Bellinda is, in fact Marianne, daughter to Lord Belmour, living in town under an assumed name since cast off by her family. Now in love with Sir Charles; Mrs. Beauclair, an independent woman, niece and friend to Sir Charles Beauclair, and attracted to his friend Sir Francis Wildlove; Sir Francis Wildlove, man

¹Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 70.

²LS, 1:481.

about town and very gallant" (dramatis personae). The last role was played by Mr. Verbruggen, who spoke the prologue, which made a reference to Pix's change of venue: "Twice has our poetess kind usage found;/ Change not her fortune, tho' she changed her ground" (lines 47-48).

The setting is London, with actual places depicted on stage, such as Lockett's, a fashionable restaurant, and Mrs. Bantum's coffee house. The main action concerns Sir Charles and Bellinda, who are trapped in a hopelessly platonic relationship until it turns out that his wife is a bigamist. In the secondary romantic plot, Mrs. Beauclair puts her rake to several tests, including resorting to breeches disguise, finally taming him. Yet another plot has a woman rescued from a forced marriage, a recurring theme of Pix's.

The Innocent Mistress was a success. A commentary in Lives and Character of the English Dramatic Poets begins, "This is a diverting Play, and met with good Success, tho' acted in the hot season of the year."¹ The remainder of this critique attempts to sort out possible sources for various characters and plot incidents:

Our Poetress [sic] has endeavoured to imitate the Easiness and Way of the Author of Vertue in Danger and The Provoked Wife. She has borrowed some incidents from other Plays; as Mrs. Beauclair's carrying off Mrs. Flywife from Sir Francis

¹Langbaine/Gildon, Lives and Characters, p. 111.

Wildlove from The Vertuous Wife doing the same to her Husband's Mistress. Then the Scene in the Park betwixt Sir Francis and her in the Mask, is a kind of Copy in young Bellair and Harriots in Sir Fopling. Miss Peggy seems a Copy of Miss Hoyden, as Chattal is of several of the parts written of late for Mr. Dogget. But notwithstanding these Imitations, which ever have been allowed in Poets, the Play has its peculiar Merit.¹

In A History of English Dramatic Literature, Adolphus Ward comments: "The Innocent Mistress is written under the influence of Etherege, from whose The Man of Mode some of its incidents seem borrowed, and Congreve, most of whose comedies had by this time been produced."² Congreve was himself influenced by Etherege. The characters Valentine and Angelica in Love for Love are descendants of Dorimant and Harriet, and in turn, Pix may have modeled her Sir Francis and Mrs. Beauclair after them.

One contemporary criticism was adverse and brings up a question about the attribution of the Comparison of The Two Stages to Charles Gildon. Did the same man who found the play diverting in his critique in Lives and Characters put into the mouth of the character Sullen in Comparison the sharp rebuke, "Tho' the Title calls this Innocent, yet it deserved to be Damn'd for its obscenity?"³

Genest found the play "a pretty good C[omedy]." and noted two instances in later plays which apparently borrowed the idea of the manner in which Sir Charles's marital problem was resolved.⁴

¹Ibid., pp. 111-12.

²Ward, History of English Dramatic Literature, 3:454.

³[Gildon,] A Comparison, p. 32.

⁴Genest, Some Account, 2:120.

Besides the Garland reprint, there is a modern edition of the play included in the collection compiled by Fidelis Morgan. In addition to modernizing spelling, grammar, and scene division, Morgan found the first edition "not only flawed in its order, but also littered with mistakes in characters, names, settings and division of scenes."¹ She has corrected these in her text, although she presents no evidence that the order of scenes in the staged production was different from that in the edition, or any of Pix having objected to the version as it was published.

With the two main plots Pix seemed to be going in two directions at once--towards sentimentalism with the high-minded Charles and Bellinda, but counterpointing the "gay" Restoration couple. The latter shows the influence of Congreve, who is even complimented in an exchange between them. Mrs. Beauclair chides Sir Francis for his behavior at the theatre: "Have I not seen you at the play slighting all the bare-faced beauties, hunting up a trollop in a mask with pains and pleasure; nay more for her gaping non-sensical banters, neglecting immortal Dryden's eloquence, or Congreve's unequalled wit" (p. 21). The focus of the busy play, however, keeps returning to the platonic couple, whose relationship verges on the cloying. The description of it by the rake Wildlove early in the play sums up what in fact ensues:

He, notwithstanding the provocation of an ugly, scolding Wife at home, and the temptation of a good Estate, and a handsome Fellow into the bargain, instead of making his life easy with jolly Bonarobas, dotes on a platonic Mistress, who never allows him greater Favors than to read Plays to her, kiss

¹Morgan, Female Wits, pp. 263-64.

her Hand, and fetch heart-breaking sighs at her Feet.
(p. 3)

Perhaps the ladies in the audience were pleased with this new sort of romantic arrangement where the "good" woman had the upper hand for a change, but Beauclair's maundering and Bellinda's agonizing with her conscience come off as mushy and discordant in tone in the setting of an otherwise earthy comedy. Yet Pix's heart was apparently in her statement about two innocent lovers who are rewarded, however implausibly, in a world usually dominated by rakes and coquettes.



The production of The Deceiver Deceived in November 1697 was the Betterton company's answer to George Powell's plagiarism of Pix's plot in his The Imposture Defeated, as has been previously discussed (see above, pp. 203-206).

The premise of the play is that Bondi, a miserly and jealous old Venetian (played by Betterton) has feigned blindness in order to avoid the expenses incurred by election to the presidency of Dalmatia. As the play opens he is stewing in his own juices because, assuming he cannot see them, his wife is being courted by a gallant to whom she was formerly engaged, while his daughter is being wooed by the son of a bankrupt. In the end the daughter is allowed to marry her choice, but the wife, though tempted to the brink, remains chaste. Bondi himself reforms: "I have been a cross, stingy, old captious fellow, but henceforth I'll throw it away with the best of ye" (p. 46). Pix also pokes

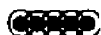
¹LS, 1:488-89.

fun at her own profession in making the fop character, whom Bondi would have forced his daughter to marry, a playwright of boundless and groundless conceit.

Genest affirms Pix's charge of plagiarism, but finds both comedies "pretty good."¹ Gildon thought Pix's version superior to Powell's. The play was revived in 1699 under the title The French Beau.²

The main difference between the Pix and Powell treatments is that Powell has Bonde (played by Cibber) actually catch his wife in flagrante delicto, while Pix's wife is sentimentalized in that she stumbles but does not fall. Again in this Pix comedy there are the themes of forced marriage and the tyranny of Latin husbands.

The character of the fop playwright was doubtless a hit back for the satire on her and her sister authoresses in The Female Wits the previous season.



Mrs. Pix's next offering, Queen Catherine; or, The Ruines of Love, produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields in June 1698, was an admittedly ambitious one.³ The play presented English historical characters, some of them coinciding with those treated in Shakespeare's history plays. Pix wove domestic romances within historical events. Her dedicatory

¹Genest, Some Account, pp. 141, 154.

²Thorn-Drury, "Unrecorded Play-Title," p. 316.

³LS, 1:496.

epistle defends the effort, even as her prologue (apparently the author's words) apologizes for the presumption of following in such illustrious footsteps. Pix confided to the Honourable Mrs. Cook of Norfolk in her dedication:

Did not some of the brightest and best of our Sex can
boast of incourage attempts of this kind, the snarling
critics might prevail and cry down a diversion which they
themselves participate though their ill nature makes them
grumble at their entertainment.

The prologue, like the content of the play, aimed to win the female audience:

Shakespeare did oft his Countries worthies chuse,
Nor did they by his pen their lustre lose.
Heroes revive thro' him, and Hotspur's rage,
Doubly adorns and animates the Stage.
But how shall woman after him succeed,
And what excuse can her presumption plead.
Who with enervate voice dares wake the mighty
dead;
To please your martial men she must despair,
And therefore courts the favor of the Fair:
From huffing hero's she hopes no relief,
But trusts in Catherine's Love, and Isabella's
grief.

(lines 10-20)

The plot turns on the circumstance that Edward IV was in love with Henry V's widow, Catherine, but he, having been spurned in favor of Owen Tudor, his ardor has turned to spiteful revenge. Mrs. Barry played the title role, a romantically vulnerable but noble queen. Betterton was the object of her passion, as Tudor. A climactic scene in Act 4 would be suitable in a farce were not the content so serious and the outcome fatal. The two are surprised in Catherine's chamber in their night-gowns, and she hides him in a closet. When he reveals himself, he is stabbed. In the end, after a brief indulgence in the madness of grief, Catherine pulls herself together for the sake of her royal offspring

and flees. Edward is sobered into devoting his efforts henceforth to the public good, concluding the play with the sentiment:

Kingdoms are given by powers above,
And the chief blessing is our people's Love:
Whilst we are just, they ought must be kind,
No cement does so fast as justice bind.
(p. 99)

The secondary plot concerns Clarence's love of Isabella, blocked by a forced marriage to Thyrrold. Isabella runs on his sword to escape consummation. Clarence goes off into self-exile out of personal grief as much as to escape political plots against his life.

The epilogue for the play was written by Mrs. Trotter. Although spoken by a child, a vogue of the day, it was not the usual prurient stuff. It is a good-natured spoof of heroic writing and acting style.

The play was not much of a success. Baker reports that it "did not live above four nights."¹ But this was at least enough for one author's benefit. Genest did not like the piece much: "It is a poor play both as to plot and language, but without any egregious fault--it is founded on history, but almost all the incidents seem to be fictitious."² Herbert Carter, however, singled this play out as the best written by a woman in the Restoration.³

It is a shame this play has been forgotten and ignored. A rereading might be of interest to Shakespeare scholars, if only because Pix set the play in an historical niche, the time between the actions

¹Baker, Biographia Dramatica, 3:189.

²Genest, Some Account, p. 149.

³Carter, "Three Women Dramatists," p. 97.

of Henry VI (part 3) and Richard III. There is interest in her manipulation of the famous characters' historical actions into personal romantic frameworks, but it is hardly, as Carter averred, "in the true tradition of Shakespeare's histories."¹ Pix's characterization of "Gloucester" is directly akin to Shakespeare's, however. He is the agent of evil deeds, busily laying the groundwork for his own accession: "Tho' seas of blood my Title do divide,/ Cruel and bold I'll wade the kindred tide" (p. 7).



The False Friend; or, The Fate of Disobedience opened in May 1699.² The prologue advertises its purpose to reform:

Amongst reformers of this vitious Age,
Who think it duty to reform the Stage,
A woman to contribut does intend,
In hopes a moral play you lives will mend.
(lines 1-4)

This would seem to be in response to Jeremy Collier's A Short View of the Immorality and Prophaneness of the English Stage (March 1698), the controversy over which had been raging in the ensuing year, and in which Pix's friend Congreve was one of the major figures. Pix had obviously made the professional choice to join rather than to fight.

The three juiciest roles, so to speak, were for women. Barry and Bracegirdle played tragic heroines, and in this instance Mrs. Bowman was entrusted with the flamboyant part of the false friend of the title, whose frustrated love is perverted into rage, driving her to fanatical acts

¹Ibid.

²LS, 1:511.

of evil against innocent people. But, unlike her prototype, Sheker Para in Ibrahim, she does not go proudly to Hades. Rather, in the end, she is dragged on by her hair, shouting a moral injunction: "Let me for ev'r/ Warn my Sex, and fright 'em from the thoughts of/ Black Revenge, from being by Violent Passions/ Swayed" (p. 59). The second moral, reflecting the secondary title, is spoken at the end by the bereaved Viceroy over the deaths of his children: "Nor [let] indulg'd children dare to disobey,/ Lest they are punished such a dismal way" (p. 60).

The plot concerns the son and daughter of the Viceroy of Sardinia. Emilius has brought his beloved Lovisa back from France without the permission of either of their fathers. His sister Adellaida, though intended by her father for another, has secretly married Don Lopez. The Viceroy orders Emilius to kill Adellaida's husband, who is in fact his own wife's brother. Meanwhile, Appamia, Emilius' forgotten former love, plants a poison draught in Lovisa's chamber, which Emilius inadvertantly gives her when she faints. Don Lopez mistakenly wounds each with poison-tipped swords, left by Appamia, who is finally betrayed by an accomplice. Adellaida is left alive, but mad from grief.

No contemporary critique of this play is known. Didbin, whose assessment of anything written by a woman is predictable, uses that fact as an indication that the play was a failure: "[It] has not found a single advocate among all the panegyrists of Mrs. Pix, therefore we may naturally suppose that it played her false as well as the others."¹

¹Didbin, Complete History, 4:344.

Genest summed up: "The plot of this play is not bad--the language is very poor--and the whole is rather dull."¹ Nicoll calls it a "slightly domestic theme with a 'moral plot.'"² Cotton calls it Pix's worst play and answers Pix's preface with: "Her one overt attempt at stage reform, The False Friend, was a muddle of melodrama and moralizing."³

Perhaps Mrs. Pix was in thrall to Mrs. Trotter's The Fatal Friendship when she offered this play the following season. The moral of the tale just is not convincing. As in Trotter's play, the young lovers' misfortunes are either the result of accidents or the evil deeds of others. Marrying without parental consent was certainly a graver offense then than now, but the natural swing of sympathy toward young lovers and away from tyrannical parents defeats the purpose of the so-called message.



With The Beau Defeated (c. March 1700), for the first time Pix went anonymous--even to the point of posing as a male author.⁴ The prologue contains the following reference: "There's something I was beg'd to say,/ In favour of our Author's Play./ He hop'd you'd like" (lines 23-25). The dedication to the Duchess of Bolton is gallantly flattering in regard to the effect of her feminine charms upon the

¹Genest, Some Account, 2:172.

²Nicoll, History of English Drama, 2:97.

³Cotton, Women Playwrights, p. 119.

