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# HEIRS TO "ASTREA'S VACANT THRONE:" BEHN'S INFLUENCE ON TROTTER, PIX, MANLEY AND CENTLIVRE

by

MARGARETTE R. CONNOR

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

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## Introduction

### "The Vacant Throne"

> Without those forerunners, Jane Austen and the Brontës and George Eliot could no more have written than Shakespeare could have written without Marlowe, or Marlowe without Chaucer, or Chaucer without those forgotten poets who paved the ways and tamed the natural savagery of the tongue. For masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people, so that the experience of the mass is behind the single voice.
> – Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (1929)

Most critics who work with the drama of the English Restoration have come across Virginia Woolf's now-famous comments on Aphra Behn: "All women ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn . . . for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds" (66). Aphra Behn – or Astrea – was the queen of early Restoration drama; in fact, she was queen of all women writers of her time. Unfortunately, the honor loses something, because she was queen by default. Her only female competitors on the stage were Elizabeth Polwhele with her The Faithful Virgins in 1669, and the anonymous "Ephelia" with her Pair of Royal Coxcombs presented at a dancing school in 1678. While Behn is best remembered today for a few of her plays and her most famous narrative, Oroonoko, she wrote an astonishing amount: fourteen narratives, nineteen plays and several collections of poetry and translations. While there were several other women publishing poetry during this period, she was the best-known woman writer of her day. Indeed, she was one of the best-known writers.

But even with slight competition from her female peers, Astrea deserved her throne. She was prolific, loved, hated and, most

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important, read. She threatened the male writers of her time, as was evidenced by the vituperative attacks against her, and less obviously, she inspired the women. Woolf imagines this when she writes,

> For now that Aphra Behn had done it, girls could go to their parents and say, You need not give me an allowance; I can make money by my pen. Of course, the answer for many years to come was, yes, by living the life of Aphra Behn! Death would be better! and the door was slammed faster than ever. (64)

But the door wasn't really slammed fast. An opening was there for the tenacious women willing to pry at it and seize the vacant throne.

Who, then, were the women vying for Astrea's throne? Behn had been worried about the lack of opportunities for women to follow in her footsteps, and it seems her fears were justified. It was seven years before a new play written by a woman was performed on stage. But then came the 1695-96 theatre season, the "Annus Mirabilis" for women playwrights (Smith 71). Charles Gildon rewrote a few scenes of Behn's The Younger Brother and brought it out for the first time, and three new women playwrights also had plays produced: Catharine Trotter, Mary Pix, and Delarivier Manley. Four years later, Susanna Centlivre's first play went on the boards, and the reign of the heirs was in full sway. Kathryn Kendall views the time between 1695 and Centlivre's death in 1723 "as a golden age in the history of women's playwrighting" ("Theater" 1). I would extend this period to an earlier date - 1670, when Behn's first play was produced. In that 54-year span, these five writers produced 63 of the 73 staged plays written by women, making this

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not only the most prolific period for women playwrights, but making these writers, especially Behn, Pix, and Centlivre, some of the most prolific playwrights in British theatre.[1] To put this period into context, between 1920 and 1980, a time of great progress for women, in all of London's principal theaters fewer plays by women writers were staged than were presented by the two London patent companies between 1660 and 1720 (Morgan "Female Wits" xi).

Pix, Manley, and Trotter are commonly grouped together as "the female wits," after an anonymous satirical play about them which appeared in the 1696 season.[2] The female wits and Centlivre all recognized that they were linked in the public's imagination; but except for the timing of their debuts, they were quite separate. In fact, due to political and class differences between them, some later became bitter enemies. Although they were not united in purpose, these women saw themselves as successors and heirs to Aphra Behn. Their writings reflected this self-consciousness. It is apparent in their commendatory epistles to each other as well as in how they shaped their careers. And while not usually grouped with the "female wits," Centlivre also used Behn as her model and idol.

To carry our metaphor further, these women are traditional heirs, for they are seen as "daughters of Behn." They mirror their literary mother in many ways. All are assertive about their capabilities; despite male opinion, they believe that they write as well as men; they compete in London in multiple genres; they use current dramatic and political discourses but turn them to special feminist purposes; they show that in an ideal relationship, women are not treated as property,

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and enjoy some independence; and their characters are often "haunted" by a threat of abandonment, but they survive (Williamson 22).[3]

Not all women writers of this period were of this "school." Some followed the model of the "Matchless Orinda," the poet Katherine Phillips, who claimed that she did not seek fame, wrote of the unthreatening subject of female friendship, was retired from public life; and, although known as a writer, was considered a kind of "superfeminine" ideal of modesty. Williamson would add Sarah Fyge Field Egerton, Mary Heane, Eliza Haywood, and the anonymous "Ephelia" as daughters of Behn, but I do not see them as having the public power that the female wits and Centlivre wielded in their lifetimes. Carolyn Heilbrun has defined "power" as "the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter" (18). By this standard, these "daughters of Behn" certainly wielded considerable power in the literary world.

That power is a product of their own sense of feminism, and indeed, I see feminism as the strongest tie linking them. But I think we always need to be careful when bandying about the term "feminist." Of course, these women aren't feminists in the twentieth-century sense of the word, but I am using the word as Joan Kelly does in her essay "Early Feminist Theorists and the '<u>Querelle des Femmes</u>.'" Kelly explains that early feminists would use a term like "defender" or "advocate," "but it is fair to call [the] long line of pro-woman writers that runs from Christine de Pisan to Mary Wollstonecraft" by the name used for later writers (64). Kelly goes on to argue that early feminist writers had a specific agenda in their writing: "The immediate aim of

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these feminist theorists was to oppose the mistreatment of women, that they might have the knowledge and confidence to reject misogynist claims" (67). Under this definition all five of these writers can be seen as staunch feminists. They all labelled themselves as "defender" or "advocate" at one point or another, and all argued against the mistreatment of women. Kelly also notes that early feminists and their thoughts often seem "isolated and separated from each other," but if one looks there is a "richness and coherence and continuity" to be found (66). I think this phenomenon is quite apparent when looking at Behn and the playwrights who followed her.

Nancy K. Miller defines a feminist as someone who articulates a "self-consciousness about women's identity . . . both as inherited cultural fiction and a process of social construction" (8). I think that all of these women also fit this definition, for all addressed this issue, especially when asserting their right to write in the face of society's harsh disapproval. As numerous critics and historians have noted in recent years, writing women were at best labelled plagiarists and, at the harsher extreme, branded as unchaste or mad. Behn constantly faced accusations that the plays weren't her own, but even more damaging were the attacks on her morality. She was not merely accused of loose morals but of actual prostitution. In one of the more graphic examples of these libels, Robert Gould wrote of Behn and "Ephelia":

> Yet Hackney writers, when their own verse did fail
> To get 'em Brandy, Bread and Cheese and Ale,
> Their wants by Prostitution were supply'd,

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Shew but a Tester, you might up and ride:
For Punk and Poetess agree so Pat,
You cannot well be This and not be That.

(qtd in Woodcock 103)

Those women who followed in Behn's footsteps were well aware of the battering her reputation had taken. In their own turn, they too faced society's disapproval. Each of these women made conscious decisions about whether they could live with a reputation like Behn's. Almost all decided that they couldn't and took steps to avoid it. And all were careful in constructing their public personae, as their individual biographies show.[4]

All were conscious of the fact they were putting their reputations on the line, and Manley and Centlivre, who like Behn were quite outspoken in their decrying of the sexual double standard, suffered worse treatment than the others. As late as 1751 their moral reputations were still being sullied. The attitude John Duncombe took towards them in his Feminiad, or Female Genius is representative:

The modest muse a veil with pity throws
O'er Vice's friends and Virtue's female foes;
Abash'd she views the bold unblushing Mein
Of modern Manley, Centlivre, and Behn.

(ll. 139-42)

Of course, these women writers wrote no more smuttily than their male counterparts, but thanks to a literary double standard, their smut was considered worse. And, since they presumed to court fame and fortune and to enter the public arena, their "female modesty" was similarly

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called in question.

These women writers were also considered "unnatural." In the anonymous satire A Comparison Between the Two Stages of 1702, three gentlemen are discussing the stage and discussing the merits and demerits of recent plays. This section begins with a reference to one of Manley's plays from the 1695-96 season:

> **Sullen**: The Lost Lover, or, The Jealous Husband.
>
> **Ramble**: I never heard of that.
>
> **Sullen**: Oh this is a Lady's!
>
> **Critick**: How's that? – Andetque; viris contendere virgo?
>
> **Ramble**: See how Critick starts at the naming a Lady.
>
> **Critick**: What occasion had you to name a Lady in the confounded work you are 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 the 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 abus'd: 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

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thing as a She-Author.

**Sullen:** Come, come, you forget yourself; you know 'twas a Lady carry'd the Prize of Poetry in France t'other Day; and I assure you, if the Account were fairly stated, there have been in England some of that Sex who have done admirably. (26-27)

Although Critick is chastised by his companion, his remarks are allowed to stand.

Immediately following this passage the men drink a toast to Trotter's The Fatal Friendship. The Comparison was published six years before Trotter's marriage, but she had publicly sided with Jeremy Collier in his battle for stage reform and had the reputation of personal modesty. And Trotter was one of the few women writers who made a conscious decision to alter her direction after she had started the course. By marrying a clergyman, the Rev. Patrick Cockburn, retiring from the city, and spending the larger portion of her life raising a family and writing on philosophy and theology, she was able to switch from being a follower of Astrea to one of Orinda's school. In Duncombe's The Feminiad she is praised for her learning and morals, "Philosopher, Divine, Poet join'd" (130). Duncombe published his poem in the year when the two-volume Works of Mrs. Catharine [Trotter] Cockburn was published. This collection makes no mention of her early novel, includes only one of her plays (a very innocuous one at that), and concentrates mainly on her defenses of Locke, the Church of England, and living the Christian life. And except for one puzzling letter (which is discussed in the chapter on Trotter), it also includes the

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chastest of letters to friends and family. While often feminist in tone, these works are feminist in a rather conservative Christian mode à là Mary Astell (discussed in the chapter on Trotter). But even though she tried hard, she did not escape entirely unmuddied. There are a few comments still on record showing doubts about her modesty.