⁴LS, 1:526.

author: "My Charm'd Eyes being lately bless'd with the sight of You, have let into my mind such a Beautiful Idea, that I liv'd in pain till I cou'd express my Admiration," etc. The reason for the established author's using such a screen at this point is a matter for speculation. Was it to avoid the stigma from her recent failure? Was it pressure from the management or players for fear of losing business on account of a play advertised as by a woman? Was the play indeed written by a "Mr. Barker," as Giles Jacob had stated?¹ Another possibility is a male collaborator, perhaps the translator of the French source from which the play was adapted, F.C. Dancourt's Le Chevalier à la Mode (1687).

Pains were taken to acknowledge a French source. The dedication explains, "The Play is partly a translation from the French." The prologue announces, "Know then, our Comedy came first from France." Again, in the epilogue, "Costume in England makes poor Poets scrape,/ In hopes by that Damnation to escape? But we our plot have fetched from a Foreign Nation."

The comedy follows the attempts of two recent widows to secure new husbands. Their motives are significantly different. Mrs. Rich, a nouvelle riche city woman, is determined that her next husband shall have a title: "I am resolved, and I will be a Countess, cost what it will" (p. 1). She goes to the extent of disowning her "citizen" relatives, and takes on a crew of sycophants to instruct her in the arts of social gossip and gaming. She sets her sights on a beau who turns out

¹Jacob, Poetical Register, 2:11.

to be a servant in disguise and ends up with a plain but honest country squire.

Lady Landsworth, on the other hand, is seeking true love in her next match, since her first was forced:

I was married a meer Baby to a very old man, who in his Youth, having been a debauchee, and dealing only with the worst of our Sex, had an ill opinion of all, kept me like a Nun, broke off all commerce to London, or indeed with anybody, not excepting relations. (p. 4)

She withholds the knowledge of her wealth from her chosen young man and devises other tests to assure herself that he is true and will be constant. After a series of misunderstandings, including her being mistaken for a prostitute, the deserving couple are united.

Barbour considers The Beau Defeated dramatically as Pix's least interesting comedy, while Cotton thinks it one of her best intrigue comedies.¹ Fidelis Morgan calls it "a very funny comedy" and quotes a large portion of the opening scene between Mrs. Rich and her maid.² Allardyce Nicoll also alludes to this scene, calling it "a good Comedy of Intrigue opening vivaciously with the conversation between Mrs. Rich and Betty, and fairly well developed in the later scenes."³ In John Harrington Smith's "French Sources of Six English Comedies," he examines the similarities between The Beau and Le Chevalier, finding the French original far superior.⁴

¹Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 111; Cotton, Women Playwrights, p. 116.

²Morgan, Female Wits, pp. 47-48.

³Nicoll, History of English Drama, 2:171.

⁴Smith, "French Sources," pp. 390-94.

Smith might have added that the predicament of Mrs. Rich owes a good deal to Molière's Les Précieuses Ridicules (1659). Her counterpart, Lady Landsworth, is the heroine evolving from the "gay" Restoration prototype to one of sensibility. She is independent and her tricks are impudent, but her values are those preached, if not practiced, by the eighteenth-century bourgeoisie.



The Double Distress opened in March 1701.¹ Pix signed the published version of it. In the dedication, however, she spoke of collaboration: "The Play is not wholly mine, because I thought [wished?] it done and revised by abler Hands, and therefore fitter to lay at your Lordship's feet [Viscount Fitz-Harding]." Two epilogues are included in the published version. The second, by C.V., dwells on the disruptive effects of factionalism, including that among theatre people, and urges reunion. The tone is similar to John Vanbrugh's Aesop II (1697), which characterized the Betterton rebellion as a mutiny and counseled reconciliation.

There is a significant change in the cast from Pix's usual lineup of Bracegirdle opposite Verbruggen and Barry with Betterton. Barton Booth, newly arrived from Smock Alley in Dublin, stepped into the partnership.²

¹LS, 2:8.

²Genest, Some Account, 2:228.

The lovers' problems in this play are set within a martial framework of skirmishes between the Persians and the Medes. Mistaken identity is used both to create and to resolve problems. Cytheria is dismayed over the sexual feelings she has for her brother, Cyraxes. In order to avoid a prophecy about her "too charming brother," she marries Tygranes, a foreign prince, only to find out that he is in fact her half-brother (p. 34). Her horror is allayed and her suicide prevented when it turns out that she had actually spent the wedding night with the disguised Cyraxes, who is not, after all, related to her.

Leamira is in love with Cleomedon and frets at the oracle's prediction that she will lose him and marry a foreign prince. In the end, Cleomedon is revealed to be a foreign prince, and half-brother to Tygranes, who yields the throne to him. Tygranes also gamely gives up thoughts of Cytheria as he spies an attractive lady of the court.

The setting is exotic Persepolis, and, in particular, the scenes at the temple of the oracle gave opportunity for stunning effects. In the temple scene the stage directions called for a discovery. "The Scene opens, shows the Temple of the Sun, several Pyramids of light. The Priests attending the high Priest" (p. 35). At one point the priest ascends the "tripos," or oracular seat, which must have been a stepped structure. The scene ended with "The Temple darkened. Thunder" (p. 38).

Although Pix says in her dedication, "The success answered my expectation," Baker states, "It had no success."¹ Didbin gibes: "Mrs. Pix went as far as Persopolis for her plot, but whether she lost it on

¹Baker, Biographia Dramatica, 2:173.

her way back again... it was the universal opinion that she had been wool-gathering."¹ This was the play that prompted Genest to make the statement that Pix ought to have stuck to comedy and not meddled in tragedy.²

Barbour points out that this play was Pix's only tragicomedy and seems bemused by the piece. She calls it "without a doubt Pix's most bizarre play."³

More striking than the plot similarities to previous plays is the difference, the variation upon what was, after all, a not uncommon theme in drama. In The Double Distress it is the heroine who is first strongly aware of the forbidden passions she feels, and the emphasis is on hers, not her lover's, emotional and moral struggle. It might also be mentioned that Bevil Higgons's The Generous Conqueror (1701), for which Pix wrote a commendatory letter (although it was mounted by the rival house), also concerned a nearly fatal triangle resolved when one of the suitors turns out to be the heroine's father.

Pix captions this play with a pat tribute to poetic justice that seems tacked on, since the outcome of events is really shaped by a pagan oracle, rather than the deeds of the predestined, albeit well-meaning, youngsters: "The Good have Heav'n their sure and certain Guard,/ And Virtue always meets a just Reward" (p. 64).



¹Didbin, Complete History, 4:344.

²Genest, Some Account, 2:240.

³Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 98.

The Czar of Muscovy, Pix's prose tragedy, opened almost immediately after The Double Distress.¹ Again Barry and Booth were matched, but in this piece Mr. Hodgson and Mrs. Bowman played the other romantic couple.²

The plot harkens back to Ibrahim in the situation of an unfit ruler obsessed with an illegitimate lust for a subject. The opening scene juxtaposes festivity with foreboding. At the wedding of Czar Demetrius and Marina, guests reveal in asides that he is a tyrant and hypocrite and that Marina does not love him. She is pining for Alexander: "This empty pageantry suits not the sorrows,/ Concealed within my heart, are ready to burst forth" (p. 4). The newlywed Czar sees Zarianna, beloved of Zueski, who is second in line to the throne. He falls into a passion for her and sends Zueski off to certain death. When Zarianna rejects him, he threatens: "What my entreaties cannot gain, I will enjoy by force" (p. 21). She holds a knife to her breast, so he does not succeed, but he imprisons both her and his wife, who has refused to divorce him on principle. The Czar's next scheme is to depose his own mother. At this point it is revealed to the audience that he is an impostor, a double of the slain Czar. He is finally exposed through his lack of an identifying tattoo. Zueski returns, not dead after all, and Alexander and he join the rebellion. At the impostor's death Zueski assumes the throne, and the couples are reunited.

¹LS, 2:8.

²Ibid.

Of the play's fate, Baker reported, "This play was founded on some of the incidents of the then recent history of the great Czar Peter. The scene Muscovy. It died, however, in obscurity, and has not been heard of since."¹ Genest calls Baker sharply to task: "The Editor of the B.D. sometimes makes his remarks on a play without having read it-- of this we have a flagrant instance.... In fact there is not one single syllable about the Czar Peter." He judged the work an indifferent tragedy.²

Cotton disparages The Czar for its lack of tragic stature: "Like Queen Catherine, The Czar of Muscovy reduces history to amorous intrigue." She goes on, however, to praise its potential as a "lively acting play" and judges it one of Pix's better tragedies.³

Although, like The Double Distress, this play provides a happy ending for the innocent parties, it is distinctly different in tone. The pervading presence of the evil usurper and his death make it more of a villain tragedy than a tragicomedy.



The Different Widows; or, Intrigue à la Mode is aptly named. The comedy, which opened in November 1703, abounds in interwoven intrigues.⁴ The dedication expresses Pix's admiration for the unusual accomplishments

¹Baker, Biographia Dramatica, 2:150.

²Genest, Some Account, 2:241.

³Cotton, Women Playwrights, p. 117.

⁴LS, 2:47.

of the Countess of Salisbury:

Where else shall we find so active and improving a Mind in the Female Sex, to tempt the numerous hazards of the sea, passing undaunted over the raging billows in search of useful curiosities, whilst others have thought it is a sufficient account of their time to have been busied in Scandal and Intrigue.

The Countess, the former Frances Bennet, had married James Cecil, the fourth Earl of Salisbury, when she was only thirteen. After his death in 1693, she traveled to Rome and through the Alps.

The letter has a ring of sincerity beyond the pat encomium which usually solicited the patronage of its subject. This practice is the matter of the opening scene. An anxious young poet awaits the approval of Sir James Belmont, as he reads, "I am a very sober gentleman, the hope of my family, the ornament of the country, etc. Damned lies, by Jupiter and Juno." He exhorts the writer, "Never debase thy muse to groveling, nor meanly wait at great men's doors, for all the alms they bestow on wit" (p. 1). He sends the poet off with twenty pounds and the advice, "Quit scribbling if thou'dst be either rich or wise" (p. 2).

Another bird's-eye-view of the literary scene of the day is provided by the prologue, which pokes fun at Wycherley, then in his seventies. Mr. Booth explained that they could not find anyone to write a verse prologue, so he finally went to Wills (the coffee house which was a rendezvous for the literati):

But not one Poet was there to be found,
Except the Author of The Country Wife,
But faith I durst not wake him for my Life.
(lines 60-62)

None other than the infamous George Powell, who left Drury Lane to join the Betterton company for two seasons, impersonated Sir James, a Restora-

tion rake type.¹ Angelica has set her sights on him, intending to reform him. She realizes she must snare him first, and one of the ways she does this is to pretend to be just as free and wild as he is. After a series of tricks and tests that keep the usually poised gallant spinning, she succeeds.

Another of the multiple plots involves Lady Loveman, a wife à la The Spanish Wives, who repents in the end and tells the assembled united couples: "Hear me and believe me, I have had my Ramble, and this is the Effect: I hate to Town, despise young Fellows, renounce Intrigues, and am resolved to love nothing but nown Dear as long as I live" (p. 61).

The epilogue gives Collier his due as a successful reforming influence upon the stage. The controversy was still very much alive five years after the appearance of the original attack:

Long have we suffered and the injur'd Stage
Laboured beneath the censure of the Age:
We own our Faults, and pardon crave today,
When we present to You a modest Play.
Here no lewd lives offend the chaster ear,
No jests obscene raise blushes in the Fair;
This we could wish Collier himself would hear.
(lines 1-7)

No contemporary criticism is known of this play. Barbour is put off by "the most uncontrolled, farcical plot ever composed of Mary Pix."²

This bit of fluff is a potpourri of elements from previous Pix comedies. Nowhere else in her works is her skill as a hack more evident. She interweaves the intrigues of no fewer than four couples. Angelica, the rake-reformer, resembles both Mrs. Beauclair of The

¹Ibid.

²Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 113.

Innocent Mistress and Lady Landsworth of The Beau Defeated, and Lady Loveman is clearly a reworking of the Governor's Lady in The Spanish Wives. Within the intrigues, farcical gimmicks abound such as prat-falls, slaps, pulled-out chairs, and a man in drag.



Zelmane; or, The Corinthian Queen, attributed to Pix (see above, p.), opened at Lincoln's Inn Fields in November 1704.¹ The dedication defends the stage against "the snarling zealot" and insists that "an inclination to plays never injured the fortunes of any man," reiterating the main argument against Collier's criticisms. It also gives the information, "The following play was a piece left unfinished by Mr. M_____t." This was probably William Mountfort, the actor/author who was murdered in 1692.

Both the prologue and epilogue are in praise of Queen Anne. The latter was spoken by Mrs. Bowman, "dressed like [sic] Victory." It ended with: "Now fierce Bellona more than Venus charms,/ And I'm returned to crown great Anna's arms." This was likely a reference to the Battle of Blenheim and the Duke of Marlborough's victory over the French the preceding August.

The play was called a tragedy although the villain is killed at the end and the lovers reunited. Zelmane's father had promised both her and his kingdom to Amphialus, general and prince, if he won the war. Amphialus secretly marries Antimore. Zelmane, who is in love with him,

¹Genest, Some Account, 2:334.

forces him to honor her father's pact, but when she finds out about the bigamy, she banishes him and calls for an annulment. In the meantime, Zelmane's step-brother attempts to rape Antimore but is prevented by Amphialus' younger brother, Arcanes, who is in love with Zelmane. After a tremendous victory Amphialus is allowed to return and rejoin his bride. The noble Queen resigns herself and promises to entertain Arcanes's suit. No tyrant she, she vows:

All private Suits and Passions be withstood:
For he who governs well does more Command,
Than if all nations bended to his Hand...
Thus I my People's Rights and Honour will maintain
And Corinth date her Glories from a Female Reign.
(p. 67)

Genest's brief entry on the otherwise obscure tragedy concludes:
"This is a poor T[ragedy]. both as to plot and language."¹

If this play is indeed an adaptation from a draft of a play written by Mountfort more than a decade before, it is easy to see why the subject matter appealed to Pix. The plot features a heroine of strong passions who is the aggressor in a love affair and, if Pix literally finished it--that is, composed the ending--it can be seen that she took a potential villainess and transformed her into a noble character.