The first of the heirs of Behn to enter the public arena, Catharine Trotter published her first work, the epistolary novel Olinda's Adventures, in 1693. She was also the first of the heirs to have a work performed on stage. Around December of 1695 her Agnes de Castro was performed at the Drury Lane Theatre. This play would immediately link her to Behn in her contemporaries' minds, since it was based on Behn's novella of the same name. An author of five plays and the one novel, Trotter became a relatively well-known essayist in later life.

Mary Pix, the author of thirteen plays, shared Behn's strong sense of professionalism. When play-writing opportunities thinned, she wrote Violenta, a translation of a book of The Decameron in verse, and composed the novel The Inhumane Cardinal. But like Behn's, her contemporary fame rested on her plays. She also shared a number of themes with Behn. Her first comedy, The Spanish Wives, which appeared that 1695/6 season, "utilized one of the plot lines" of Behn's The False Count (Clark 20). Pix is best known for her intrigue plots, which are her closest ties to Behn's work, a tie she especially shared with Centlivre.

Delarivier Manley inherited Astrea's infamy and some of her ideas about sexuality. Like Behn, Manley claimed sexual freedom for women and

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deplored the sexual double standard. While her output of plays was quite small, she was prolific enough in other genres to make her the most famous woman writer of her day. She was the author of one of the biggest-selling narratives of her time, the New Atalantis. As a vocal and loyal Tory, she also got into legal trouble for writing political satire, just as Behn had years before, and she was eventually handed the editorship of The Examiner by her literary colleague and admirer, Jonathan Swift.

Susanna Centlivre was the most successful playwright of the early heirs, and she is often considered the strongest claimant to the throne. The most commercially successful female author of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Centlivre was the author of nineteen plays. Three of her plays remained popular on the stage until well into the nineteenth century.[5] Because of this commercial success, her name has managed to survive into records which exclude "the female wits."[6]

These, then, are the most likely candidates for Astrea's vacant throne. This study will now examine each of these women individually. Beginning with a brief chapter on Behn, giving a brief segment of her history, since Behn's biography is currently in such an interesting state of flux, I will go on to discuss major themes in her writing which will appear individually or severally in the writings of the heirs.

I will also touch on the two satirical plays attacking these four women during their lifetimes. The first, the anonymous The Female Wits, attacking Pix, Manley and Trotter, appeared sometime during 1696 at the Drury Lane Theatre, home to most of the women writers until this savage attack.[7] The play is relatively easy to find today. The Augustan

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Reprint Society issued an edition in 1967 edited by Lucyle Hook, and Fidelis Morgan included an edited acting version of the play as an appendix to her 1981 anthology The Female Wits.

The immediate pretext for the satire was Manley's The Royal Mischief, but the inordinate success of women playwrights that season appears to have been the compelling reason for some of the male playwrights to attempt to put the women "back in their proper place." The play seems to have effected its aim vis-à-vis Manley; it was ten years before another one of her plays was produced. But its only effect on Trotter and Pix was to have them transfer their allegiance to the rival company at Lincoln's Inn Fields.

A second misogynistic attack is Pope, Arbuthnot and Gay's Three Hours After Marriage, which satirizes Susanna Centlivre in the character of the play-writing Phoebe Clinket. For many years it was believed that the character attacked the Countess of Winchilsea, but in 1927 George Sherburn argued rather convincingly that Phoebe Clinket bore a much closer resemblance to Centlivre than Pope's friend the Countess.

These attacks didn't stop the women from writing. And while the drama of these four daughters of Behn may be based on the Behnian drama of the Restoration, all four are also transitional writers in that they begin to develop traces of sentimentalism in their works, a trend which developed throughout the eighteenth century. They also move away from the sophisticated verbal wit associated with the comedies of the Restoration towards the more humane comedy which was coming into vogue.

But in this evolution, these five writers show a continuum. That sense of continuity was just as important to them as it is for today's

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women writers. Thanks to the very active feminist scholarship of the past quarter century that was prodded into life by women like Virginia Woolf almost a century ago, these women are no longer scandalous footnotes in texts about their literary brothers. My aim is to illuminate their roles more fully. For women writers, it is important to know our literary foremothers. For women in general, it is important to know that women did have a voice, and that as hard as society tried to silence it, that voice still spoke. But these early playwrights are more than just beacons in the dark for today's writers and readers, and they are not only important for women. They wrote for, and deserve, a wider audience. Their works – prose, poetry and drama – made up an important part of their world, and for us to see as clear a picture as possible of the literature, and life, of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, we must illuminate all we can.

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**NOTES**

[1] For a list of the plays written by women which appeared between 1670 and 1723, see Nancy Cotton's Women Playwrights in England ca. 1363-1750 (East Brunswick, NJ: Associated U P, 1980) 16-21.

[2] There is quite a bit of debate about whether or not these women were consciously working together. According to Jacqueline Pearson, "they were not a school or even a close-knit group writing together with unanimity of purpose. It was only in 1695-96 that they lent each other consistent support" The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women and Women Playwrights 1642-1737 (NY: St. Martin's, 1988) 169. Cotton disagrees with Pearson and believes that "the three were very conscious of themselves as a group with a novel place in the culture" (10).

[3] Pearson argues that however "vehemently they argue for their ability and rights to enter literature on the same terms as men, most have absorbed enough of their culture's misogyny to feel guilt, or anxiety, or ambivalence about these claims even as they make them" (xi).

[4] Jesslyn Medoff observes that women writers after Behn had to make conscious decisions about accepting, rejecting or refashioning her precedents, not only in style and subject matter but in the personae of their writings, in the personae they, as authors, would assume in public (in formal letters, prefaces, dedications and the like), and in the way they tried to control their reputations as women, which were essentially inseparable from their reputations as writers; see "The Daughters of Behn and the Problem of Reputation," Women, Writing, History 1640-1740 (Athens, GA: U of Georgia P 1992) 34-35.

[5] See Judith Phillips Stanton's extensive charts on play and playwright popularity in her "'This New-Found Path Attempting': Woman Dramatists in England, 1660-1800," Schofield and Macheski, Curtain Calls: British and American Women and the Theater, 1660-1820 (Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 1991) 332-36.

[6] In 1929 Ashley Thorndike wrote, "No woman in the two centuries since her time has contributed as much as she to the English comic stage, and no one, man or woman, has surpassed her in the comedy of intrigue" English Comedy (NY: Macmillan, 1929) 365. Thorndike also notes the connection between Centlivre and Behn when he adds, "Her work in many respects resembles that of Mrs. Behn; she is nearly as immoral, even less sentimental, and even more skillful in theatrical contrivance" (365).

[7] Lucyle Hook calls the play "an hilarious piece of dramatic satire" "Introduction" The Female Wits, [1702] The Augustan Reprint Soc. #124 (1967; NY: AMS, 1993) x. Juliet McLaren calls it a "viciously funny misogynist satire" "Presumptuous Poetess, Pen-Feathered Muse: The Comedies of Mary Pix," Gender at Work: Four Women Writers of the Eighteenth Century, ed. Ann Messenger (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1990) 78. With something uncomfortably close to glee, Robert Hume labels it

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"impressive" and "a fascinating example of personal satire . . . Mrs. Manley, Mrs. Pix, and Mrs. Trotter are very effectively brutalized" The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century (Oxford: Clarendon 1976) 410. He adds "this delightful spoof and smear, too little known today, seems to have enjoyed the topical popularity it sought" (410).

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# Chapter One

## Aphra Behn

Thanks to the efforts of feminist scholars for the past twenty years or so, Aphra Behn has moved from the footnotes of mainstream studies to the position she now rightfully enjoys. Once again, she is seen as one of the more important forces in Restoration literature. She was recognized as such by her peers – publishers sought her verses to grace their miscellanies, Dryden wrote commendatory verses for her, young writers like Otway and Southerne sought her out for mentoring, and her friends included many of the literary lights of her day: Edward Ravenscroft, Nathaniel Lee, Thomas Creech, Edward Howard, Edmund Waller, Charles Cotton, Nahum Tate, and the Earl of Rochester.

Like many of these male writers, she was a staunch supporter of the Stuarts and a subscriber to the Cavalier/Royalist ideology that had been forged during the Court's years in exile. The Cavalier of popular imagination was "a merry, fearless, improvident goodfellow, morally eclectic but aboveboard withal" (Harbage 188). Along with these qualities the Cavalier was a staunch Tory, politically conservative and a faithful servant of the Stuart family.[1] Cavaliers were also popularly seen as romantic rovers who believed that sexuality was natural and overwhelming, and as such, beyond the control of institutions such as religion. Sexuality must also be free from social constraints like marriage and constancy. Loyal to Charles II and usually to James II as well, they were both very aware of, and very appreciative of class distinctions, manners, and wit.[2] These qualities describe Behn's public persona perfectly, but Behn's work did not mirror the misogyny which

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often co-existed within this lifestyle. Indeed, Behn extended the Cavalier attitudes of her day to include both men and women equally. Within the Cavalier framework, she was able to preach the gospel of sexual freedom for all; for women, this meant foregoing the double standard that had cramped them for years.

Of course, Behn never totally disappeared from literary view. She crops up from time to time, usually as a cautionary figure for young misses, or as a titillating temptress for prurient schoolboys or readers of racy stories, but with all the negative publicity, she did manage to maintain a place in the annals of literature. Macaulay favorably compared Defoe to her, and Allardyce Nicoll noted Behn's importance for women writers:

> Aphra Behn may have been licentious, but she was establishing a surer position for her sisters than any of the Elizabethan women had succeeded in establishing. . . . Mrs. Behn, by almost every Puritan critic, has been cold-shouldered on account of her supposed indecency. In fact, she is no worse, and is often a great deal better, than the average playwright of her age. (220)

Nicoll's comment actually refers to the indecency in Behn's plays, but it is intriguing, because it can be read in a different way. It can also be seen as referring to her plays as being better than those of the average playwright of her age.

Montague Summers did much to bring Behn's works out of the locked bookshelves and into the light of day with the publication of his six-volume Works of Aphra Behn in 1915. In it, he collected most of the

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works she had created in her lifetime, some published for the first time since their first printing. His intention, he stated in the introductory "Memoir of Mrs. Behn," was that Behn should have the chance, though "long neglected and traduced," to "vindicate for herself . . . her rightful claim to a high and honorable place in our glorious literature" (1:lxi).

Not only is Behn reclaiming her rightful place, she is also being acknowledged for a number of "firsts." Thanks to the investigations of modern feminist scholarship, she has lost the title of "first woman to earn her living by her pen." Sarah Jinner, an almanac maker, and Hannah Wolley, a cook book and household-management writer, are the two most likely contenders for that title now (Hobby 114), but Behn can still claim title to being "the first woman to succeed as a professional playwright." Rosamund Gilder adds another "first" title – "first modern": "the first exponent of the revolutionary idea that men and women are created equal with an equal aptitude for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (174).

Much of Behn's biography has been the stuff of legend: world traveler, spy, wit, debauchée. Her early life has long been the subject of debate. Her first biography, written shortly after her death "by One of the Fair Sex," was presumably by someone who knew her, and until the twentieth century, it was the generally accepted version of her life.[3] But in this version many details of her early life were left out. "New plays, poems, and letters attributed to her [Behn] appeared irregularly from 1690 to 1718, usually with good internal evidence or the printers' vouchers for their authenticity" (Day "Biography" 239). Embedded in

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these "new" writings were tantalizing references and allusions to a personal history. All this has led to much confusion about Behn's birth name, birth date, and antecedents. Throughout the twentieth century much ink has been spilt in proving Behn a liar and creating new possibilities for what may have been the truth. This issue was further muddied when early researchers into ecclesiastical records made errors as simple as misreading a church register. In 1990, though, Jane Jones came up with some "new documents," which seem to clear up some of the doubts about Behn's early years.[4] Then in 1993, James Fitzmaurice published a brief study which told of his discovery of a letter in the possession of the Huntington Library which also seems to shed light on the veracity of Behn's statements; and also in 1993 Janet Todd and Francis McKee uncovered a letter which added to the portrait we have of Behn. These findings shed light not only on Behn's background, but on the factors that allowed her to become "Astrea" and metaphorical mother to the heirs.

"One of the Fair Sex" claimed that Behn was a "gentlewoman by birth, of a good family in the City of Canterbury in Kent, her paternal name was Johnson." This was called into question by a famous annotation by Anne, Countess of Winchilsea, discovered in a manuscript by Edmund Gosse and published in 1884: "Mrs. Behn was daughter to a barber, who liv'd formerly in Wye, a little market town . . . in Kent. Though the account of her life before her works pretends otherwise; Some persons now alive do testify upon their knowledge that to be her original." Jones, however, argues that Behn was the daughter of Bartholomew Johnson and Elizabeth Denham, who was later wet nurse to Sir Thomas Culpepper.

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Johnson, formerly of Wye, acquired the freedom of the city of Canterbury as a barber. It also appears that Denham had married someone from "beneath her station." By looking at marriage and birth records, Jones was able to surmise the reason – four months after the wedding of Johnson and Denham, Aphra's sister Frances was born. But, it appears that Behn could legitimately claim, on her mother's side at least, to be a gentlewoman of a good family. "Although apparently contradictory, both contemporary statements about her were true" (291).

Other matters Jones discusses include the question of Behn's possibly coming from a Catholic family; her fluency in French, and possibly Spanish and Dutch; and the benefits that Behn would have had during her childhood from her mother's position as nurse to Culpepper. The Johnson girls would have spent their early years with the Culpepper children, and they were probably in one another's orbit much longer, for it "is obvious from his Adversaria that Sir Thomas had a high opinion of Aphra's poetic abilities" (291).

In this century, many critics have questioned the veracity of Behn's statements in the beginning of Oroonoko that the story is true, that she had been to Surinam herself and witnessed the action. "One of the Fair Sex" states that Behn's "father's relation to Lord Willoughby" led to her father's high appointment in Surinam. Jones points out that this relation has always been interpreted as a blood one, but this isn't the only possible interpretation. There are many links between Willoughby, Culpepper, and by extension, Behn. Jones argues that this appointment could have been a reward for service or a means to get the Johnsons out of the way, for they knew more about Willoughby's activity

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during the Interregnum than he wanted revealed.

As early as 1939 Harrison Gray Platt, Jr. also argued that Behn was most definitely in Surinam, but he gives another reason for her being there: that she was there as the mistress of William Scot, who was busy dabbling in republican politics in the colonies (547). For evidence Platt cites a letter from the Tory Governor William Byam to Sir Robert Harley dated March 1663/4 referring to Celadon's passion for Astrea (names Behn later used to refer to Scot and herself), and his leaving the colony to follow her. The description of Celadon matches that of Scot. But the letter only refers to <u>his</u> passion:

> the sympatheticall passion of y$^{e}$ Grand Sheapheard Celadon who is fled after Astrea, being resolved to espouse all distresse or felicities of fortune w$^{th}$ her. But the more Certaine cause of his flight . . . was a Regiment of protests to the number of 1000 of pounds sterling drawne up against him. And he being a Tender Gentleman & unable to keepe the feild hath betaken himself to the other element. (555)

Later in his article Platt argues that Behn was a spy on behalf of William Scot: "Mrs. Behn was not so much an agent of the English government as she was an agent of William Scot in his bargain for a pardon" (557). While this letter is further evidence that Behn was in Surinam, and that she no doubt knew Scot (they were after all, old friends), I don't see that this means that they were long term lovers or that she went to Surinam to be with him. This letter mentions Celadon's love as his reason to leave, but states the more pressing reason – a

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£1000 debt. Behn had already left, and only when his pocket interfered did Scot deign to follow. If they were lovers, why didn't they leave together? Perhaps their departures were close together, but this does not necessarily mean that they were lovers.

Platt also bases his theory on the fact that Behn paints a highly unflattering portrait of the Tory Governor Byam in Oronooko, a rarity for the Tory Behn. Platt's theory is that Behn formed this opinion from the views of the republican Scot. If Behn was in Surinam as she says she was, why was she incapable of forming her own opinion? Her opinion of Byam was based on his incompetence and his cruelty, and party aside, she would have seen the man's true colors. As a writer, too, Behn must have Byam as her villain in order to show a dramatic contrast to her hero, Oroonoko.

Jones also argues that a Mr. Behn did exist, something that has been called into question since Aphra's time. She refers back to Culpepper's Adversaria: "She had also a fayer sister maryed to Cpt. Write their names were Franck and Aphra was Mr. Beene" (289). Jones ties this to an entry in Murray's English Dictionary of 1681 which states "In Germany or Holland most of the Hosts speak a certain Franck" (293). H. A. Hargreaves argued in 1962 that a possible candidate for Mr. Behn was the seaman Johan Behn, of Hamburg, whose commander was Erick Wrede, which pronounced in the German, or Frankish, manner, sounds like "Wright." Jones sees this comment of Culpepper's as confirmation of Hargreaves' analysis.

Fitzmaurice's document, a draft of a letter, gives further credence to this version. In 1667, the ship Abraham's Sacrifice was the

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center of a legal case. Claiming it was a Dutch ship, the English seized the vessel during the Second Dutch War and brought it to Galway. Its goods were unloaded and a portion stolen. Its captain, Anthony Basso from Genoa, claimed that since the ship was Genoese, the seizure was illegal. Two years later the case came to a head in the Dutch courts in Amsterdam, and William Blathwayt acted as the representative for England. It is a draft of one of Blathwayt's letters that seems to provide another piece of Aphra's history. In this letter, the "factor" or agent of "the Widow Behn" plays an important role. "Although there were other women besides Aphra who went by the 'widow Behn,' they were very few in number, and it is therefore quite likely that the widow Behn in Blathwayt's correspondence is Aphra Behn, the poet, dramatist, and writer of fiction" (321). Fitzmaurice also argues that Blathwayt's involvement with the affairs of Aphra confirms that she had indeed married Behn. "If Blathwayt valued his job, he would have been well advised to know what was fabrication and what was truth" (321).

If Aphra did have interests in shipping in Holland, it must modify our view of her activities there. Fitzmaurice also argues that she would not have discussed these matters with either Lord Arlington or Thomas Killigrew, her "spy masters," to use a modern phrase, for fear they would not approve of her giving less than 100 percent of her time to the job of converting William Scot to the Royalist cause. But I think that Arlington and Killigrew would have been happy to know of these activities, and indeed, though purely speculation on my part, I think they probably did. We know by her poverty during the late 1660s that if Behn did have some interest in shipping left to her by her

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husband, it wasn't doing well. What better cover for a spy than to be dealing with legitimate business? A business in trouble may have needed immediate attention, supplying an excellent excuse for a woman to travei to an enemy country during hostilities.

In 1993, Janet Todd and Francis McKee published the text of a letter dated August 31, 1666, held by the Public Records Office in London, which tells us more about Behn. It was from Thomas Corney, a senior agent in Antwerp, whom Behn had blasted in her dispatches to London as a bumbling clod. In her later fictionalized accounts about her spying days, Corney becomes Van Bruin, a doddering agent "who laid siege to her" (Platt 559). But in this letter, it is Corney who attacks the professionalism of the amateur spy:

> here is come over with Sr. Mark Ogniatto a faire Lady whose name is Affora Beane accompanied by her brother and M [Cheney?] and a 8Mayd – her brother is out of the Duke of Albemarle's Guard, at their first arrivall at Ostend they dispatched an Express away to . . . Scot, who came immediately to them, but durst not stay in Antwerp many hours for feare of mee, soe they tooke Coach & went out of the Towne with him, and stayed out all night and returned again the next morning. (4)

This letter also seems further proof that Scot and Behn were not in league as Platt has argued. If they were, Behn would have learned that Corney was a senior spy, a fact Scot obviously knew since he feared meeting him. One may argue that her letters berating him may have been a ruse on her part to discredit him in London, but I doubt it. If Scot

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feared his power, doubtless Behn would have, too, if she were working with Scot instead of attempting to convert him to the Royalist cause.