The Conquest of Spain, put up in May of 1705, was the first new play to open at the new Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket, built by

¹Genest, Some Account, 2:233-34.

Vanbrugh for the Betterton company.¹ The play was unsigned, and, as with The Beau Defeated, the prologue spoke of the author as a man: "How bold a Venture does our Author make,/ And what strange Measures do his Wishes take?" (lines 1-2). The cast is not known, but Genest speculates that Betterton played the relentlessly loyal general, Julianus.² The setting is Barcelona during the Moorish wars. The King of Spain sends his faithful general Julianus off to wage war against the Moors, and while he is gone rapes his daughter, Jacinta. She makes her way to the battlefield to tell her father, but the obsessively loyal general refuses to seek revenge. She is accidentally wounded making her way back through the lines.

Meanwhile, her betrothed, Theomantius, thought to have been killed in battle, returns and hears of the atrocity. When he catches Mullymumen, leader of the Moors, he releases him with the object that he will kill the King, thus revenging Jacinta. However, the result is that the Moors overrun the entire nation. The dying Jacinta reproaches Theomantius, and he falls on his sword. Julianus dies of wounds incurred while trying to help his King escape. In the end the Moors are in control. A subplot reunites and liberates a beleaguered noble couple.

In Roscus Anglicanus, John Downes describes the circumstances of the production of The Conquest of Spain. It followed an unsuccessful opera and a string of sparsely attended revivals. It did not manage to save the disappointing first season at the Queen's Theatre. It "had

¹LS, 2:93.

²Genest, Some Account, 2:330.

not the run of a Stock-Play, for it expired on the sixth Day."¹

John Genest cites the source of The Conquest of Spain as William Rowley's All's Lost by Lust, printed in 1633. He gives a detailed synopsis of that plot, discussing the similarities and concluding: "Mrs. Pix is greatly indebted to the old play--she has however materially altered both parts of the plot, and written nearly the whole of the dialogue afresh."² One of the major changes was the creation of the romantic interest in Theomantius.

The theme of the general's dauntless loyalty is not found in the source play. Nancy Cotton sees this play as a variant on Fletcher's The Loyal Subject, which was in fact revived later that season by the rival company.³ Yet another version, The Faithful General, by "a Young Lady," was produced at the Queen's Theatre in January of 1706. On that occasion, the Drury Lane revived the original The Loyal Subject on the same day.⁴

Aside from outside influences, Barbour notes the resemblance not only in plot, but in style, of The Conquest, Pix's last tragedy, to Ibrahim, her first: "The play ... is surprisingly reminiscent of Ibrahim. In The Conquest of Spain Pix returns to full-fledged blood and thunder tragedy."⁵

¹Downes, Roscus Anglicanus, p. 48.

²Genest, Some Account, 2:330.

³Cotton, Women Playwrights, p. 118.

⁴LS, 2:342.

⁵Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 103.

If a return to the blood-and-thunder tragedy can be discussed in The Conquest of Spain, with a repetition of some of the situations of her early tragedy, Ibrahim, an evolution can be seen in Pix's heroine figure. The piteous Morena drank poison after being raped; Jacinta dashes into the midst of a full-tilt battle in search of an avenger!



Mary Pix's last play was a comedy, The Adventures in Madrid. It was presented at the Queen's Theatre in June 1706.¹ Barry and Bracegirdle were still the leading ladies, though now, instead of being coupled with Betterton and Verbruggen, they were wooed and won by Benjamin Husbands and Barton Booth.

The dedication was addressed to Sir Jacob Banks, whom Pix obviously thought an appropriate patron for a play with a feminist message: "You retain such a Veneration and Tenderness [for women] scarce to be met with in your Sex."

There were four romantic pairings in this three-act intrigue farce set in Spain, which is in many ways similar to Pix's first farce, The Spanish Wives. The play opens with two visiting Englishmen, Bellmour and Gaylove, preparing to launch their campaign to steal the objects of their affections, both of whom are kept virtual prisoners in the adjoining house of old Gomez, husband of Clarinda, and guardian of Laura. Gaylove compares their situation to two Dryden heroes: "We'll not Quarrel, like Mr. Bays' Heroes whose Damsel is the Handsomest" (p. 3).

¹LS, 2:126.

Thus there is the in-joke of two characters in a comedy comparing themselves to similar characters in a contemporary writer's plays.

Clarinda is, in truth, Gomez's niece, and the marriage is not consummated. Gomez has stolen his nephew's estate and thinks the latter has been killed on his orders, but Don Philip has escaped and is in town, disguised. He too is in love--with Gaylove's sister, Emilia.

Bellmour and Gaylove employ a pimp, Gusman, who is himself in love with Lissett, the friend of the young ladies. She has penetrated the Gomez household disguised as a eunuch.

In the end, all the above have combined forces to bring Gomez to justice. He is arrested by the Inquisitor General, and all the couples set sail for "Merry England, where there still lives Freedom, Pleasure, and smiling Joy" (p. 69).

The fact that three of the couples are of mixed nationality leads to much conversation comparing the repressive marital customs of Spain to the relative freedom enjoyed by English wives. Barbour's examination of this play points out several elements which this play has in common with The Spanish Wives and regrets its fate of being lost in obscurity: "The long neglect of this latter play is difficult to understand, because it is one of Pix's best."¹ She concludes:

The Adventures in Madrid is one of those rare comedies with sympathetic characters and lively action built upon solid ideas. Of all of Pix's plays, only The Spanish Wives has more control and more good-humored patriotism and general optimism about love and life.²

¹Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 114.

²Ibid., p. 117.

Hume reads the play as "a breezy treatment of semi-serious intrigues" and observes that its Spanish setting in which the male leads are English follows a pattern set by Dryden in 1668.¹ An Evening's Love (1668), set in Madrid, presented a pair of English cavaliers who win two Spanish damsels.

In A History of English Drama, Nicoll uses this play as an example to point out Susanna Centlivre's superiority: "Adventures in Madrid is a three-act piece of no particular merit introducing stock characters of a rather monotonous type. Obviously, Mrs. Pix has here been endeavouring to emulate Mrs. Centlivre, but she lamentably lacks the flair for the theatre which the latter possesses in so marked a degree."² It seems unlikely that it was a case of an attempt at emulation on Pix's part, since she produced comedy of this type four years before Centlivre made her debut. If Nicoll's value-judgment is correct, then it appears to be a case of the pupil surpassing the teacher.



Pix's two major nontheatrical works were a novel, The Inhumane Cardinal, published in 1696, the same year as her theatrical debut, and Violenta, a verse translation of the eighth book of the second day in Boccaccio's Decameron, which came out in 1704.

The Inhumane Cardinal, thought to be lost, has been overlooked in discussions of Pix's works, or mentioned as having existed from the

¹Hume, Development of English Drama, p. 491.

²Nicoll, History of English Drama, 2:171-72.

sole evidence of an advertisement for it on the back of Ibrahim. Barbour's information is fuller.¹ In addition to the advertisement for The Inhuman [sic] Cardinal; or, Innocence Betray'd, she cites Giles Jacob's assessment in The Poetical Register stating that Pix "Writ a very ingenious novel called The Inhuman Cardinal." He goes on to mention that the dedication was to Princess Anne of Denmark.² Further, in the anonymous The Session of the Poets, a novel is included in the charges against Pix, at a mock trial held against several contemporary poets: "The Very first Venture she expos'd unto public View was a Novel, a very barren Discourse, abounding with neither language nor Intrigue furnished out at the book-seller's charge, but I am very confident will not defray the expense of the impression."³ Barbour then concludes, "despite the excellent case for its having existed, there are no copies of the novel known today, nor is there anywhere an account of its plot, characters, or source."⁴

In fact, The Inhumane Cardinal is extant and in good condition in the Newberry Library in Chicago. There is an interesting handwritten note on the title page signed by Joseph Knight: "This novel is by Mrs. Pix, the well-known dramatist. It is very uncommon. I have never seen another copy." Under the title is the description, "A Novel written by a Gentlewoman, for the Entertainment of the Sex. The dedication was signed "Mary Pix."

¹Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 13.

²Jacob, Poetical Register, 2:204.

³Anon., The Session of the Poets, p. 44.

⁴Barbour, "Critical Edition," p. 14.

The story, which follows the seduction of an innocent maiden by a lecherous cardinal, includes two other long tales told to the girl in the process of her wooing. The narratives are augmented by a song, letters, and dialogue.

Pix introduces the novel with: "All that are conversant in History, must remember the unbecoming sway Donna Olympia held in the Court of Rome during the papacy of Innocent the Tenth."¹ It is related that he was lazy and effeminate, and that she was actually in control of policy. Her particular favorite was the evil and cunning Cardinal Antonio Barbarino. As the story opens he confesses that the reason he has been avoiding her importunities is that he has fallen in love with a young girl, Melora. Olympia sets out to procure her for him. She takes the girl under her wing, telling her that she is saving her for a prince, who was sent a jeweled case for her portrait. Olympia relates a romantic tale, "The History of Alphonsus and Cordelia." Alphonsus was the son of the Duke of Ferrara and Modena. One day, on a lark, he climbed over a garden wall and was surprised to encounter a beautiful young maiden with whom he fell immediately in love. Wishing her to love him for himself, not his exalted position, he married her in disguise. But when on his father's death he had to assume the dukedom, he called her to the court, revealed his true identity, and the two lived happily. Upon the Duke's death, an enemy attacked the young heir's legitimacy, and now he has come to Rome to sue for his rights, which are certain to be granted. It is this young man, Olympia tells Melora, who has seen her and fallen in love with her and compares Melora to Cordelia. Thus she has set the

¹Pix, The Inhumane Cardinal (London: n.p., 1696), intro.

bait. "A Scene of greatness straight appeared to Melora, and she, with the eye of Fancy, beheld herself seated in a Palace, attended by persons, born above her.... Women are generally ambitious and opinionated of their own merit."¹ One day the Cardinal is on the other side of the door of Melora's chamber. He hears her singing and bursts in on her. She flees, but he now pursues her with such ardor, pretending to be dying of love, sending her poems, etc., that she begins to weaken. One day when he is entertaining her, knowing that she likes stories, he has his servant Francisco relate the "true" history of Emilius and Lovisa.

Young Emilius, second son of the Duke of Parma, returned from war to his father's court. At a ball, he saw Lovisa and fell in love with her. She was an orphan taken in as his mother's ward. A group of young people at the court had formed a "Friendly Society" in which they met and read each other's letters aloud. One day Emilius surprised Lovisa trying to conceal a letter. It was from his father betrothing her to another man. When their own love was revealed, the Duke sent Lovisa from the court and betrothed Emilius to another. Just as Lovisa was about to enter a convent, the Duke had relented on his death bed. The lovers were reunited.

Shortly after this, Melora's father finds a letter from the Cardinal. She is able to persuade him that it is someone else's, but the danger of exposure causes Olympia and the Cardinal to press Melora into a secret private "marriage." Pix provided the following description of the wedding night: "Innumerable were the prayers before they could obtain a full consummation: at length powerful importunity overcomes; and the Cardinal has sacrific'd to his Lust Nature's

¹Ibid., p. 81.

Masterpiece."¹

After six months, "His fierce desires begin to cool in that certain cure for love, full enjoyment."² Lovisa is pregnant. The servant Francisco, whose conscience has been bothering him about the deception tells Melora the truth. When the Cardinal and Olympia discover that she knows, they poison her. In the conclusion Pix explains that because of their power, the two were not immediately punished, but both met miserable deaths: she alone and banished by the next pope; he of various unsavory diseases.

The novel shows the influence of Boccaccio in the device of the telling of tales that tie in to the overall plot. The situation of Olympia pimping for the Cardinal is much like the situation in her play Ibrahim, with Sheker Para performing the same function for the Sultan. Pix claims history as the story's source. That source is possibly The Life of Donna Olympia Maldachini by Gregorio Leti under the pseudonym "Abbot Gualdi," which had been translated into English in 1667. The account claimed to be an eyewitness report by an ex-priest. The names of Emilius and Lovisa were used later in a play, The False Friend. In that instance the young pair who wed against a parent's wishes suffered a tragic fate.

In 1704, Violenta; or, The Rewards of Virtue, a verse translation of the eighth novel of the second day from Boccaccio's The Decameron, was published by Pix. It was composed in heroic couplets and was doubtless

¹Ibid., p. 212.

²Ibid., p. 213.

influenced by Dryden's Fables Ancient and Modern, brought out just before his death in 1700, a work which included adaptations from Chaucer and Boccaccio.

The novel Violenta is based on is titled "The Duke of Angiers" and concerns a wronged duke who flees with his two children and is reduced to beggary in exile. For their safety, he makes them swear not to reveal their true identities. In London, he gives his daughter over to the care of a Lady. In Wales, his son is taken up by a nobleman. He himself ends up in Ireland as a common servant.

Violenta's story is as follows. She grows up to be a beauty, and the only son of the lady falls in love with her. The boy is a model of virtue. Knowing that his parents would oppose his love and think the girl to be of base birth, he conceals it from them. The torment throws him into a violent wasting illness. A young doctor perceives that every time Violenta enters the room the youth's pulse quickens and makes his diagnosis known to the mother. She seeks a remedy in trying to persuade Violenta to become his mistress. The thought of this horrifies her and the young man equally. Finally, rather than see him pine and die, the parents consent to their marriage.