Thanks to the State Papers, we are able to trace Behn's actions as a spy in Holland, and they also tell us that she returned to England deeply in debt.[5] As was not unusual for the time, the Crown had not fully compensated Behn for her efforts and expenditures – she received £150, but that did not cover her living expenses, messenger fees, transportation, and the other costs involved in trying to turn Scot's loyalties. In an undated letter to Killigrew covering a petition to the Crown for redress, Behn pours out her misery and tells of her impending fate:

> if you could guess at the infliction of my soule, you would I am sure, pity me. 'Tis to-morrow that I must submitt myself to a prison, the time being expired, and though I have endeavored all day yesterday to get a few days more, I cannot, because they say they see I am dallied withal, and have cried myself dead, and could find in my heart to break through all and get to the King, and never rise till he were pleased to pay this; but I am sick and weak and unfit for it, or a prison; I shall go tomorrow . . . . Sir, if I have not the money to-night, you must send me something to keep me in prison, for I will not starve. (qtd in Woodcock 43)

After this, we again lose the thread of what happened to Behn, but she evidently got out of prison. The most common opinion is that she wasn't in prison very long, but since it is two years before we hear from her again, I wonder at the accuracy of this. Since her earlier pleas were

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ignored, I don't see how her being thrown into debtor's prison would spur the State to action. It may, perhaps, have mobilized her friends to greater efforts, though, but until further records appear we shall never know the length of her imprisonment.

There has been much speculation as to how Behn was able to support herself during the period between her imprisonment and the production of her first play. Some have argued that she was a kept woman during this period, others that she lived on the charity of family and friends. The new information about her shipping interests illuminates some possibilities. Although during her own time there was gossip that she was a loose woman, her only "documented" lover is John Hoyle. From evidence in her poems we know that they knew each other as early as 1671, but at that time "Mr Je B" was "the author of my sighs and flame," not Hoyle, who is mentioned in the same poem ("Our Cabal" Todd 1:47).[6] In light of this, coupled with Hoyle's apparent promiscuity with both sexes and Behn's complaints about his coldness, it is hard to believe he was her keeper. On the other hand, if she had a meager income from her shipping interests, it may have supplemented the charity of family and friends and provided sustenance.

Behn closes letter to Killigrew with a sentence that is the most striking clue to her psyche left to us – "I will not starve." For the rest of her life, Behn ground out words to support herself. She had literary gifts, to be sure, and she knew how to show them to their best advantage. And her gifts were not only purely literary, for she also had the ability to read the public's tastes. Her plays, while always reflecting her Cavalier values, changed with the marketplace. When sex

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comedies were in vogue, she wrote bawdy. When the backlash of the 80s occurred, her plays became more modest. When the market for plays dried up, she turned to a new form, and not only imitated, but innovated. To fill in the chinks, she wrote poems and translations, and successfully supported herself, albeit meagerly at the end, for the rest of her life. The changing state of the theater during the 80s made self-sufficiency difficult, but she persevered. We have a number of letters from this period which reflect her constant worries about money:

> As for y[e] verses of mine, I shou'd really have thought 'em worth thirty pound; and I hope you will find it worth 25l; not that I shou'd dispute at any other time for 5 pound where I am so obleeged; but you can not think w[t] a preety thing y[e] Island [Isle of Love] will be, and w[t] a deal of labor I shall have yet with it. . . . But pray speake to yo[r] Bro[r] to advance the price to 5 lb more, 'twill at this time be more then given me, and I vow I wou'd not aske if I did not really believe it worth more.
>
> * * *
>
> I have been wthout getting so long y[t] I am just on y[e] poynt of breaking, espesiall since a body has no creditt at y[e] Playhouse for money as we used to have, fifty or 60 deepe, or moore; I want extreamly or I wo'd not urge this. (qtd in Woodcock 170)

And again:

> Where as I am indebted to Mr. Bags the sum of six pownd for the payment of which Mr. Tonson has obleged him self. Now I

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> do here by impowre Mr. Zachary Baggs, in case the said debt is not fully discharged before Michaelmas next, to stop what money he shall hereafter have in his hands of mine, upon the playing of my next play till this aforesaid debt of six pownd be discharged.
>
> Witness my hand this 1st of August, -85. (qtd in Summers 1:xlviii)

These letters from a woman accustomed to receiving £50 to £100 for each production of her plays in office receipts alone (Goreau Reconstructing 256)! In the preface to Sir Patient Fancy, Behn acknowledges the fact that she writes to the taste of the audience and gives the reason why. She is "forced to write for Bread and not ashamed to owne it" (4:7).

## Part 2

## The Themes

In Behn we find a writer, forced to write for bread, yet never allowing her writing to stray from her Cavalier ideals, even when it meant she flew in the face of popular opinion. At the end of her life, a time spent in poverty, she was asked to contribute a poem to King William in spite of her well-known loyalty to James II. Her reply, probably one of her last poems, "A Pindaric Poem to the Reverend Doctor Burnet on the Honour he did me of Enquiring after me and my Muse," (1689) to the powerful Whig cleric and later good friend of Catherine Trotter, neatly avoids the issue of having to praise William. Instead she tells of her sadness in not being able to oblige:

> My Muse that would endeavor fain to glide
>
> With the fair prosperous Gale, and the full driving Tide

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But Loyalty Commands with Pious Force,

That stops me in the thriving Course.

The Brieze that wafts the Crowding Nations o're,

Leaves me unpity'd far behind

On the Forsaken Barren Shore,

To sigh with Echo, and the Murmuring wind;

* * *

I like the Excluded Prophet stand,

The Fruitful Happy Soul can only see,

But am forbid by Fates decree

To share the Triumph of the joyful Victory.[7]

She then neatly turns the poem into a compliment on Burnet's skill as a poet.

To be sure, one of the values Behn held so dear and displayed in the bulk of her work was her staunch Toryism. Behn was not merely content to air her political views privately; her writings are permeated with Tory sentiment and indicate informed opinions on the political situations in her very political era. Her fame as a Tory was so widespread that the following note prefaced her poem "The Complaint of the Poor Cavaliers" published in The Muses Mercury in June 1701: "ALL the World knows Mrs. Behn was no Whig, no Republican, nor Fanatick; her Zeal lay Quite on the other Side: And tho her Manners was no Honour to any, yet her Wit made her acceptable to that which she espous'd. She was a Politician, as well as a Poet" (Todd 1:457).[8]

Her fealty to Charles and James is clearly evident in her poetry. Just reading some of the titles is enough to show her loyalty to the

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Stuarts: "A Pindarick on the Death of Our Late Sovereign: With An Ancient Prophecy on His Present Majesty," "A poem to Catherine Queen Dowager. On the Death of her Dear Lord and Husband King Charles II," "A Pindarick Poem on the Happy Coronation of His Most Sacred Majesty James II," "A Congratulatory Poem to the King's Most Sacred Majesty, On the Happy Birth of the Prince of Wales," and "A Pindaric Poem to her Sacred Majesty Queen Mary, upon her Arrival in England" are some of the obviously Tory poems which need not be discussed further here.[9] But Behn praises only Stuarts, and, although both Mary and William came to England to be joint rulers, it is only Mary who is welcomed through poetry.

In some of her less obviously titled poetry her Tory views shine through. One of her angriest poems is the very short "On a Conventicle," published posthumously in the Miscellany Poems Upon Several Occasions (1692). Reproduced here in its entirety, the poem blasts the opposing religious party for being the source of all of England's woes:

> Behold that Race, whence England's Woes proceed,
> The Viper's Nest, where all our Mischiefs breed,
> There, guided, by Inspiration, Treason speaks,
> And through the Holy Bag-pipe Legion squeaks.
> The Nation's Curse, Religion's ridicule,
> The Rabble's God, the Politician's Tool,
> Scorn of the Wise, and Scandal of the Just,
> The Villain's Refuge, and the Women's Lust.
> (Todd 1:355)

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Anger and scorn are again the prominent emotions in "To Poet Bavius; Occasion'd By his Satyr he Writ in verses to the King, Upon the Queen's being Deliver'd of a Son." John Baber's "To the King Upon the Queen's being Deliver'd of a Son" (1688) attacks Behn's "A Congratulatory Poem to her Most Sacred Majesty, on the Universal Hopes . . . for a Prince of Wales," and also "refers to the damaging consequences for individuals of James II's attacks on the Anglican hegemony" (Todd 1:439). Behn calls Baber a "Faithless Scribbling Infidel," and a "poor forgotten Drone without a Sting," and after thoroughly insulting both him and his verse for 140 lines, she concludes with the triplet:

> Thy Wit, thy Parts, thy Conduct, Mein and Grace,
> Thy Presence, Cringes, and thy Court Grimarce, [sic]
> But Swears Heaven meant thee for a perfect --As--.
>
> (Todd 1:300, 303 ll. 17, 39, 145-47)

Behn's most public works, her plays, were also overtly political. Her most popular hero, the Rover, of the play of the same name, is an exiled Cavalier in service to Charles II during the interregnum. The dashing ideal of the man who had lost everything in service to his king, Willmore proved quite popular with audiences. Not surprisingly, the play was popular with the Stuarts, as well. Charles II, who attended the play's initial performance on March 24, 1671, enjoyed it so much that he returned during the play's initial run. "In February 1680, he requested a private command performance at Whitehall. Just a few days before his death he enjoyed it again when with the Queen he made one of his last visits to the theatre" (Leja 71). James II enjoyed it as well.

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During his brief reign he had two royal command performances of the play at Whitehall (Leja 71). When Behn wrote its sequel, The Rover II, in 1681, she dedicated it to the then out-of-favor and exiled James, Duke of York, who had suggested the sequel to her. In her dedication, she likens the Rover to her currently wandering prince: "he is a wanderer too, distrest; belov'd, the unfortunate, and ever constant to Loyalty" (1.113-14).

Behn's Rover was based in part on Killigrew's unwieldy autobiography Thomaso. The play's success not only earned her respect as a playwright, it also clearly established her as a member of the Tory camp. Using Killigrew's plot was also "a compliment to an arch Tory" (Leja 67). She returned to Killigrew for Rover II, but she had already taken the best elements for the first part. The sequel, while initially popular, suffered the fate of most of its kind by not living up to the reputation of its predecessor.

In the same year that Rover II appeared, the overtly political The Round-Heads; or, the Good Old Cause (dedicated to Henry Fitz-Roy, Duke of Grafton, one of Charles's illegitimate children) was also produced. The play, which satirizes prominent republicans, including Lords Fleetwood, Lambert and Wariston, Lady Lambert, and Lady Cromwell, Oliver Cromwell's widow, has much of Behn's trademark sexual intrigue, but it also includes the details of a 1659 political plot involving Lord Willoughby. Jane Jones suggests that the play may have been partly autobiographical, as it "showed considerable knowledge of the 1659 events and the people involved" (292). Whether the play is autobiographical, it most publicly aligns Behn even more firmly with the

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Tory camp, and it shows the depth of her understanding of her era's tangled politics.

The Rover II and The Round-Heads appeared on the scene at a time of intense political machinations and declarations of party. During 1681, the Whigs, led by Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, had been frustrated in their attempts to have the Exclusion Bill passed and had gone on to face more disappointments. In March, Charles dissolved Parliament, and by July, Shaftesbury was arrested for high treason for conspiring to wage war on the King and was sent to the Tower. Unfortunately, Charles had misread the political climate of London, and in November a predominantly Whiggish Grand Jury returned a verdict of Ignoramus. In honor of the event, the Whigs struck a celebratory medal with the motto "Laetamur," "Let us rejoice" (cf. Fraser 409-410).

As attuned to the differences of party as any courtier, the writers of the day allowed the battle also to rage in the literary world. Just before Shaftesbury's acquittal, Dryden published his allegorical Absalom and Achitophel. Behn joined the other Tory writers (Dryden with The Duke of Guise, Otway with Venice Preserv'd, Southerne with The Loyal Brother, and D'Urfey with Sir Barnaby Whig and The Royalist), in their attempt to sway popular opinion. Behn's contribution to party politics were The Round-Heads and The City Heiress.

The City Heiress attacks Shaftesbury in the character of Sir Timothy Treat-all, a "true-blue Protestant." The hero of the play is Treat-all's nephew Tom Wilding, a gallant young Tory who, at the beginning of the play, is disowned by his uncle. By the end of the

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play, Treat-all finds himself married to his nephew's cast-off mistress; Wilding is married to the chaste yet witty heiress, Charlot; and Treat-all is thoroughly humiliated. In the play's dedication to Henry Howard, a staunch Tory, Behn writes: "I find Honesty begins to come into fashion again, when Loyalty is approv'd, and Whigism becomes a jest wher'er 'tis met" (2:200).

These are Behn's most overtly political plays, but that does not mean that politics are absent from her other plays. (Alfred Leja has done a very thorough study of contemporary politics in Behn's plays, and it would be redundant to cover the same material here.)

When Behn turned to prose narratives, she did not desert her Royalist politics. Her first published narrative, Love Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister (1684-87), published in three installments, was "one of the most popular 'best sellers' of its time" (Day Told 159). Part of its appeal was its topicality. A roman à clef, Love Letters tells the story of Philander's (Lord Grey of Werke) incestuous love for his wife's sister Sylvia (Lady Henrietta Berkeley), and Philander's treasonous involvement with Cesario (the Duke of Monmouth).[10]

During Behn's lifetime, her authorship of Love Letters was never publicly acknowledged – not until Langbaine's An Account of the English Dramatick Poets (1691) was it listed as hers. In her notes to Love Letters, Janet Todd tells us that this anonymity is most likely due to the work's political content and surmises that Behn was "persuaded to write the novel by a government concerned by the threat of Monmouth and Grey" (Todd 2:x). The first volume was sold by Randal Taylor, a trade publisher who worked as a sort of distributor for other publishers, thus

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allowing the publisher and author to remain removed from the marketplace. The subsequent volumes had similar treatment (Todd 2:x).

Even as staunch a Tory as she was, Behn was still able to fall afoul of the Law when her zeal eventually went over the line. In August 1682 she wrote the epilogue for the anonymous play, Romulus and Hersilia in which she sharply criticized Monmouth for deserting his father:

> Of all treasons, mine was most accurst;
> Rebelling 'gainst a King and Father first.
> A sin, which Heaven nor man can e're forgive. (Todd 1.24 ll 7-9)

Both Behn and Lady Slingsby, the actress who spoke the lines, were arrested for libel. Since both were mentioned as being at large soon afterwards it appears that not much came of the incident, but "Behn had made some enemies among a number of powerful Whigs and among Whig playwrights such as Shadwell" (Cotton 63). After the Glorious Revolution these enemies would retaliate.

**Feminism**

It is hard to imagine someone as politically conservative as Behn being a liberal feminist, but her entire literary career was devoted to attacking the patriarchy which held women down. The bastion of patriarchal authority most frequently under attack in Behn's plays is marriage, specifically, a husband's proprietorship over his wife and a father's right to "dispose" of his daughters as he sees fit. Restoration laws supported "traditional analogues between kings and subjects, parents and children, husbands and wives" (Staves 111-12). When husbands and fathers had the authority of kings, it was almost

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treasonous to challenge them; and in fact the charge of petit treason could be levelled against murderous wives (Staves 113). That Behn could reconcile her attacks on the patriarchy with her staunch loyalty to the paternalistic Stuarts appears slightly schizoid today, but Behn apparently saw no contradiction beteen the two.

Behn's subversive undermining of the patriarchy is especially evident in three plays: The Rover, 1677; Sir Patient Fancy, 1678; and The Lucky Chance, 1686, all popular in their own time, but the sally against the conventions surrounding marriage was not limited to these three plays. Her very first work to be staged, The Forc'd Marriage (1670), took the theme as its title, and she went on to develop it through nearly every one of her plays, even those whose which are primarily political.

The Rover, by an "anonymous author," first produced in March 1677, soon became part of the repertoire. No doubt the play was a favorite in part because it is so funny. Although many of the characters are stock characters of the Restoration stage and some of the ideas are borrowed from other plays, the language is fresh and the action well paced. The popularity of the play is important because no matter how revolutionary a play's underlying message may be, if the play is not appealing, no one will see it.

The first volley against patriarchal authority comes in the very first scene. Florinda and Hellena, two sisters, are discussing how to avoid the fates their father has planned for them. Neither can tolerate their father's choices - the old but very rich Don Vincentio for Florinda and a nunnery for Hellena. Florinda tells her sister that she

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blushes with indignation, for, "how near soever my father thinks I am to marrying that hated object, I shall let him see that I understand better what's due my beauty, birth, and fortune, and more to my soul, than to obey those unjust commands" (1.1.21-25). But it is the younger sister, Hellena, who chafes most under her father's orders. She declares:

> Dost thou think that ever I'll be a nun? Or at least till I'm so old I'm fit for nothing else? Faith, no sister; and that which makes me long to know whether you love Belville, is because I hope he has some mad companion or other that will spoil my devotion. Nay, I'm resolved to provide myself this Carnival, if there e're a handsome proper fellow of my humour above ground, though I ask first. (1.1.34-40)

At this bold resolution to "spoil" her devotion, that is, lose her virginity and make her "unfit" for convent life, her shocked sister cries out "Prithee not so wild" (1.1.41), but Hellena is not deterred. Like Florinda, she knows her worth and refuses to have it wasted in a convent.

The sisters are interrupted by their brother, Pedro, who is acting _in loco parentis_ for their absent father. Florinda pleads with him to divert their father's will, but he tells her she must "consider Don Vincentio's fortune, and the jointure" he'll make her (1.1.79-80). This brings on a spirited argument from Hellena, the more feisty sister, and to stifle her outburst, Pedro orders her locked in her room. He then tells Florinda that although he has urged their father's will, his wish is that she "would love Antonio . . . [and] this absence of my father will give us the opportunity to free you from Vincentio by marrying

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here, which you must do tomorrow" (1.1.155-59). Instead of helping his sister avoid their father's tyranny Pedro acts the tyrant himself by forcing a marriage when he knows his sister's heart lies elsewhere.

After he leaves, Hellena takes the initiative to save her sister and herself from their arranged fates. She tells Florinda, "we'll outwit twenty brothers if you'll be ruled by me" (1.1.183-84). She then cajoles their duenna, Callis, to allow them to go to the Carnival in masquerade. As a servant, Callis must be careful not to offend the person, specifically the male person, who pays her salary; but she is more than happy to defy patriarchal authority as long as she doesn't get caught. She'll allow the outing, "if I thought your brother might not know it" (1.1.189-90).

This first scene sets the tone for the rest of the play. First, Behn atypically allows women to appear first in five of her plays and to speak first in four (Pearson 278 n 28). Here, as in the beginning of Act III, a "woman-only scene precedes the appearance of the male characters so that we see the pretensions of men through female eyes" (Pearson 146).[11] So in this revolutionary scene, the sisters have issued the challenge, and Behn has given us a very good idea of the differences in the siblings' temperaments. Fiery Hellena will forcefully take her fate into her own hands; passive Florinda will try to change her fate but will allow herself to be led by others; domineering Pedro will be the patriarchal bogey, determined to exercise his will on his two sisters.