In the meantime, the count's son has become president of Wales, and, in the end, the count is restored to all his former honors, and the family is reunited. Thus is virtue rewarded. This embodiment of poetic justice has come full circle from the sinister naturalistic ending of her early novel.

Chapter V

THE FEMALE WITS

The Female Wits is estimated by the editors of the London Stage to have been presented in September 1696. Because it was not printed until 1704, they could not use the usual method of dating a performance approximately a month before the date when the published script was advertised in a newspaper. They present the following arguments for their dating:

In the first place, the presence of Verbruggen in the cast indicates that it must have been acted before 1 Jan. 1696/7, when Verbruggen was permitted to act at Lincoln's Inn Fields. The play also parodies the works of Mrs. Manley, whose The Royal Mischief had been staged (probably) in April 1696, and it is likely that the company would emphasize the pertinence of the parody by presenting it soon after the appearance of the original. Although The Female Wits may not have been acted until later in the autumn, it seems likely that it may have been acted first in the late summer or early autumn.¹

Other scholars have dated the play in the following year. Genest gives 1697.² In Plays about the Theatre in England, Dane Farnsworth Smith places it following The World in the Moon, which the London Stage dates in June 1697.³ This date for The World in the Moon is based on an advertisement in The Post Boy announcing its publication for June 25, 1697 and also on the benefit performance on July 1.

¹LS, 1:467.

²Genest, Some Account, 2:101.

³Elkanah Settle, The World in the Moon (London: A. Roper, 1697); Dane Farnsworth Smith, Plays about the Theatre in England, from the Rehearsal in 1671 to the Licensing Act in 1737 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. ; LS, 1:180-81.

An argument for the production of The Female Wits coming after that of The World in the Moon is a reference to it by the character Marsilia: "They have all talked of The Emperour of the Moon and The World in the Moon, but discovered nothing of the Matter: Now again, I go just contrary; for I say nothing, and shew all" (p. 33). This would also place The Female Wits later than Pix's The Innocent Mistress at Lincoln's Inn Fields. The prologue of The Innocent Mistress mentions The World in the Moon and was presumably presented in June 1697. It was previously presumed that the satire was the instigation for her taking her plays to the rival company.

The later date would invalidate some of Lucyle Hook's conjectures in her introduction to the Augustan Society Reprint edition of The Female Wits. She supposed that the work was composed immediately following the production of The Royal Mischief, put on early in the next season. She speculated that the machinery used in the last scene was the same as that employed in Brutus of Alba, which would have been running concurrently with it in October 1696 according to her calculation. She also suggested that the dialogue sung by Mrs. Cross and Mr. Leveridge may have been the same one as that in Brutus of Alba, the production date of which is ascertained through the date on its dedication, November 16, 1696.¹

Beside the Augustan Reprint Society reproduction, the text of The Female Wits is included in the previously cited microprint collection Three Centuries of English and American Plays. A modern edition is included in the also previously cited collection of plays by women writers

¹George Fowell, Brutus of Alba (London: Samuel Briscoe, 1696) [LS, 1:468].

of the Restoration entitled The Female Wits and edited by Fidelis Morgan. Morgan modernized spelling and form and omitted commendatory verses, dedications, prefaces, prologues, and epilogues. She separated the acts into scene units and rewrote the stage directions. In the case of The Female Wits she altered the dramatis personae in a manner which she proposed would facilitate future productions. She claimed to have combined the part of Mr. Johnson with that of Mr. Verbruggen and of Mrs. Kent with Mrs. Cross. Actually, she left Mrs. Cross's part intact and fused Mrs. Kent's role with that of Mrs. Lucas in the original. At that, in her list of characters, she specified only actors who played themselves as well as characters in the play-within-the-play. Elsewhere, Morgan referred to the existence of an original 1697 edition of the text in the collection of the Henry E. Huntington Library. Upon inspection, this turned out to be the 1704 edition, misdated in a marginal notation on the title page.

The Augustan Reprint Society version lacks a title page. That page bore the information "written by Mr. W.M.," but W.M., who signed the preface, disclaimed authorship, saying he was merely publishing the work for a friend, now deceased. Hook's introduction provided background information relating to the play's production and subject matter. She synopsisized the action of the plot of Manley's The Royal Mischief, relating those incidents which were satirized in The Female Wits, and compared the satire itself to Buckingham's The Rehearsal, which the preface of the play admitted it imitated. Hook posited the authorship as a collaborative effort despite the author of the preface's characterization of a single author as "a Man of more Modesty than the generality

of our Present Writers, tho' not of less Merit than the best of 'em... till his good temper got the better of his Aversion to write himself among the List of Poets."¹ She felt that internal evidence, such as the looseness of structure, with incidents strung together to provide occasions for specialty song and dance turns, pointed to a collaborative effort on the part of the company members at Drury Lane. The Rehearsal had been put together by a group of wits, and several actors at Drury Lane were also playwrights. Her two most likely candidates for a possible single authorship, or at least leadership in the composition, were George Powell and Jo Hayns.

Powell, in addition to being Drury Lane's leading actor, was more of an entrepreneur than a playwright. His method was to interpolate musical interludes into a thin plot framework. The plagiarized The Imposture Defeated was just such a concoction. Powell played a leading role in The Female Wits, doubling as himself and Fastin, the character satirizing Levan Dadian in The Royal Mischief, which role he would have done if The Royal Mischief had not pulled up stakes in midrehearsal. But even Powell came in for criticism in the satire (concerning his drinking habit), which suggests that not Powell, but someone who knew him well, wrote The Female Wits. The author was quite familiar with idiosyncrasies of the entire company, as they come to be revealed in caricature.

¹Lucyle Hook, introduction to "W.M.," The Female Wits; or, The Triumvirate of Poets at Rehearsal, ed. Lucyle Hook (London: Turner et al., 1704; reprint ed., Los Angeles: Clark Memorial Library, 1967).

Jo Hayns was Hook's prime candidate for authorship. The fact that he was well known for his portrayal of Bayes in The Rehearsal and had a bent for satirical prologues and epilogues made him a likely possibility at least for being the ringleader in writing a collaborative pastiche. She mentioned that his one play, written in 1692, was given a second printing in 1696. Hayns was also dead by 1704, as was the author according to the preface. Yet, Hayns did not appear in The Female Wits. His flair for comedy was highly personalized. He often wrote the prologues and epilogues which he spoke (although his most famous epilogue, that seated on an ass, was written by Thomas Brown), and he had appeared as himself in the theatre play The World in the Moon by Elkanah Settle earlier that season. So, it seems unlikely that he would put so much effort into a comedy that had no part in it for him.

The main evidence Hook offered on Hayns's behalf came from the dedicatory letter for The Life of the Late Famous Comedian Jo Hayns, published in the year of his death, 1701.¹ The dedication is to William Mann and is signed Tobyas Thomas. Thomas related that Mann had urged him to write a biography of their mutual friend. Hook concluded that William Mann may have been the W.M. of the preface of The Female Wits and his deceased friend Hayns the author. However, she did not take this connection further to the attribution of that work to Thomas Brown, using Tobyas Thomas as a nom de plume.² Brown, a brilliant Grub Street wit, used Hayns as a subject on other occasions: The Reasons of Mr. Joseph Hains

¹Thomas Brown, The Life of the Late Famous Comedian Jo Hayns (London: Samuel Briscoe, 1701).

²Summers, Restoration Theatre, p. 56.

the Player's Conversion and Reconversion (1691) and Letters from the Dead to the Living... from Jo Haines of Merry Memory, to his Friends at Wills (1702). In the latter Brown used Hayns as a mouthpiece for his satirical observations, as he apparently did in the case of Tobias Thomas in the biography. Thomas was a player with the Rich company for several seasons beginning 1696-97. He, in fact, played Lord Whiffle, a secondary comic role in The Female Wits. Whether Brown wrote the play cannot be known, but a flood of his writings was published in 1704, the year of his death, including the play The Stage Beaux Toss'd in a Blanket; or, Hypocrisie Alamode, a satire on Jeremy Collier. The play has been presumed to be unproduced, but the text indicates it was "spoken at the Drury Lane," and the epilogue was "spoken by Mr. Wilks at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane." Stage reformer Arthur Bedford also mentions The Stage Beaux as having been performed in his anti-theatre tract The Evil and Danger of Stage Plays (1706).¹ Brown had another play to his credit. A one-act farce published around the time The Female Wits was entitled The Dispensary (1697). Brown's essay "The Reasons of Mr. Bays [Dryden] Changing his Religion" (1690) was influenced by The Rehearsal. It has already been mentioned that Brown's description of Mary Pix as a jolly poetess in "Criticism of Several Modern Plays" is similar to her description in the dramatic personae. Brown was also listed among those for whom The Female Wits was printed, and The Life of the Late Jo Hayns is among the publications advertised on the back page of The Female Wits.

¹Arthur Bedford, The Evil and Danger of Stage Plays (London: Bonny & Henry Mortlock, 1796; reprint ed., New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1974), p. 17.

The preface by W.M. attests to the success of the production of the piece, praising the performances of Mr. Powell (Himself/Fastin) and his wife (Mrs. Wellfed), with a special accolade to the deceased Mrs. Verbruggen who had portrayed Marsilia. He acknowledges that the piece was written in imitation of The Rehearsal,¹ and his key to the characters satirized is in the same spirit as the original:

The Lady whose Play is rehears'd, personates one Mrs. M__ly, a Gentlewoman sufficiently known for a Correspondence with the Muses some time since, though she has of late discontinu'd it, (I presume for some more profitable Employ) and those that go under the Names of Mrs. Wellfed, and Calista, are Mrs. P__x and Mrs. T____r, two Gentlewomen that have made no small struggle in the World to get into Print; and who are now in such a State of Wedlock to Pen and Ink, that it will be very difficult for 'em to get out of it.

Sexual innuendo can be read into the "more profitable Employ" that Mrs. Manley is presumed to be pursuing.

W.M. allows that the taste of the audience may have changed in the ensuing years since it was performed and appears to be referring to the post-Collier stuffiness, in which case he gives not "a Fig for their Censures, which can neither affect him that Wrote this Play, nor him that Publishes it."

The prologue, added at publication, makes topical allusions contrasting the true reform of Queen Anne's order against the wearing of vizard masks, which had come to be the emblem of prostitutes, in the theatre, and the false sort of gloom and doom preaching that blamed the great winter storm of 1703 on the sinfulness of Englishmen and on the stage as an example. The editor of The Observator is singled out

¹Dane F. Smith lists three performances of The Rehearsal in 1704 in Plays about the Theatre (p. 259).

for the barb, "How happy are we made, who well agree,/ To be laugh'd at by such a fool as he." John Tutchin, the Whig pamphleteer, had been launching attacks against the immorality of the playhouses in his paper. In 1704, Tory writer Charles Leslie undertook to answer Tutchin in his rival paper which he named The Rehearsal.

The *dramatis personae* provides descriptions of the characters in addition to their ticket names:

Mr. Awdwell, a Gentleman of Sense and Education, in Love with Marsilia. Mr. Mills.

Mr. Praiseall, a conceited, cowardly coxcomb; a Pretender likewise to Marsilia's affections. Mr. Cibber.

Fastin, Son to Lord Whimsical, Husband to Isabella, and in Love with his Father's Wife. Mr. Powell.

Amorous, Steward to Lord Whimsical, and in Love with Isabella. Mr. Pinkethman.

Lord Whiffle, An empty Piece of Noise, that always shews himself at Rehearsal and in Public Places. Mr. Thomas.

Lord Whimsical, Husband to Lady Loveall. Mr. Verbruggen.

Marsilia, A Poetess, that admires her own Works, and a great Lover of Flattery. Mrs. Verbruggen.¹

Patience, her Maid. Mrs. Essex.

Mrs. Wellfed. One that represents a fat, Female Author, a good, sociable well natur'd Companion, that will not suffer Martyrdom rather than take off three bumpers in a Hand. Mrs. Powell.

Calista, A Lady that pretends to learned Languages, and assumes to her self the Name of Critick. Mrs. Temple.

Isabella, Wife to Fastin, and in Love with Amorous. Mrs. Cross.

Lady Loveall, Wife to Lord Whimsical, and in Love with Fastin. Mrs. Knight.

Betty Useful, A necessary Convenience of a Maid to Lady Loveall. Mrs. Kent.

The *dramatis personae* does not list the actors who played only themselves, such as Mr. Johnson, Mrs. Lucas, Mr. Leveridge, the singer, a little boy,

¹Mrs. Verbruggen, famous for playing breeches roles, played the part of Bayes in The Rehearsal on occasion according to Colley Cibber in his An Apology (p. 167). She had also created Lady Froth, "a great Coquette; pretender to Poetry, Wit, and Learning," in Congreve's The Double Dealer (1693).

two actors identified as first and second prologue speakers, Mr. Pate, the singer, scenemen, a prompter, a property man, and various dancers and supernumeraries. The entire company seems to have been involved in the comedy. The only principal member of the company conspicuously absent was Mrs. Rogers, who had taken over Mrs. Bracegirdle's types. It was likely she had rehearsed as Bassima in The Royal Mischief and therefore would have taken off Isabella, the parallel role in the play-within-the-play. Mrs. Cross was a junior member of the company, who had started as a child speaking racy prologues and epilogues and who specialized in musical interludes and dialogues. Mrs. Knight and Mr. Powell parodied characters equivalent to the roles they would likely have been cast in. One instance of deliberate miscasting for ironic effect was the short comic, Mr. Penkethman, in the counterpart of the role played by the tall and heroic, if aging, Mr. Betterton.



Substantive comments in the following explication are included in the text, in smaller print and offset by brackets. Stage directions are underlined.



Scene a Dressing-Room, Table and Toylet Furnish'd, etc. Enter Marsilia in a Night-Gown, followed by Patience (p. 1).