During the working out of her challenge, Hellena manages to fall in love with the highly desirable – but chronically unfaithful – rover

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of the title, Willmore. In contrast to the powerful and independent-minded heroines, the dashing Cavalier Willmore is also "passive, ineffectual or drunken" (Pearson 153). Still, this love allows Behn to air her views on the subject of love and marriage. Although Hellena begins the play looking for a lover, she soon realizes that marriage must be her goal. While Hellena may idealistically agree with Willmore about the oppressiveness of marriage, she realistically acknowledges that marriage is imperative for women, for they pay a very different price for the 'joys' of free love. Willmore tries to talk her into a union without the benefit of "Hymen or priest," and argues,

> Marriage is as certain a bane to love as lending money is to friendship. I'll neither ask nor give a vow, though I could be content to turn gipsy and become a left-hand bridegroom to have the great pleasure of working that great miracle of making a maid a mother, if you durst venture. (5.441-51)

But the wise Hellena realizes what such a thing would mean to her: "[W]hat shall I get? A cradle full of noise and mischief, with a pack of repentance at my back?" (5.453-55).

So she continues her repartee, teases Willmore, and eventually gets exactly what she wants – the security of marriage. Hellena has no great moral compunctions urging her towards marriage, but she does realize her own worth. She has observed the lesson taught by the fate of Angelica Bianca, the courtesan, that men use women to satisfy their lusts and then scorn women for allowing themselves to be used, and she has learned quickly and well. She will not be tossed away like a used plaything once Willmore has been physically satiated.

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Angelica Bianca is one of Behn's most fascinating challenges to patriarchal authority. On the surface, it seems as if she does not challenge male authority and supremacy at all; indeed, she literally becomes the property of men. But there are some subtle undertones to her character which show traces of rebellion. Angelica may sell herself to men, but it is always on her terms and for a limited period of time. And she is the one in control of her life. She has no male pimp or pander. With her woman Moretta, she advertises and deals with the business end of her trade herself.[12]

Falling in love is Angelica Bianca's downfall, but until that time, and even after it, she sees her business as straight-forward and, in its own way, honest. When Willmore rails at her for selling herself, she exposes the mercantile aspect of the contemporary marriage mart when she responds:

> Pray tell me, sir, are you not guilty of the same mercenary crime? When a lady is proposed to you for a wife, you never ask how fair, discreet, or virtuous she is, but what's her fortune; which, if but small, you cry "She will not do my business," and basely leave her, though she languish for you. Say, is not this as poor? (2.2.90-96)

Although Willmore answers, "It is barbarous custom, which I will scorn to defend in my sex, and despise in yours" (II.ii.97-99), we cannot believe him. And his lie is exposed in act four when he learns that his "gipsy," Hellena, is worth 200,000 crowns. When he learns of her wealth, her value in his eyes suddenly increases.

One of the most interesting challenges to male authority in the

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play is issued in an almost throw-away manner by one of the more minor characters, Lucinda, "a jilting wench." She is the woman who gulls Blunt out of his money, clothes, and jewels with the promise of sexual delights, then sends him through the sewer for his pains. Of course, the gulling could be seen as just another comic and formulaic device used by Behn to round out the comedy, but it has one striking aspect which proves a subtle subtext in this series of challenges to male authority: Lucinda gets away with it. She uses the system against the credulous Blunt, and it works. Once she has taken inventory of her booty, we never see her again.

The anonymous The Rover certainly set up many challenges to patriarchal authority and institutions. But since it was at first believed that the author was male, the full impact of Behn's subtle arguments was lost. But by the production of Sir Patient Fancy the following year, the challenge was a little more obvious: the language is a little sharper, the revolt a little clearer. These differences are immediately clear in the play's opening scene which also opens with two women plotting rebellion. Neighbors Isabella and Lucretia are commiserating over their sex's lot. Their dialogue is more rebellious than the language used by Florinda and Hellena, and they quite openly deride the patriarchal system:

> Isab.: Custom is unkind to our Sex, not to allow us free Choice; but we above all Creatures must be forced to endure the formal Recommendations of a Parent, and the more insupportable Addresses of an odious Fop; whilst the Obedient Daughter stands — thus — with her Hands

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pinn'd before her, a set Look, few Words, and a Mien that cries – Come marry me: out upon't.

**Lucr.:** I perceive then, whatever your Father designs, you are resolv'd to love your own way.

**Isab.:** Thou mayst lay thy Maidenhead upon't, and be sure of the Misfortune to win . . . .
I hope thou are as well resolv'd for my Cousin Leander.

**Lucr.:** Here's my Hand upon't, I am. (1.1.13-29).

This is much stronger language than the conversation between the two sisters in the earlier play. Isabella's vow upon the all-important maidenhead illustrates the seriousness of her intent. She has sworn on the most important possession a seventeenth-century woman had. Isabella and Lucretia stick to their determination for the rest of the play, but neither has the spunk or witty dialogue of their predecessor, Hellena.

The woman closest to Hellena in style is Lady Fancy, although she is made of a very different substance. Young Lady Fancy has deliberately married the hypochondriac Sir Patient for his money. Although she is an amusing character and we are somewhat sympathetic to her, she has a hard edge to her which makes total approval of her actions impossible. She is well-matched in this by her rakish lover, Wittmore. He is just as willing to use people to gain his own ends as Lady Fancy is.[13]

Through manipulation, Lady Fancy offers many challenges to the patriarchal system which has created her. She willingly cuckolds her husband; and, at the end of the play, she manages to cheat him out of

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£8000 in plate, jewels and gold. The scenes in which Lady Fancy covers up her affair are some of the funniest in the play, but they seem conventional in that they are scenes of young lovers duping the elderly husband. Behn does have some sympathy for women in Lady Fancy's position, though she gives Lady Knowell lines which seem to excuse Lady Fancy's behavior:

> Oh, the impudence of this Fellow your Ladyship's Husband, to espouse so Fair a Person only to make a Nurse of! . . . A Slave, a very Household Drudge. (4:3.1.34-36, 38)

It is Lady Knowell, "an affected learned woman," who issues the greatest challenge to the patriarchal system which denied women education. Unlike other learned women in Restoration comedy, who are figures of ridicule, Lady Knowell may appear ridiculous at times, but she always knows what she is doing and ultimately triumphs over the foolish Sir Patient.[14] She is the one who enables her daughter, Lucretia, to marry the man she wants and still get a healthy settlement in the bargain. By manipulating Sir Patient's avarice, Lady Knowell is able to get a settlement of £500 a year and Sir Patient's land in Berkshire for the young couple. And this, it turns out, had been her intention for the entire play: "I have proved both your Passions, and 'twere unkind not to crown 'em with the due Praemium of each other's Merit" (4:5.1.211-13). Lady Knowell again schemes against Sir Patient in order to help her son, Lodwick, obtain Isabella, the woman he desires.

As part of the "love test" she puts Leander and Lucretia through, there are times in which she performs the traditional male functions. She is the one who makes the arrangements for her daughter's

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"engagement" to Sir Credulous, and at her most masculine, she even "proposes" to Leander (cf. 4:3.2.1-6).

The final act of the play reconciles all of the warring factions. The disobedient children are forgiven and even rewarded. Released from Sir Patient, who desires a divorce, Lady Fancy goes off with her lover to live on their ill-gotten gains. And the foolish Sir Patient "reforms" and becomes a spark – to "keep a City Mistress, go to Court and hate all Conventicles."

The patriarchal system is also attacked in the play's epilogue – a quite frank plea for respect for women writers. Behn starts the piece almost self-mockingly, "I here and there o'erheard a Coxcomb cry,/ Ah, Rot it – 'tis a Woman's Comedy" (Sir Patient Fancy 4.115) and quickly outlines an argument for women based on their greatness in former times. It is the last six lines that issue the actual challenge:

> To all the Men of Wit we will subscribe:
> But for your half Wits, you unthinking Tribe,
> We'll let you see, whate'er besides we do,
> How artfully we copy some of you:
> And if you're drawn to th' Life, pray tell me then,
> Why Women should not write as well as Men.
>
> (4.116)

Eight years after Sir Patient Fancy opened, Behn's The Lucky Chance was produced. The challenges to patriarchal authority in this play are not as overt as they were in the two earlier works, but they are still there. And although the play itself might not be as challenging, Behn literally issues a challenge to the readers in the

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play's preface.

By 1686, Behn had grown tired of the constant charges that her plays were "too bawdy," so her preface to The Lucky Chance is an attempt to clear her reputation. She notes that her works are no more bawdy than the pieces her contemporaries were producing, yet those other works were not condemned "because a Man writ them" (Preface 3:185). She then proceeds to throw down the gauntlet:

> I make a Challenge to any person of common Sense and Reason – that is not Willfully bent on ill Nature, and will in spight of Sense wrest a double Entendre from every thing, lying upon the Catch for a Jest or a Quibble, like a rook for a Cully; but any unprejudic'd Person that knows not the Author, to read any of my Comedys and compare 'em with others of this Age, and if they find one Word that can offend the chastest Ear, I will submit to their present Cavills; but Right or Wrong they must be Criminal because a Woman's. (Preface 3:185)

Later in the preface she bluntly states that "had the Plays I have writ come forth under any Mans Name," all would have said that the male author "had made as good Comedies, as any one Man that has writ in our Age; but a Devil on't the Woman damns the Poet" (3:186). Behn knows she is at the top of her craft, which makes the insults even more galling.

She concludes her preface with her now-famous plea:

> All I ask, is the Privilege for my Masculine Part, the Poet in me, (if any such you will allow me) to tread in those successful Paths my Predecessors have so long thriv'd in, to

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> take measures that both the Ancient and Modern writers have set me. (3:187)

Compared to this blunt challenge and plea in the preface, the challenges offered through the plot of the play seem tame.

One noticeable challenge to patriarchy in the play is the strong community of women it represents. The three lead females support each other throughout the play, a trait we see repeated in many of the heirs' plays. The three women also work together to help each other to happiness. Of all the female characters in the play, it is Lady Fulbank who offers the most overt challenge to the patriarchal authority of her husband, Sir Cautious. At first, she steals his money to give to her lover, Gayman, so that Gayman can be released from the debt he owes Sir Cautious. Her challenge to her husband's authority over her is most blatant when she proclaims her intention to love where her heart leads her. The following dialogue between husband and wife proves illuminating:

> **Sir Cau.**: Ay, but you're wonderous free methinks, sometimes, which gives shreud suspicions.
>
> **L. Ful.**: What, because I cannot simper, look demure, and justify my Honour, when none questions it – Cry fie, and out upon the naughty Women, Because they please themselves – and so wou'd I.
>
> **Sir Cau.**: How, wou'd, what cuckold me?
>
> **L. Ful.**: Yes, if it pleas'd me better than Vertue, Sir. But i'll not change my Freedom and my Humour, to purchase the dull Fame of being honest.