Marsilia is first seen furiously abusing her maid. It is past nine, she has a rehearsal at ten, and her toilette is not prepared to her satisfaction. Her complaints are interspersed with rehearsals of

heroic rants: "Mount my aspiring Spirit! Mount! Hit yon azure Roof, and justle Gods" (p. 1). [This will turn out to be a speech intended for her next work, her own version of Cataline, Ben Jonson's tragedy, written in 1611.]

Through all the abuse the put-upon Patience remains obsequious. She reveals her method of coping in an aside: "Nothing but Flattery brings my Lady into a good humor" (p. 2). The practice pays off, for Marsilia promises her her cast-off gown and petticoat after her third day. [The third performance of a play was for the benefit of the playwright.]

Mrs. Wellfed is announced, and Marsilia characterizes her as an "ill-bred, ill-shaped creature ... foolish and open-hearted, only useful as an object of mischief or laughter" (p. 3). She greets Mrs. Wellfed effusively, however, and asks her if she is writing something. Wellfed's answer is cut off, though, by Marsilia's rapturous praise of her own work, in which "the turns are so surprising, the Love so passionate, the Lines so strong; 'Gad, I'm afraid there's not a Female Actress in England can reach 'em" (p. 3). Upon Marsilia's launching into a demonstration, Wellfed reminds her that she recited it all the night before, whereupon Marsilia predicts repetitions of it amounting to seventeen or eighteen nights. The astonished Wellfed comments, "That's Three or Four more than the Old Batchelor held out" (p. 4). [Congreve's first comedy had had an extraordinary run of fourteen performances in 1693, which had not been matched since.] Marsilia repeats her favorite lines from the play she has in rehearsal, "My scorching Raptures make a Boy of Jove;/ That ramping God shall learn of me to Love" (p. 4). Wellfed inquires if some

of the Ladies might not find such expressions indecent. [That was a charge against The Royal Mischief, which Manley had acknowledged and answered in her preface on the play's publication.]

Marsilia calls for a sherry to soothe her nerves, but the portion served is too small, so she throws it in Patience's face. Immediately, she comments on Mrs. Wellfed's habit of drinking in the morning. Mrs. Wellfed justifies the practice as the source of her inspiration and quips, "else I had never come to this bigness Madam" (p. 4). Throughout, she good-naturedly makes herself the butt of her own jests.

Calista is announced and denounced by Marsilia as "the vainest, proudest, senseless Thing," but greets her with compliments and an embrace, causing Wellfed to muse in an aside, "So, I suppose my Reception was preceded like this" (p. 5). When Wellfed is introduced to Calista as "a Sister of ours," Calista makes the aside, "She's big enough to be the Mother of the Muses" (p. 5). Marsilia dubs the group the "Female Triumvirate" and asserts, "T'wou'd be but civil of the Men to lay down their Pens for one year, and let us divert the Town; but if we shou'd, they'd certainly be asham'd ever to take 'em up again" (p. 5). [This is the same sentiment expressed in the commendatory verses the women wrote for one another. Trotter's, for The Royal Mischief, ended with the lines, "The Men, o'ercome, will quit the Field,/ Where they have lost their Hearts, the Laurel yield" (lines 14-15).]

Marsilia and Calista proceed to discuss their respective admirers. Marsilia asks Calista if any "celebrated Poet of the Age [has] been lately to look over any of your Scenes, Madam?" (p. 5). Calista says he has indeed used that as his excuse for daily visits. [It may be

conjectured that the reference was to Congreve, who was at that time in his prime and enjoying the reputation as the greatest playwright since Dryden. This indicates that Trotter and Congreve knew each other before their first known correspondence in 1697. He did make editorial comments on Trotter's last play, The Revolution in Sweden, in 1706. From the above, it would appear to have been his practice from the beginning of her career.] Marsilia attempts to top Calista's conquest with the remark that she would "rather see one dear Player than all the Poets in the Kingdom" (p. 5). Calista expresses surprise at Marsilia's being in love with an old man and asks why, if that is the case, she is not doing her play at his house. Marsilia says it is because her new work is an opera. [The "Player" thus described clearly suggests Betterton, who was in his sixties and managed the rival Lincoln's Inn Fields, which lacked the facilities for effectively mounting operas.] The ensuing dialogue implies an affair between Manley and Betterton. [She thanked him three times for his help and support, in the prefaces of The Royal Mischief, Almyna, and Rivella. She praised him highly as "Roscius" in The New Atalantis, but nowhere is there a romantic inference.¹ Both Betterton and his wife had reputations for helping young artists, but there is only one reference to Betterton as a philanderer. It is in the anonymous A Satyr on the Players: "When being Chief, each playing Drab to swine,/ He takes as his chief Prerogative."²] After all this thinly veiled name-dropping, Wellfed admits in her turn she has no coterie of admirers in places of

¹Manley, "New Atalantis," 2:54 and "Memoirs of Europe," 2:328.

²Anon., A Satyr on the Players, cited in Downes, Roscius Anglicanus, lines 12-13.

influence, but counters, "My Brats are forc'd to appear of my own raising" (p. 6).

As Mr. Awdwell and Mr. Praiseall are announced, the ladies go off to help Marsilia dress. Awdwell's function in the play is as a *raisonneur*. [In The Rehearsal, Mr. Smith draws attention to the folly of Bayes by asking sensible questions, which are dismissed as impertinent, as Awdwell's are by Marsilia. Their relationship bears a resemblance to that of Rivella and Lovemore. The part may likewise have been modeled on John Tidcombe.] He is the faithful but unrequited lover, even though he sees through her: "I know her a Coquet; I know her vain and ungrateful; yet, wise as Almanzor, knowing all this, I still love on!" (p. 7). [Awdwell is comparing himself to Almanzor, the hero of Dryden's The Conquest of Granada: "He who dares love, and for that love must die,/ And knowing this, dares yet love on, am I" (Part 2, Act 4, p. 131). These famous lines were also parodied in The Rehearsal by the mock hero in the play-within-the-play, Drawcansir: "He that dares drink, and for that drink dares die,/ and knowing this, dares yet drink on, am I" (p. 37). The character of Mr. Praiseall played by Colley Cibber is a variation of the classic fop character he created for himself the season before with his first play, Love's Last Shift. Praiseall also fits the description of Skipwith that has come down to us, as well.] Awdwell baits Praiseall, unsuccessfully trying to provoke the coward into a fight by deriding the products of an Oxford education, of which he considers him a perfectly "wretched" example.

The ladies reenter engaged in a lively dispute over Aristotle, whom Calista claims to have read in the original. [Trotter had exhibited

familiarity with the works of Aristotle in Olinda.] As introductions conclude, Praiseall greets Wellfed, "tho' last, not least." She takes this as double-entendre referring to her girth and finishes the quote from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar (Act 3, scene 1, line 189) with "Good Tribonius" (p. 8).

Marsilia announces to the company that her next accomplishment will be to alter Cataline's Conspiracy, preserving only the opening speech, "Thy Head, thy head, proud city," because it is so well known.¹ Calista says she knows it so well, she's turned it into Latin. Marsilia recites a speech from her "improvement" to general applause. Praiseall exclaims, "Ah! Poor Ben! ... There was a famous Poet pick'd many a Hole in his Coat in several Prefaces--He found fault, but never mended the Matter." [The "Poet" referred to would be Dryden, who specifically criticized Jonson's character Cethegus from Cataline in his preface to The Conquest of Granada. Again in the epilogue he used Cataline as proof "Jonson writ not correctly."²] Praiseall places Marsilia above them both in merit. In her version Marsilia will make Fulvia "a Woman of the nicest Honour" (p. 10). [Jonson's Fulvia was a scheming termagant whose initial appearance is in a scene at her toilette, very similar to that between Marsilia and Patience.]

It is now time to go to rehearsal. The chairs have come, but Wellfed generously decides to walk to spare the poor men's backs. Awd-

¹Ben Jonson, Cataline (London: Walter Burr, 1611), n.p.

²John Dryden, "The Conquest of Granada" (1670), in The Dramatic Works of John Dryden, 6 vols., ed. Montague Summers (London: Nonesuch Press, 1931).

well asks for a private word with Marsilia, so Praiseall escorts Calista.

Once they are alone it comes out that Awdwell is supporting Marsilia, yet whenever gentlemen of quality come around he must fade into the background. The gentlemen in question are referred to as "My Lord Duke and Sir Thomas" (p. 13). [Sir Thomas would be Thomas Skipwith, who produced The Lost Lover, and the Lord Duke, the Duke of Devonshire, Manley's patron for The Royal Mischief.] Marsilia dashes off to meet them.

Scene the Play-House. [The behind-the-scenes effect was probably achieved by merely drawing all scene flats behind the proscenium border.]

Four company members enter, as themselves: Mr. Johnson, Mr. Penkethman, Mrs. Lucas, and Mrs. Cross. They are readying themselves for rehearsal and awaiting the arrival of Mr. Powell, who is said to be at the tavern. "At the Tavern in a Morning?" asks the incredulous young Mrs. Cross. Johnson explains, "Honest George regards neither Times nor Seasons in Drinking" (p. 13).

The actors have been ordered to dress as if for performance. "'Tis by the Desire of Madam Maggot the poetess, I suppose," comments Mrs. Lucas (p. 13). [Dane Farnsworth Smith pointed out there was a character in Thomas Wright's The Female Vertuosos (1693) named "Sir Maggot Jingle, a Parasitical Knight, pretending to Poetry," which was the probable source of the remark.¹] Mrs. Wellfed enters and explains that the reason for the dress parade is that Marsilia expects a Duke. [All the above dialogue may simply have been a way of justifying the actors in the show wearing their finery instead of their actual rehearsal or everyday clothes.]

¹Smith, Plays about the Theatre, p. 71.

Calista arrives with Praiseall, who to her chagrin proceeds to flirt with the actresses of the company. As he kisses Mrs. Cross's shoe, Cross comments in an aside, "Now I have such a mind to kick him i' th' Chops" (p. 14).

Mr. Johnson and Mr. Penkethman discuss Praiseall on the side. Johnson describes him as a dilettante, a nominal member of the Inns of Chancery, who hangs around the backstages of both theatres, never seeing a play through. Wellfed and Calista engage in a catty tete-a-tete, the gist of which is that Mrs. Wellfed, who frankly admits she has no Latin, is decried as an impostor by Calista, who maintains, "learning is absolutely necessary to all who pretend to poetry" (p. 16). Mrs. Wellfed cuts the argument off by calling on Mrs. Cross to do "her song" while they await Marsilia. Mr. Leveridge, a bass singer, is called to accompany her. Acting as a sort of mistress of ceremonies, Mrs. Wellfed next calls for Mrs. Lucas's "New Dance." [Hook commented that these numbers were probably not written especially for this show but may have been from other works. As a matter of fact, Cross and Leveridge had performed a dialogue-song, "Fairest Nymph that ever Blessed our Shore," in Mrs. Pix's The Spanish Wives.] A little boy is sent after Mrs. Lucas, who is drinking a dish of coffee. [Children were used, during this period, for recitations of prurient prologues, epilogues, and dialogues.] Praiseall sings a snatch of a song, and promises to treat everyone to chocolate in the Green Room after the dance. [Hook identified the song as a popular Scottish song. Smith maintained that this was the first recorded mention of the Green Room as so-called.¹ Actually it is predated by a

¹Smith, Plays about the Theatre, p. 78.

reference in Thomas Shadwell's A True Widow.¹]

Mrs. Knight enters and is approached for advice by Mrs. Cross. [Their dialogue resembles the conversation between the three players in Act 1, scene 2 of The Rehearsal, in which they complain they cannot make out the meaning of the play and are counting on the new costumes to save it.] Cross observes, "A Play well-dress'd, you know, is half in half, as a great Writer says; the Morocco Dresses, when new formerly for Sebastian, they say enliven'd the Play as much as the Pudding and Dumpling Song did Merlin" (pp. 18-19). [The "great Writer" referred to is Dryden. The "Morocco Dresses" would be the rich costumes for the extravagant production of Elkanah Settle's The Empress of Morocco, first mounted at Dorset Gardens in 1673, reprinted, and possibly revived and refurnished in 1687.² They would have been used, as Cross indicated, for Dryden's Don Sebastian (1689), reprinted, and possibly revived in 1692.³ "Merlin" refers to King Arthur, a dramatic opera Dryden collaborated on with Henry Purcell in 1691, which may have been revived in 1695.⁴ The "Pudding and Dumpling Song" is actually titled "Your Hay it is Mowed" (from Act 5, scene 2). It was very popular and was published in 1692.⁵] The expense to which the management is going on this occasion is attributed to Marsilia's being a "Favorite." [This undoubtedly was a reference to her

¹Thomas Shadwell, A True Widow (London: n.p., 1679), p. 58.

²LS, 1:206.

³Ibid., 1:378.

⁴Ibid., 1:395, 1:441.

⁵John Dryden, King Arthur (London: J. Tonson, 1691), p. 47.

relationship with Skipwith. Marsilia herself later threatens an actress with, "without boasting, I command them that command you" (p. 39).] Mrs. Knight grumbles that the management is "cursedly in debt already" (p. 19). The split into two companies had been the hardest on the patent company.

Mrs. Wellfed is already looking to her next play and assures everyone she has good parts for them, including Mr. Penkethman, whom she catches sneaking off. Mr. Praiseall announces the chocolate is ready, and all rush off for the free treat, except Mrs. Knight and Mr. Wellfed. Wellfed would rather split a bottle of sherry and pass the time reciting one of her best scenes. This drives Knight away, and the act ends with Wellfed alone, philosophizing on the fate of dramatists: "I find Poets had need to be a little conceited, for they meet with many a Bauk. However, scribbling brings this Satisfaction, that like our Children, we are generally pleas'd with it ourselves" (p. 20).