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**Sir Cau.**: Ay, but the World, the World –

**L. Ful.**: I value not the Censurs of the Croud.

**Sir Cau.**: But I am old.

**L. Ful.**: That's your fault, Sir, not mine.

**Sir Cau.**: But being so, I shou'd be good-natur'd, and give thee leave to love discreetly –

**L. Ful.**: I'd do't without your leave, Sir.

**Sir Cau.**: Do't – what, cuckold me?

**L. Ful.**: No, love discreetly, Sir, love as I ought, love honestly.

**Sir Cau.**: What, in love with any body, but your own husband?

**L. Ful.**: Yes. (4:5.4.18-41)

Lady Fulbank thus voices her intention to do as she pleases no matter what the paternalistic society she lives in dictates. What is interesting about this exchange is that it comes just before Sir Cautious hands his wife over to Gayman to fulfill a gambling debt. Her independence aside, she is still her husband's chattel.

Diana, daughter of Sir Feeble, also makes an overt challenge to patriarchal authority when she secretly marries Bredwell. Her father has arranged a marriage for her with the detestable fop Bearjest, who has threatened to treat her horribly after their marriage. Diana has always loved the poor Bredwell, so without thought for the financial consequences, she marries him. What spurs her on in her intention is the disaster she sees in the pairing of her father with the miserably unhappy Leticia. To add insult to injury, she manages to have her

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servant, Pert, marry Bearjest through a deception.

Leticia is the passive heroine of the play. She marries Sir Feeble under duress only after she is convinced that her promised Bellmour is dead. When she finds out that he is still alive, she calls her marriage to Sir Feeble "adultery" and transfers her patriarchal allegiance back to her wronged lover. She may assist in deceiving Sir Feeble, but it is only because she believes herself contracted to Bellmour.

As in The Rover, one of the more challenging bits of dialogue comes from one of the minor characters. In this case it is Gammer Grime, Gayman's landlady, who has the honor of denouncing a husband's rights:

> My Husband! what, do you think to fright me with my Husband? – I'll have you know that I'm an honest Woman and care not this – for my Husband;
>
> * * *
>
> Husband – marry come up, Husbands know about their Wives secrets? No, sure, the World's not so bad yet. (4:2.1.64-67, 151-52)

Although spoken by one of the lowly, and comic, characters these words seem to sum up the attitudes towards marriage held by many of the unhappy females in Behn's works.

Unhappy females giving each other comfort and succor can also be found in Behn's fiction. From Agnes de Castro to the Adventures of the Black Lady, in The History of the Nun and even in her most famous work Oroonoko we have scenes of women helping women.

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Behn's poetry is imbued with her feminism as well. In a number of her poems she celebrates female sexuality. The most famous of these is, of course, "The Disappointment," the story of the amorous Lysander's impotence and fair Cloris's "resentments" at her disappointment. Not only is Cloris resentful, during the love-making she is an active participant: "Her timerous Hand she gently laid . . . Upon that Fabulous Priapus" (Todd 1.68 ll 103, 105). Behn often turns poetic convention on its head by making the female the one desiring instead of merely the object of desire.[15]

One of the conventional expectations that Behn works with is the idealized pattern of Platonic same-sex erotic friendship. Behn's contemporaries recognized the homosexual notes in her poetry, and she was praised as a Sapphist.[16] The classic example of Behn's Sapphist poetry is her "To the fair Clarinda, who made Love to me, imagin'd more than a Woman." There are also homosexual jests, albeit male, in The Amorous Prince and The Court of the King of Bantam. And as Kathryn Kendall argues, Agnes de Castro could also fall into this Sapphist category, for the relationship between Agnes and Constantia can be read as lesbian. Trotter and Manley follow Behn in this Sapphist tradition, and Centlivre creates a homosexual character (discussed in chapter five below), so this is another shared theme, though one that is rarely discussed. But Behn's views on the hermaphroditic ideal are intriguing in light of her own sense of having both masculine and feminine "parts."

Behn also pleads directly for women poets. In the epilogue to Sir Patient Fancy she writes:

> What has poor Woman done, that she must be

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Debar'd from Sense, and sacred Poetry?
Why in this Age has Heaven Allow'd you more,
And Women less of Wit than heretofore?
We once were fam'd in story, and could write
Equal to Men; cou'd govern, nay, cou'd fight.
We still have passive Valour, and can show,
Wou'd Custom give us leave; the active too,
Since we no Provocations want from you.

(4:115)

Behn's translations are less well known. Quite aware of her lack of Latin and Greek, Behn did have a sufficient command of French to be able to produce several translations. These were of weighty originals: "Rochefoucauld, Fontenelle's _Dialogues on the Plurality of Worlds_ and his translation of a history of pagan oracles, and of a work of Cowley on botany" (Day "Muses" 63). It is in this translation that we find her inserting her own plea for recognition as a poet:

I by a double right thy Bounties claim,
Both from my Sex, and in _Apollo's_ Name:
Let me with _Sappho_ and _Orinda_ be
Oh ever sacred Nymph, adorn'd by thee;
And give my Verses Immortality.

(Todd 1.590-94)

These are three solid works, "presupposing in the reader both some erudition and the capacity for sustained reasoning" (Day "Intellect" 374).

The Fontenelle, which has a particular bearing on Centlivre's work

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(see discussion below), was "a basic course in astronomy and Cartesian thought for the laywoman by means of informal, ostensibly social conversations between a countess and a Cartesian courtier-philosopher" (Mattes 4). In the preface to her translation, Behn made some pronouncements on the theory and practice of translation, "which, though less clearly expressed, are not notably inferior to Dryden's, and some brief rather amazing comments, concerning what would later be called the Higher Criticism of Scripture" (Day "Muses" 63). Robert Adams Day calls this an "astonishing intellectual feat for an uneducated woman," concluding that Behn "must be rated as distinctly advanced in her ideas, even when set against the male writers of the period" ("Intellect" 374, 376).

If Behn achieved what she did without a formal education, what could she have done with Oxford behind her? She was certainly a living, and public, example of women's capabilities, and the heirs took note. Like her, they openly lamented their lack of educational opportunities, but accomplished much in spite of their lack. No wonder they posed such a threat to their male contemporaries.

These are the themes the heirs inherited from Behn. Not all the women concentrated on the same subjects – to generalize, Trotter took the intellectual material, Manley took the politics, Pix and Centlivre took the intrigue plays – but all four touched on the themes that Behn made her own in one way or another. When these four later writers started writing, new works of Behn were still coming out. As literate women writers, "the daughters of Behn" would have been more aware of Behn's qualities than we are today.

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## NOTES

[1] For a fuller discussion of the Cavalier mode in drama, see Alfred Harbage, Cavalier Drama, (1936; NY: Russell, 1964) esp. 31-36.

[2] See Marilyn L. Williamson, Raising Their Voices: British Women Writers 1650-1750, (Detroit: Wayne State UP) 135.

[3] For an interesting textual study of the "Fair One's" biography showing that it is really by Behn, see Robert Adams Day, "Aphra Behn's First Biography," Studies in Bibliography 22 (1969): 227-40.

[4] Jane Jones gives a very thorough discussion of the history of the confusion surrounding Behn's early life in "New Light on the Background and Early Life of Aphra Behn," Notes & Queries n.s. 39.3 (1990): 288-93.

[5] For copies of Behn's correspondence from Antwerp, see William J. Cameron, New Light on Aphra Behn, (Auckland: U of Auckland P, 1961).

[6] Quotations from the poetry and Love Letters from a Nobleman will be from Janet Todd's new edition of Behn's work which is currently being published. They will be identified as Todd, volume number, page, line. Quotations from the plays will be from Summers's edition of her works. They will be identified by volume followed by either a page number for prefaces and dedications, or the act, scene and line numbers for the plays.

[7] Todd 1:309 ll 49-55, 62-65; see also note to the text 442.

[8] Williamson notes, "in our time commentary on Behn's poetry and drama is beginning to appreciate how thoroughly political much of her work is . . . Continued historical study of Behn's writings will doubtless reveal more ways in which it is implicated in the public life of her time" (282).

[9] Alfred E. Leja includes an in-depth discussion on this group of poems in his unpublished dissertation "Aphra Behn – Tory," University of Texas, 1962.

[10] The novel is "the story of rebellion against [the] conception of selfhood in private life . . . embedded in a story of rebellion against it in public life," Donald R. Wehrs, "Eros, Ethics, Identity: Royalist Feminism and the Politics of Desire in Aphra Behn's Love Letters" Studies in English Literature 32 (1992): 461. Wehrs goes on to show how the decay of private moral values in Behn's characters is a mirror of their public moral values, and he concludes, "just as the betrayal of received 'obligations and concerns' in private life leads to the forfeiture of specifically human identity, so it leads in public life to Hobbes's 'state of nature'" (474).

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[11] Jacqueline Pearson's The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women and Women Dramatists 1642-1737, New York: St. Martin's, 1988, contains an excellent analysis of feminism in Behn's plays. She also has insightful chapters on the Female Wits and Centlivre.

[12] Anne Prescott points out how different Behn's treatment of Angelica Bianca was from her male contemporaries' stage prostitutes: "unlike her male competitors, who portrayed prostitutes as women consumed by concupiscence and acquisitiveness, Behn portrays these prostitutes [Angelica Bianca and La Nuche of Rover II] as complex women painfully aware of the consequences of earning their bread by selling their bodies in a man's world, marked by a lucid comprehension that love exposes them to great risk," "The Dramatic Works of Aphra Behn: A Comparison/Contrast of her View of Women and Their Interaction with Restoration Society with that of her Male Contemporaries," diss., CUNY GSUC, 1992, 78.