So the fond Mother's rapt with her prattling Boys,
Whilst the free Stranger flies th'ungrateful Noise.
(p. 20)

Act 2 opens with Calista and Wellfed criticizing Marsilia as tedious and tolerated by the company more from fear than love. [The fear referred to would be that of alienating the co-manager's mistress.] Upon Mr. Powell's appearance, they compete for his commitment to appear in their plays. Calista's promise to "make you equally in love with two very fine Ladies" is topped by Wellfed's guarantee, "I make two very fine Ladies in Love with you" (p. 21). The beleaguered actor finally breaks loose only to run smack into Marsilia. When she asks him point-blank what he thinks of her play, his answer is ironically diplomatic: "Extraordinary, Madam, 'tis like your Ladyship, a Miracle" (p. 23). Marsilia

flirts openly with Powell, promising him the role of Cataline and insisting he stay at her side during rehearsal. She describes her plot as one in which the heroes and heroines are in love with people they should not be, and Powell wonders if the critics might say that the "Guilt of their Passion takes off the Pity?" (p. 24). Marsilia has provided for the critic; she will have the prologue given by two stout men wielding truncheons. [This is reminiscent of the tactic planned by Bayes in The Rehearsal. He was going to deliver it himself with a huge hangman behind him, with a drawn sword, and if they did not like the play, he would threaten to have his head cut off (Act 1, scene 2, p. 7). Marsilia's method is more aggressive.] "A Critick is cursedly afraid of anything that looks terrible" (p. 24).

As rehearsal is to begin, Praiseall begins a skirmish with Powell in which Awdwell, upon entering, is more than willing to intervene. The cowardly Praiseall backs off, and Marsilia asks Awdwell to sit down, because "this Fellow may make a Party for me at the Coffee-House." [That is, he may form a clique of cohorts to applaud her play.] A sceneman informs Marsilia that Powell has sneaked off for a nip. [The Rose Tavern was adjacent to Drury Lane.] At this, Marsilia blames her silent colleagues for having driven him off with their teasing. Throughout the play, she makes remarks that ricochet back to herself. She says she despises flattery, yet clearly thrives on it; she cannot abide people who talk too much, yet babbles on; she hates interruptions, while she is a constant offender.

The prologue speakers come on with their truncheons, but prove unsatisfactory, despite her coaching. [Bayes in The Rehearsal likewise

exhorted his prologue speakers, dubbed Thunder and Lightning, to speak more loudly and interrupted to demonstrate his directions.] Marsilia finally pushes the actors off the stage and calls for the first scene, even though neither the Duke nor Sir Thomas have shown up. [Throughout the rehearsal, Marsilia addresses the prompter and scenemen. The introduction to the first part of the London Stage cites the first act of The Female Wits as proof that scenemen also served as supernumeraries.¹ They are also given lines to speak as well, in Acts 2 and 3.]

Calling for the scene to begin, Marsilia gives the following introduction to Praiseall et al.: "t'has been the receiv'd Opinion and Practise in all your late Operas to take care of the Songish part, as I may call it, after a great Man; and for the Play, it might be the History of Tom Thumb" (p. 29). [Again, the great man referred to is Dryden, who described the nature of the separate parts of opera in his preface to Albion and Albanus (1685): "The recitative part of the opera which (for want of a proper English word) I must call The Songish Part must abound in the softness and variety of numbers." He argued for the preeminence of the music in opera. Tom Thumb, His Life and Death is the title of a chap-book first published in England in 1665.] Marsilia proudly announces she has turned the tables on the popular notion of opera: "I have done just the contrary, took care of the Language and the Plot, and for the Musick, they that don't like it may go and whistle" (p. 29). Awdwell's query as to why, then, she has chosen to call it an opera is dismissed as an impertinence. Throughout Awdwell interjects common sense questions and comments, to her growing irritation.

¹LS, 1:xc.

Mrs. Wellfed is sent on the "pleasing Errand" of buying wine, in the hopes of keeping Powell in attendance at rehearsal. The rehearsal proceeds with the entrance of Lady Loveall/Mrs. Knight and Betty Useful/Mrs. Kent. [At this point the direct parody of The Royal Mischief begins. As in the case of The Rehearsal, the "tragedy" has been shifted from its exotic locale to contemporary London. Betty fulfills the function of Acmat, but as a ladies' maid.] Betty asks: "Why do those Eyes, Love's Tapers, that on whomsoe'er they are fixt, kindle straight Desire, now seem to Nod" (p. 30). [Acmat had also begun his questioning about his mistress's discontent with an allusion to "those Eyes that did never vainly shoot a Dart,/ Such are their Fires, so sparkling, so attractive" (p. 1).] Lady Loveall begins her confidence with, "Art thou the Key to all my Secrets, privy to every rambling Wish, and canst not guess my Sorrows?" Betty's answer to the delicately phrased question is blunt:

No! For what Lover have ye mist, honest Betty Useful has been the Contriver, Guide and close Concealer of your Pleasures: Amorous, the Steward, you know, is yours; the Butler too bows beneath your Conquering Charms, and you have vow'd your Wishes in your own Family shou'd be confin'd, who then of Worth remains? (p. 30)

[The parallel exchange in The Royal Mischief goes:

Homaïs: Why thou, my Acmat, who hast known my weaknesses,
And marked the various changes of my Temper,
Should'st know my Griefs can have no other Rise
But Love's Almighty Passion.

Acmat: My Sense has touch'd the Mark,
If that my Memory in all its Search
Cou'd have but fix'd your new Disquiets on
A person fit to fill your Royal Breast.
Osman the new-made Visier you detest,
His cousin Ismael you have enjoy'd,
And sure such Fires did never want Possession,
Since that, none has approached your Royal Sight
Fit to give Love or to create Desire.

(p. 1)]

Marsilia interrupts rehearsal to exhort Mrs. Knight to speak as passionately as she can, because she is about to swoon, but Knight complains she is having trouble making "Oh Betty! Betty!" sound heroic. Marsilia explains with pride that she is the first that "made Heroick natural" (p. 31). She is sure the swoon will get applause. [Loveall's speech following the swoon, which also occurred at that point in The Royal Mischief, parodies Homais's rant:

Loveall: Yes, he shall be mine! Let Law and Rules confine
the creeping Stoick, the cold lifeless Hermit, or
the Dissembling Brethren of Broad Hats, and narrow
Bands; I am a Libertine, and being so I love my
Husband's Son, and will enjoy him.
(p. 31)

Homais: My Life, my Soul, my All is fix'd upon Enjoyment
Resistance but augments Desire;
If thou would'st Live, threaten no more Despair
I've named the Goal, lend me the aid to reach it.
(p. 4)

The above is an example of the sort of "warmth" the ladies had objected to. In her defense in the preface to The Royal Mischief, Manley cited Dryden's Aurenge-Zebe (1676) as a precedent. In that play the Empress Nourmahal reveals and defends her love for her husband's son (Act 3, scene 1, p. 41).]

Betty announces the arrival of the object of passion, and Loveall, as did Homais, goes into an ecstasy which Marsilia interrupts to direct: "In this Speech, stamp as Queen Statira does, that always gets a Clap; and when you have ended, run off, thus, as fast as you can drive" (p. 32). [She stumbles demonstrating, as did Bayes in The Rehearsal, but continues to coach Mrs. Knight in what may be supposed to be an imitation of Mrs. Barry's style. Mrs. Knight took over Mrs. Barry's roles when she left the company. Yet, Statira is a character in Lee's The Rival Queens

(1677) which was played by Mrs. Bracegirdle. Mrs. Barry's most famous role was that of Roxana in the same play.]

At Lady Loveall's exit, Betty describes her old Master as a bookworm who has spent fifty years trying to find a way to the moon. [This has no connection to the Prince of Libardian in The Royal Mischief; however, Aphra Behn's The Emperor of the Moon (1687), which was well-known and was revived in 1691, had a character, the bookish Doctor Ballardio, who was convinced that there was a population on the moon similar to that of the earth.]

The first scene of the play-within-the-play concludes with a brief cross-over by the comic, Penkethman, as Amorous the steward. [Betterton's Osman was chief vizier of the kingdom. His counterpart was domesticated, along with the setting, for comic effect.] The distracted Amorous babbles about his love for Isabella, and is overheard by Betty, who determines to make use of the information in her schemes.

At this interval Marsilia calls for opinions. Calista offers an equivocal "'tis beyond imitation," followed by the aside, "I never heard such stuff in my Life" (p. 33).

Marsilia asks the assembled guests if they noted the reference to the moon and promises, "And you shall see it all, and how they live in it before the Play's done." She refers to Behn's The Emperor of the Moon and Settle's The World in the Moon, which only referred to it, where she will actually show it (p. 33).

Now she calls for Fastin and Isabella, attended. Mr. Powell and Mrs. Cross enter. [He would have played Levan Dadian in The Royal Mischief, but it is far more likely Mrs. Rogers would have been cast as

Bassima, the role originally written for and ultimately played by Mrs. Bracegirdle. The very young Mrs. Cross would not likely have merited the role in the United Company.] When Marsilia is finished abusing the supernumeraries, Powell asks permission to begin.

Fastin tells Isabella that he has it from hearsay that his father has taken a young bride. Praiseall interrupts, expressing surprise that Lady Loveall and Fastin, the object of her passion, have never even met. [Of course, this was the case in The Royal Mischief--Homais had fallen in love from a life-sized portrait.] Isabella goes off and Betty enters. Marsilia promises a scene that "excells Jago and the Moor" (p. 35). [The character Ismael in The Royal Mischief does bear some resemblance to Iago of Shakespeare's Othello, and the following scene takes off that in which Ismael has little difficulty planting the suspicion in Levan that his wife is unfaithful.]

Betty, as Ismael did with Levan, quickly convinces Fastin his bride's coldness is a sure sign of infidelity and, as Acmat had, gives Loveall's picture to him with a rapturous description of her reaction to his own likeness, which is a paraphrase of the original.

Betty: Her Curtains by me drawn wide, discover your goodly
Figure; each Morn the Idols brought, eagerly she
prints the dead Colours, throws her tawny Arms a-
broad, and vainly hopes Kisses so Divine, wou'd
inspire the painted Nothing, and mould into Man.
(p. 36)

[The original reads:

Acmat: Thus she bears her when she sees your Picture,
... The Chief Ornament
Of her Apartment, answering
Exactly to her waking Curtains.
How often have I seen this lovely Venus,
Naked, extended in the gaudy Bed,

Her snowy Breast all panting with Desire,
 With gazing, melting Eyes survey your Form,
 And wish in vain 't had Life to fill her Arms.
 (pp. 17-18)]

Marsilia interrupts again to urge, "Now, dear Mr. Powell, let me have the pleasure to hear you rave," whereupon he goes into a rant, making his exit with "Fire, incestuous Fire; I blaze! I burn! I Rost [sic]! I Fry!" (p. 37). This bombastic scene is followed by a nonsequitur dance by Mrs. Cross, who, upon completion, turns in her part and quits. Marsilia is astounded for a moment, but quickly recovers, and determines to do the part herself, sending Patience out for scarlet ribbons and patches and commanding the use of gowns which Mrs. Cross doubts will fit her. [Mrs. Manley did admit to a weight problem. Did any such incident occur during rehearsals for The Royal Mischief? It is probably an exaggeration that Manley considered stepping into the role, but if the ingenue, who would probably have been Mrs. Rogers, quit, that could have been what precipitated Manley's taking the script to the other house, where the illustrious Mrs. Bracegirdle would play the role.]

At the prospect of Marsilia actually treading the boards, Awdwell delivers an ultimatum: "Do, Marsilia, be ruled by your Vanity, and that good Friend Mr. Praiseall; but rest assur'd, after such a weakness, I will never see your Face again" (p. 39). Marsilia confides in an aside, "Ha! I must not lose him" and placates him by promising to dine alone with him that night. Awdwell goes off to persuade Mrs. Cross to return as Praiseall announces wine is served within, leaving Marsilia alone rehearsing the lines. "Whom shall I Curse? my Birth, my Fate, or Stars! All bent to ruine Innocence!" [This is a condensed version of a lengthy rant of Bassima's in Act 3, scene 1 of The Royal Mischief in which she

exhorts Osman to renounce their love: "And then in spite of Love, or Stars, or Fate,/ We will be guiltless, though unfortunate" (p. 25).]

Patience announces the arrival of Lord Whiffle. After frantic primping, Marsilia is rushing off to greet him just as Awdwell returns. She taunts him with "I will pay my Respects again to my Lord, in spite of your Tyrannical Pretensions." Awdwell ends the act with another woe-ful couplet: "Who would a kind and certain Mistress choose,/ Let him, like me, take one that loves a Muse" (p. 42).

Act 3. Enter my Lord Whiffle, Marsilia, Mr. Awdwell, Mr. Praise-all, Mrs. Wellfed and Claista.

Observing Marsilia preoccupied with Lord Whiffle, Calista and Mrs. Wellfed take the opportunity to sneak off. [In The Rehearsal, Bayes's two invited auditors, Smith and Johnson, used a moment's distraction after a battle scene to do likewise.]

Marsilia and my Lord Whiffle talk, both looking in a great Glass, reads a stage direction. [It may be supposed that full-length mirrors were a part of backstage furniture.] In their conversation Marsilia fills Whiffle in on what has gone before, much of which was not included in the actual stage action. Awdwell observes she may have "like the Chorus of Old, to enlighten the understanding of the Audience" (p. 44).

As rehearsal resumes, Marsilia describes the scene to Whiffle. "A Night Scene there. A Dark Grove made Glorious by a Thousand burning Lights" (p. 45). [Act 4 of The Royal Mischief opened on an elaborate tableau:

The Curtain flies up to the sound of Flutes and Hautboys, and discovers the river Phasis, several little gilded Boats, with Musick in them, a Walk of Trees the length of the House,

Lights fix'd in Crystal Candlesticks to the Branches, several Persons in the Walk as in attention. (p. 27)]

In the scene, Fastin and Lady Loveall declare their love. Marsilia calls for her "Rhime," and Fastin spouts the couplet she had been rehearsing in the opening scene: "My scorching Raptures ... " (p. 45). [The closest counterpart to this speech in the parallel scene between Levan and Homais in The Royal Mischief is the speech in which Levan gives the credit for their ecstasy to Homais: "Joys, unproved, unthought, till now,/ Thou, Goddess, who has taught me best to Love" (p. 26).] Whiffle praises the couplet fulsomely: "They exceed any of our modern Flights as far as a description of Homer's does Mr. Settle's 'Poet in Ordinary' for the Lord Mayor's Show" (p. 46). [Elkanah Settle regularly wrote the speeches, twenty or so lines of rhymed couplets, for the elaborate show of processions and pageants, called "Triumphs of London." The most recent had been October 1695.¹]

The love scene ends with a nonsequitur "Italian Song" by Mr. Pate and a "Grotesque Entertainment," a dance performed by women. Marsilia justifies the interruption with "A Play must not be absolutely without Ornament" (p. 46). [The dance is apparently similar to one performed by all men in a recent play at the rival house.] The ladies are exhorted, "Pray take care, Gentlewomen, as we Poets are fain to do, that we may excell the Men, who first led the way" (p. 46). [This remark echoes the sentiment expressed in the commendatory poems exchanged among the "female wits" upon publication of their plays.]

¹LS, 1:453.

The dance concluded, Betty runs on to warn Fastin his father has awakened and is about to storm the castle and seize Loveall. [In The Royal Mischief, Homais's husband, supposed to have been drugged into a deep sleep in Act 3, appeared suddenly in Act 5 to capture Homais, whom he said he had been following and observing. This surprise might be said to be as arbitrary as anything depicted in the satire.]

Marsilia suddenly notices the absence of Wellfed and Calista, dismissing them with "Ill-bred Things! who do they expect shou'd have Patience with their dull stuff?" (p. 47). [Bayes, on discovering the defection of Smith and Johnson, called them "Senseless rascals ... what comfort has a man to write for such dull rogues" (Act 5, scene 1).]

Marsilia describes for Whiffle an elaborate battle scene which he must imagine is taking place behind the scenes, while three alarms sound followed by trumpets and violins in a tune of victory. [Act 5 of The Royal Mischief had a like battle scene that consisted entirely of trumpets, a long alarm and off-stage shouting (p. 40).] Whiffle wonders at the omission of the battle action on stage: "Had not the storming of the Castle been as good a Scene as the taking of Jerusalem" (p. 48). [John Crowne's The Destruction of Jerusalem, Part 2 (1677) was possibly revived in the season of 1696-97.¹ It had several battle scenes; one was a castle-storming using the entire stage including the proscenium balconies.] Marsilia explains she has two castle-takings and to show them both would be repetitious. [In The Rehearsal, Bayes's play has two battle scenes; the first is not fought, but described in "recitativo"

¹Ibid., 1:466.

(Act 5, scene 1, pp. 48-49). The second is fully staged with Bayes shouting stage directions throughout and concludes with Drawcansir killing everyone, on both sides. This was a take-off on the battle scene in Conquest of Granada (Part 2, Act 5, p. 144).]

Marsilia calls for an orange grove setting, and Mrs. Cross enters, having returned, as Isabella. She blames her husband's unkindness on herself, because she "came to thy Arms without a Heart" (p. 48). [The ever noble Bassima expressed that same sentiment even as she was dying of poison and her beloved Osman was dragged off to a grisly death.] Isabella remarks of her lover, Amorous, "'Tis true he's in the Vale of Years" (p. 49). [This is a slap at Betterton for playing a romantic lead at the age of sixty.]

Lord Whimsical, Loveall's husband, and Amorous rush on to warn Isabella to flee, for Fastin has proclaimed her nose shall be cut off. But she, like the noble Bassima did, values her honor over her beauty. [Bassima's sentence had been even more extreme. Her eyes were to be put out, her hands, nose, and lips cut off.] Unlike Bassima, however, Isabella tearfully agrees to go. At this point, Marsilia instructs Mrs. Cross in the art of crying, apparently, à la Bracegirdle, with an accompanying demonstration: "Oh! There's a great deal of Art in crying: Hold your Handkerchief thus; let it meet your Eyes, thus, your Head declin'd, thus; now in a perfect whine, crying out these words, 'By these Tears which never cease to Flow'" (p. 50).

Penkethman is the next recipient of acting lessons, apparently in the style of Betterton. She coaches him to "Fetch large Strides; walk thus; your Arms strutting; your Voice big, and your Eyes terrible"

(p. 51). Marsilia promises Whiffle, "Now you shall see the storming of a Fort, not like your Jerusalem, but the modern way; my Men shall go all up thro' a trap door, and ever now and then, one drop polt down dead"

(p. 51). [There is no equivalent scene in The Royal Mischief, in which the second castle-storming is indicated merely by the forcing of a door, probably a proscenium door (p. 43). The mayhem that follows is quite possibly a take-off on The Destruction of Jerusalem itself, in which a battle scene is described thus: "Phraartes, Monobasus and their followers are seen defending a high rockie mount. The Romans oft attempt to scale it, but are beaten down by great stones flung on their heads," etc. (p. 52).] Marsilia bustles about in the fray, urging the participants, "Mount ye Lumpish Dogs: what are you afraid of? You know the Stones are only made of Wool: Faster, with more Spirit. Brutes. Oh Jehu! I am sorry I had not this Castle taken by women." She orders Powell to "enter like a Lyon" (p. 52). But it is Loveall who takes over, refusing to spare her husband, his father, sending Fastin off in pursuit of the fleeing lovers, ordering the butler slain, "least he tell Tales." Whiffle is taken aback and protests, "Indeed Madam, you have made her very wicked" (p. 53). [This was the criticism of the character of Homais replied to by Manley in her preface to The Royal Mischief. Marsilia's answer is the same--that it is all right--since she is punished at the end.]

Marsilia now calls for a "Chariot" to be let down. [Hook thought this was the same machinery used in Powell and Verbruggen's production of Brutus of Alba, which she posited was playing concurrently with The Female Wits. Chariots which could hold at least two people comfortably

were stock machinery used for the special effects in operas. There was repeated use of such devices in The World in the Moon.] Marsilia sets the scene for the hunted lovers, who have sought sanctuary in the castle's leads, which adjoin Lord Whimsical's study.

[It is at this point that the plot departs sharply from that of The Royal Mischief, as to the fate of the lovers.] Marsilia recounts both the original ending and the change to Lord Whiffle:

You must know, my Lord, at first I design'd this for a Tragedy; and they were both taken; She was poyson'd.... I was studying a Death for him; once I thought Boys would shoot him to Death with Pot-Guns.... But at length I resolved to ram him into a great Gun, and scatter him o'er the sturdy Plain: this I say, was my first resolve. But I consider'd 'twould break the Lady's Heart; so there is nothing in their Parts Tragical but as your Lordship shall see miraculously I turn'd it into an Opera. (p. 54)

As the described scene begins, the stage directions read: Scene The Leads of a Castle. The Sun seen a little beyond. A Chariot stands upon the Leads. [It can be assumed that all this was assembled by the scene-men in full view of the audience, as was the "orange grove."]

There is one similarity to the original in the ensuing scene. The hero, at the moment of imminent death, attempts to seduce the heroine. [Osman promised "Heavenly joys": "I count such vast Delight in your Embrace,/ That should my Life exceed that charming Point,/ The Ecstasy would blunt the sharpest Sword" (p. 42).] Amorous makes a comparable bid: "But give me up the Heav'n my ravenous Love requires: Let me fill my Sences with thy Sweetness; then let 'em pour upon me, I could laugh at all their idle Tortures, every pleas'd Limb shou'd dance upon the Wheel" (p. 56).

[The scene is interspersed with the fops' compliments and Awdwell's wisecracks. Marsilia frankly admits, "I always believe what p[le]ases me best." She goes on directing: "Strain your Voice, I tell you, Mr. Pinkethman, this speaking Loud gets the Clap" (p. 57).]

A noise is heard without. Isabella climbs into the chariot to hide and Amorous follows her. Marsilia explains, "This is the very Chariot Whimsical had been making fifty Years, contriv'd beyond all humane Art, for the Sun to draw up to the Moon, at this very Critical minute, the Matter's affected" (p. 57). Once the machine is out of sight, Fastin, Loveall, and Betty burst in. When they realize they have lost their prey, the lovers decide to make the best of it by feasting and making love.

[Here the plot returns to its model. Whimsical enters and stabs Loveall, just as the Prince did to Homais. Loveall's reaction is a paraphrase of Homais's:

Loveall: Oh, thou Impotence, only strong in mischief: That feeble aged Arm has reach'd my youthful Heart.... Let me come at the Dotard, let me cover the Blood-thirsty Man with Livid Gore. (p. 61)

Homais: Thou Dotard, impotent in all but Mischief, How cou'dst thou hope, at such an Age, to keep A handsome Wife? ... Thus I dash thee with my Gore (p. 45)]

Marsilia calls out "D'ye hear, Property-Man? Be sure some red Ink is handsomely conveyed to Mrs. Knight" (p. 60). [Apparently there was one person on the scene crew whose function was to see to personal properties for the cast. In The Rehearsal, Bayes checked if a lance was filled with wine in preparation for a funeral scene (p. 31).]

Unconvinced that Fastin/Powell is struggling hard enough with his captors, Marsilia takes his place and demonstrates, commenting, "Oh! if

we Poets but did act, as well as write, the Plays wou'd never miscarry' (p. 60). Powell, who has been patient to this point, rejoins that there are certainly enough of them "Male and Female" to entertain the town, and he'd gladly resign the stage to them. [This is a comment on the sudden appearance of previously untried playwrights who appeared on the scene after the split of the United Company.]

The scene proper continues with Whimsical revealing, to Fastin's astonishment, that Loveall was not a virgin before him, which the dying temptress confirms. [At the end of The Royal Mischief, Levan, too, was aghast at the news.] Lady Loveall, as Homais had, greets the fiends of Hell with ranting bravado. Suddenly Whimsical misses his chariot, and, ignoring Fastin, who has just stabbed himself [Levan fell on his sword], goes berserk. This is finally acting Marsilia approves of, and she goads him on to "the highest pitch of raving," addressing him as "Mr. What-d'-call-'um" (p. 62). [John Verbruggen was a well-known leading player.] Whimsical has an exit worthy of King Lear. Powell, as dead Fastin, is given the option of walking off or being carried. [It was a convention that bearers removed the remaining corpses at the conclusion of a tragedy. After the final battle scene in The Rehearsal, after Drawcansir has killed both "friend and foe," Bayes was asked how all the dead men would get off when there were none left to help them. Bayes justified their having all to simply get up and walk off with, "Do you think the people here do not know they are not dead?" (p. 51).] As Powell walks off, Marsilia predicts with confidence, "Well, sure by this Play, the Town will perceive what a woman can do" (p. 63).

Whiffle assumes the play is now over, since everyone is now dead or gone, but Marsilia has a surprise: her play will end in the world in the moon. The scenemen are ordered to bring out one of the "finest Scenes," which is not described in the stage directions, but which is marveled over by Whiffle and Praiseall. [The set pieces used in The World in the Moon included "a Silver Moon, near Fourteen Foot Diameter" (p. 6)]. Praiseall says no stage in the world can equal the setting, but Marsilia says, "Oh, fie, Mr. Praiseall, you go often to Lincoln's Inn Fields" (p. 63). [This is meant to mock the smaller house, a converted tennis court, whose facilities were paltry by comparison to Drury Lane and Dorset Gardens and where operas were seldom attempted.]

Dancers enter on all fours, which Marsilia explains is because the inhabitants of the moon are "a little shallow." On Amorous and Isabella's arrival, "all the Heroes of the Moon-world shall fall in love with Isabella, as you know, in Aurence-Zebe they are all in love with Indamora" (p. 64). [In that 1675 heroic tragedy by Dryden, the Emperor and his two sons all vied for the heroine, Indamora.]

Following the dance and a song there is a mutiny among the moon folk, who have been whispering among themselves, and due to their extreme discomfort, have "unanimously resolv'd to stand upright." The insurrection sends Marsilia into a ranging tantrum. She Throws down the Book, and stamps upon it:

Asses! Ideots! Jolts! But they shall never speak a Line of mine, if it would save 'em in inevitable Ruine: I'll carry it t'other House this very Moment.... I'll never set my Foot agen upon this confounded Stage. My Opera shall be first, and my Cataline next; which I'd have these to know, shall absolutely break 'em. They may shut up their Doors; strole or starve, or do whatever the Devil puts in their heads; no more of Marsilia's Works, I assure 'em. (p. 65)

[Bayes's reaction on discovering that most of the players had sneaked off to dinner when his back was turned was:

The players gone to dinner! Y'gad, if they are, I'll make 'em know what it is to injure a person that does 'em the honor to write for 'em and all that. A company of proud conceited, humorous, cross-grained persons, and all that. Y'gad, I'll make 'em the most contemptible, despicable, inconsiderable persons, and all that, in the whole world for this trick. Y'gad, I'll be revenged on 'em. I'll send this play to the other house. (p. 52)]

As Marsilia stalks off, Awdwell vainly tries to get her to keep their dinner date, but she is headed directly for Linc ln's Inn Fields in Lord Whiffle's coach, spurning Awdwell, and leaving even faithful Praiseall behind.

Company members reenter laughing, and Powell gives Awdwell a description of Marsilia's farcical exit from the theatre:

Oh, my Sides! my Sides! the wrathful Lady has run over a Chair, shatter'd the Glasses to pieces: the Chair-Men, to save it, fell pell-mell in with her. She has lost part of her Tail, broke her Fan, tore her ruffles, and pull'd off half my Lord Whiffle's Wigg, with trying to rise by it: so they are, with a Shagreen Air, and tatter'd Dress, gone into the Coach: Mr. Praiseall thrust in after 'em, with the bundle of Fragments, his Care had pick'd up from under the Fellows Feet. Come, to make some Atonement, Entertain this Gentleman with the Dance you are practising for the next new Play. (p. 66)

After the dance, Awdwell invites Powell to join him for the dinner he had ordered for Marsilia, and ends the play with the couplet, "I'll leave the Scribbler to her Fops, and Fate;/ I find she's neither worth my Love or Hate" (p. 67).



The epilogue defends the satire on the basis that the stage, being likened to a pulpit in that age, has reformation as its object. The

question is put, "But Manners might have hinder'd him [the author] you'll say,/ From Ridiculing Women in his Play" (lines 21-22). The justification is:

Not that the Good he'd with the Bad abuse,
Or Lessen the true value of a Muse;
.....
So those whom he has made his Present Theme,
Assist to make up Poetry esteem,
As we from what they are, distinctly see,
And learn what other Poets ought to be.
(lines 30-31, 36-39)



The Rehearsal; or, Bayes in Petticoats was written and performed by comedienne Kitty Clive for her own benefit in 1750 and published in 1753. The two-act farce is modeled directly on The Female Wits, though the latter is never cited in Mrs. Clive's preface to the play.

The scene opens on a woman playwright, Mrs. Hazard, played by Clive, preparing to go to rehearsal. She spouts her own lines, abuses her maid, and receives a flattering fop. She is planning her own burlesque version of Don Quixote. The theatre jokes were, of course, updated; Garrick replaced Betterton, and so on.

In the second act, when Mrs. Clive does not show up for rehearsal, Mrs. Hazard/Clive is infuriated and takes over the role. In the end, a crew of gossiping dilettantes, who interrupt constantly, drive her into a rage. She tears up her script and stalks off.

The authoress Clive did not spare herself in the satire. She is described as being too busy drumming up business for her own benefit performance to attend rehearsals.

One significant difference is that there is no *raisonneur* character, at least on stage. Mrs. Hazard's ex-fiancé, Surly, is said to have left her because of her folly, but never appears. The auditors at rehearsal are depicted as being every bit as foolish as Hazard. It is a spoof of the theatre people of its time with the twist of self-parody by Clive.



The first criticism in print of The Female Wits came from stage reformer Arthur Bedford, a disciple of Jeremy Collier's, who cited it over forty times in The Evil and Danger of Stage-Plays (1706) for the offenses of profanity, blasphemy, and cursing. The prologue is mentioned in the section "The Stage a Declared Enemy to all Reformation."¹ Bedford, who was among those who attributed the great storm of 1703 to the theatres having presented supernatural imitations in such plays as Macbeth and The Tempest, would have been offended at the flippant tone of the opening lines of the prologue: "While Sinners took upon 'em to reform, and on the Stage laid the late, dreadful Storm..."

The Female Wits offended John Genest for another reason. He came to the women writers' defense:

[T]his play is not badly written, but it is an unfair attack upon Mrs. Manley, Mrs. Pix and Mrs. Trotter, who were sadly to blame if they did not quiz their opponent for calling them a Triumvirate of Poets--the Heroine of this piece is Marsilia or Mrs. Manley, whose Royal Mischief must be read in order to understand the satire aimed at her in this play--as Mrs. Verbruggen had a happy turn for mimicry, she probably took off Mrs. Manley--Mrs. Wellfed in the D.P., is said to be, one that represents a fat female author, a good, sociable well-

¹Bedford, Evil and Danger, p. 179.

natured companion, that will not suffer martyrdom rather than take off three bumpers in a hand--this character is meant for Mrs. Pix, and is said to have been excellently acted by Mrs. Powell--Mrs. Trotter, as Calista, is bantered for pretending to understand Greek and to set herself up for a critic, but she is treated less severely than the two others....

This play was not the only attack on the female wits: Gildon, in his Comparison between the two Stages, is very severe on them....

Nothing can be more absurd than to censure female writers merely as females--the prejudice against them, however rose to such a pitch, that Mrs. Centlivre in the Prologue to The Stolen Heiress thought it advisable to speak of her play as written by a man--Mrs. Pix in The Conquest of Spain did the same thing.¹

The copy of The Female Wits published on microcard in the Three Centuries of English and American Plays series bears the handwritten critique of the party who owned it in 1798. Between "A" and "Comedy" were added the words "very dull stupid."

Of the modern readers, Smith pointed out a resemblance to Molière's characterizations in his qualified assessment of the comedy:

If The Female Wits provided an opportunity for farcical acting in its day, its chief literary elements spring from machinery of characterization probably borrowed directly or indirectly from Molière. This device consists of the two contrasting figures Mr. Awdwell and Mr. Praiseall. The former, an honest and intelligent man whose loyalty has already stood the test, is, in the course of the play, rejected by Marsilia for the latter, a vain flatterer whose adulatory show of affection is mere pretense. But even the speeches of these characters lack crispness of phrase and fail to compensate for the slovenly treatment of situations which could have been worked into highly diverting burlesque. Some of the remarks made at the playhouse are more interesting as sidelights on the stage of the time than as satire.²

Hume's opinion was much more positive. He found the comedy

¹Genest, Some Account, pp. 101-102.

²Smith, Plays about the Theatre, pp. 76-77.

A fascinating example of personal satire and the rehearsal play genre. Mrs. Manley, Mrs. Pix and Mrs. Trotter are very effectively brutalized. Mrs. Manley had a comedy fail at Drury Lane that spring; she then transferred her tragedy, The Royal Mischief, to Lincoln's Inn Fields, which rushed it into production. The Female Wits presents the Drury Lane view of the tragedy, a piece of bloated heroic nonsense which fairly begs for burlesque. It got what it deserved (although it had succeeded on stage, further annoying Drury Lane, no doubt). Frame and mock plays are better integrated than in either The Rehearsal or Sheridan's The Critic. The actors play themselves--cheerfully including personal characteristics like George Powell's early-morning drinking. The styles of Mrs. Barry and Betterton are effectively travestied. At the end Mrs. Manley storms out, vowing to take her bathetic masterpiece to the other house--precisely as she had done. This delightful spoof and smear, too little known today, seems to have enjoyed the topical popularity it sought.¹

Lucyle Hook described the "romp of scenes from The Royal Mischief and an entire gallery of burlesqued portraits of the famous actors who were as much under fire as Mrs. Manley herself," as "an hilarious piece of dramatic satire as well as a valuable theatrical document."²

Much was revealed about actors' personalities, backstage customs, and rehearsal procedures, but one element is conspicuously missing. The management is absent from the cast of characters and ostensibly from involvement in mounting the production. Though they are spoken of as willing to spend an extraordinary amount of money on the production, they are not present to supervise the preparation. Neither Charles Rich nor Sir Thomas Skipwith was strictly a man of the theatre; they were businessmen, and so may understandably have delegated artistic direction to a senior company member who would presumably be George Powell. When Betterton had headed the company, he supervised rehearsals. Since Powell inherited his roles

¹Hume, Development of English Drama, p. 410.

²Hook, intro to The Female Wits, pp. ix-x.

he likely took over that function as well. There are several plays credited to Powell for which he disclaimed authorship but took credit for mounting. He is seen to steer clear of any such involvement, however, in this play.

Both in The Rehearsal and The Female Wits the authors are seen to have a very strong hand in the direction of their works, which was a practice of the time. But it is unlikely such a neophyte as Marsilia/Manley would have been given such a free hand. It can be presumed that it was necessary to the comic development for Marsilia to be in complete charge of the proceedings. Another reason for not presenting the company managers as characters would be the employees' reticence to cast their bosses as comic characters. Skipwith, as described in Rivella, as Sir Vainlove, bears a resemblance to Praiseall, but his company members would hardly portray him as such.

The play reads like a series of three-hundred-year-old theatrical in-jokes interspersed with variety turns. Yet it is easy to discern the embellishment added in the playing, with the young players' impudent zest in taking off the established stars of the day. Since the mannerisms of the star actors were familiar to the public, and those of the women writers to the literati, mimicry must have played a substantial role. There would also be the titillation of a peek behind the scenes. The show was liberally sprinkled with songs and dances, some original, but some obviously popular repeats, or previews of musical turns from upcoming productions. There was comic appeal on several levels. In addition to the topical satire, there was slapstick for the galleries

and even astute literary references for the more sophisticated theatre-goer, the "critick."

Chapter VI

SUMMATION

Historical summations may be spared the obligation of tying up all the data into an hypothesis, as is the case with critical studies. History is in large measure accidental, rather than an orderly pattern or progression. Each generation reshapes the past from its own perspective and imposes its own taste. In the case of the arts, Golden Ages are split off from inferior periods. The drama of Restoration itself has often been judged in the light of the greatness of the Elizabethan period before it and the Augustan Age, when other genres supervened. Historians tend to ignore or dismiss as imitative and lackluster the transition period between the Restoration and the Augustan periods. To gauge theatre pieces by the yardstick of literary excellence without taking into account the exigencies of the live performances for which they were intended invokes "closet criticism." Theatrical effectiveness in visual spectacle, emotional impact, and stimulating entertainment comprised the goals of the professionals of the time.

In any case, the more gifted playwrights such as Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar have to succumb to the Restoration labeling, despite chronological fact. Since the remainder get lumped together as "minor," most modern studies have settled on the critical favorites. As more information accumulates about a few, a distorted picture could emerge about the process, if not progress, of the theatre from the

beginning of the eighteenth century to modern times.

H. Ten-Eyke Perry, at the conclusion of his voluminous study of the Duchess of Newcastle, came to the conclusion that she had had virtually no influence on the future of English literature, but he justified his study on the grounds that she was in any case an interesting phenomenon.¹ The "female wits," however, were not just an isolated phenomenon; they were public figures. Their works were not closet fantasies, passed around for the edification of a few admirers; they were commercially produced. The "female wits" belonged to the mainstream of the theatre. They dedicated their works to the same notables and shared patrons with the greats. Congreve, Betterton, Farquhar, and others considered them peers. Their obscurity may result more from scholarly neglect than from their intrinsic insignificance. Perhaps the more known about them means the more understood about the spirit of the age, a supplement to the generalizations that can be gleaned from the perusal of a few acknowledged masterpieces, spread over two generations.

Thomas Otway, Thomas Southerne, and Nicolas Rowe have been described as writers of "She-Tragedies," Otway, who wrote in the 1670s and 1680s, was a protege of Behn. Southerne based his tragedies The Fatal Marriage (1694) and Oroonoko (1695) on two novels of hers, and Nicolas Rowe made his debut in the heyday of the "female wits," the same year as Susanna Centlivre's debut, with a tragedy titled The Ambitious Stepmother (1700).²

¹Henry Ten-Eyck Perry, The First Duchess of Newcastle and Her Husband as Figures in Literary History (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1918).

²Nicolas Rowe, The Ambitious Stepmother (London: R. Wellington & Thomas Osborne, 1702).

It would be difficult to deny the debt owed to the pioneers by the Bluestockings, who shaped so much of the literary taste of the eighteenth century, albeit the focus changed from the drama to the novel. Even Virginia Woolf felt a direct connection in the twentieth century with the early women writers. She characterized it as a continuum: "The road was cut many years ago--by Fanny Burney, by Aphra Behn, by Harriet Martineau, by Jane Austen, by George Eliot--many famous women, and many more unknown and forgotten, have been before me, making the path smooth."¹

How self-conscious were the "female wits"? Did they consider themselves part of a movement? Nancy Cotton perceives that they did: "This decade produced a group of women playwrights conscious of themselves as a group with a novel place in the culture."² If the appellation "female wits" is expanded to include the other playwrights, the poetesses and the ladies who were patrons, a pattern of a polemic can be traced in their dedications, poems, commendatory epistles, prologues, and epilogues (where self-composed). There is no evidence of an organized group such as a cabal or formal salon, but a collaborative effort such as The Nine Muses suggests a group awareness. In his "Criticism on Several Modern Plays," Thomas Brown grumbled about "the Pix's, the Carroll's, and the rest of the Lady-Tribe of Playwrights."³ The complaint, though facetious, aims at a discernible sorority.

¹Virginia Woolf, Collected Essays, 4 vols., ed. Leonard Woolf (London: Hogarth Press, 1966), 2:284.

²Cotton, Women Playwrights, p. 10.

³Brown, "Criticism," in Works, 4:237.

Whether it was a concerted policy, or merely the manifestation of each individual's sensibility as a woman, there are some common characteristics which seem to differentiate these authors' works from their male colleagues' for the most part: the recurrent themes of forced marriage and the supremacy of love over financial considerations; the diminution of the male hero, with heroines becoming the dominant characters; heroines of greater psychological complexity; characters who had formerly been the butt of satires now treated sympathetically, such as learned women, "fallen" women, or women who were frank about experiencing sexual desire.

Nancy Cotton proposed two categories for women writers of the time: the emulators of "Orinda," Katherine Philips, sedate, modest, seeking respect by apologizing for their aberration, and those of the "Astrea" mode, who invited comparison to Aphra Behn and openly defied the strictures of society. Cotton generalized, "Orindas wrote as men thought they should, and Astreas wrote as men."¹ According to this division, Catherine Trotter would be aligned with the "Orindas" and Delarivière Manley would be an "Astrea." Pix, however, straddles the the partition--self-effacing while at the same time promoting feminist values.

Further studies of the contributions of the "female wits" may lift them above their generalized designations so that they may be spared the epitaph in literary history that is inscribed on Aphra Behn's tomb in Westminster Abbey: "Here lies a proof that wit can never be/ Defense enough against mortality."

¹Cotton, Women Playwrights, p. 210.

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