[13] Maureen Duffy sees this as part of Behn's point about the marriage mart. Pleading for Lady Fancy's and Wittmore's cause, she notes that it "isn't Lady Fancy's fault or Wittmore's that they are as they are. Money and the marriage market have corrupted them, her because she is dowerless and him because he's the younger son. This marriage to Sir Patient was a contrivance to remedy this" The Passionate Shepherdess: Aphra Behn 1640-1689 (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977) 162-63.

[14] Lady Knowell is the only character of Behn's that Katharine Rogers sees as feminist: "It is not the female intellectual who is humiliated at the end of the play, but her antifeminist adversary. Comic though she is, Lady Knowell is infinitely more human than the learned ladies of Molière and his imitators . . . Among the few middle-aged females in Restoration drama, she stands out as a mature intelligent woman drawn by another mature intelligent woman" Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England, (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1982) 100.

[15] As Elizabeth V. Young observes, in her pastoral poems Behn at first appears to be following conventions about the active male and the passive female, but "the confrontation comes in the poetry's subtexts as the conventions Behn appears to accept suddenly explode with the reversal of gender roles, the redirection of the reader's sympathy, and the constant disorientation of the reader's conventional expectations" (541). For a fuller discussion of Behn's unorthodox use of pastoral convention see her "Aphra Behn, Gender and Pastoral," Studies in English Literature 33 (1993): 523-43.

[16] See Arlene Steibel, "Not Since Sappho: The Erotic in the Poems of Katherine Philips and Aphra Behn," Journal of Homosexuality 23 (1992): 156.

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## Chapter Two

## Catharine Trotter

Catharine Trotter's[1] writings, especially her plays, have often been dismissed as the works of a moralist who tried to proselytize through the medium of the stage. Because of her stated purpose of stage reform and her support of Jeremy Collier, the reputation of her plays has suffered. James Sutherland calls her a "dreary exponent" of drama (English Literature 34) and Alison Fleming, in her much quoted essay "Catharine Trotter--Scots Sappho" writes, "[t]hat her works should quickly perish is not surprising; her plays were bad, her poems were derivative and dull, and her philosophy, being purely interpretive, was similarly doomed" (313). Today her writings are ignored by all but a small number of scholars, since she is not considered "important" or an original thinker.

But when one reads Trotter's works, the picture one gets is of an exceedingly complex and sophisticated thinker. Like Behn before her, Trotter also fits her writing to the taste of the age, which may coincidentally agree with her own natural inclinations. The person who emerges, though, is a staunch feminist. Sometimes it's not what she writes that contains the most powerful message; the mere fact that she writes on the topics she chose to write about is the most powerful message of all. Trotter engaged in philosophical discourse with some of the best minds of her day: Locke, Leibnitz, Gilbert Burnet, and John Norris are among her correspondents. And literary flourishes about her sex aside, all of these men took her and her thinking seriously. She

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was not male or female to them; she was a thinker.

This is the key to reveal Trotter's method. When one strips away all of the platitudes about women being subject to men, which often make Trotter sound very much like Mary Astell, one finds a steady insistence that men and women are intellectual equals. Like Behn's works, Trotter's works have a theory of intellectual androgyny running through them.

Indeed, critics have traditionally seen Trotter's feminism most easily in her pleas for education for, and respect for the intellects of, women. But the vein runs deeper. In her plays, the honor of the female characters goes further than the contemporary meaning of female honor as premarital virginity and married chastity. Her heroines exhibit honor in the male sense of allegiance to a cause and upholding one's public, i.e., political, ideals in the face of adversity and despite one's desires.

In her philosophical tracts, Trotter publicly engages in debate with the men of her time. She does not limit herself to "women's issues," or make coy defenses based on her sex. She argues asexually. She did publish these treatises anonymously at first, because she had been in the public eye long enough to realize that a woman's name would damn her texts, but in her published philosophy her sex is irrelevant. In her personal letters her sex may be mentioned, since obviously her correspondents knew it, but she makes reference to it only when she is angrily defending other women's intellectual capabilities.

The woman who emerges from Trotter's writings is not only complex

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as a thinker, but in her own motivations as well. In fact, she is complex to the point of paradox. Another reason why earlier critics tended to ignore her work is that they saw only one side of the paradox – the stereotypically pious woman of learning whose "character is irreproachable," as she is remembered in the Dictionary of National Biography. Throughout history, unparalleled virtue has unfortunately carried the stigma of being insipidly boring. The almost universal acclaim both Trotter and her writing had for being virtuous may also have prevented them from being studied because of the corresponding image of dullness. But when one does read the work, one finds a consistent theme: the constant struggle it is to be good. There are most definitely "falls" in Trotter's works, and her characters verbalize the internal struggle to an unusual degree. One of the ramifications of this apparent struggle in the works is the difficulty modern scholars seem to have in placing Trotter in the competing "schools" of women writers. She has been placed variously in the "Astrea" school as well as in the seemingly conflicting "Orinda" school.

**Part 1 Biography**

Our misunderstanding of Trotter started with her first biographer, the Rev. Thomas Birch, who also edited Bacon, Milton and Spenser. In 1751, Birch, a friend of Trotter and her husband the Rev. Patrick Cockburn, released the two-volume collection of her works prefaced by his "life," which has become the standard biography. While the biography does give us quite a bit of important information, such as Trotter's antecedents and important events in her life, it reads like a

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hagiography, and since later biographers have followed Birch's account, a cardboard saint is what has been preserved. Yet as the various "confessions" of countless saints from Augustine to Francis to Theresa have shown us, saints are imperfect people who struggle every day to be good. By not allowing that Catharine Trotter to come through, the well-intentioned Birch has done her, and by extension, us, a great disservice.

According to Birch, Trotter, the second of two daughters, was born August 16, 1679.[2] Her mother, Sarah Ballenden (or Ballanden), was closely related to the Scottish noble families of Maitland, dukes of Lauderdale, and Drummond, earls of Perth. Her father, Captain David Trotter, also a Scot, was a commander in the Royal Navy under Charles II. Captain Trotter, whose nickname seems to have been "Honest David," had the favor of both Charles and James, and the Earl of Perth called him an "ornament to his country" (1:iii). Trotter died of the plague while on a mission for the Crown when Catharine was about four. The exact date is unknown, but his will was probated February 9, 1683/4. Birch adds that the family was defrauded of the money Capt. Trotter earned on that expedition, and the goldsmith holding Trotter's money went bankrupt soon after the captain's death. Charles II did award the widow a small pension, but that ended with the king's death less than two years later.

We know that Mrs. Trotter raised her daughters as best she could, living on the charity of her wealthy relations. Birch tells us that Catharine "gave very early marks of her genius" (1:iv). On one

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occasion, she recited to a group of relatives and friends extemporaneous verses on an incident she had seen on the street. She also taught herself French, and with a little assistance, learned Latin and logic. At one point she drew up an abstract of logic for her own use.

In 1693 she published verses to Mr. Bevil Higgons, a minor man of letters, on his recovery from smallpox, and it appears that in that same year she published the novel Olinda's Adventures, a fact Birch omits. The original edition, which appeared in Samuel Briscoe's miscellany Familiar Letters of Love and Gallantry and Several Other Subjects All Written by Ladies, was anonymous, but the editions which appeared in 1718 and 1724 both give the author as "Mrs. Trotter." In his introduction to the Augustan Society's Reprint, Robert Adams Day argues that Catharine Trotter is the most likely author of the work (iii). There is another compelling reason for agreeing with the attribution. In 1718 and 1724 Catharine Trotter was alive and well and at least marginally aware of the literary scene. For a woman as careful with her reputation as she, her silence about the attribution speaks volumes. She surely would have protested had she not been the author. Although in a letter written later in her life she claimed that during the period she was busy raising her family she was ignorant as to what was being written and published in England, the evidence of her vast reading, apparent in her philosophical works which she resumed publishing only two years after the 1724 edition of Olinda's Adventures, proves her comment disingenuous. She also had a number of literate friends in London who could have called her attention to a novel falsely released

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under her name.

In 1695 Agnes de Castro went on the boards, followed by The Fatal Friendship two years later. In 1700 her only comedy, Love at a Loss: or the Most Votes Carry It, was staged. She returned to tragedy the following year with The Unhappy Penitent. Before her last play was presented, Trotter entered the world of philosophy with the publication of her Defense of the Essay on Human Understanding. Her last play, The Revolution of Sweden, was presented in 1706.

It was during this period that Trotter was attacked as Calista, "a Lady that pretends to the Learned languages, and assumes to her self the Name of Critick" in The Female Wits (1696). Calista is "a precocious brat who apes the learning of her male counterparts" (Finke 64), and indeed, Calista's "learning" is harped upon. During the course of the play Marsilia (Manley) describes Calista as "the vainest, proudest, senseless Thing, she pretends to Grammar, writes in Mood and Figure; does every thing methodically" (Hook 5).

If the goal of the author of The Female Wits may have been to banish women playwrights through humiliation, it didn't work. Trotter's next play8 appeared the following year. Indeed, the only effect the attack seems to have had on Trotter is that she gave her plays to Betterton's rival troupe until 1700, when the Drury Lane troupe changed management.

Although reared in the Church of England, at some point during her early life Trotter converted to Roman Catholicism, much to the chagrin of some of her important Church of England friends. But by 1707,

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convinced that the Anglican Church was the true faith, she returned to the fold. The seriousness with which she made this decision is evidenced in her work A Discourse Concerning A Guide in Controversies in Two Letters with a preface by Bishop Burnet, first published in 1707 and reprinted in Edinburgh in 1728.

Her return to the Church of England also allowed her to marry the man of her choice – the Reverend Patrick Cockburn – in the beginning of 1708. Birch calls Cockburn "a man of considerable learning" (1:xxxv), mentioning one political and three theological publications of his, one published posthumously. Cockburn was the son of a Dr. Cockburn, an "eminent and learned divine of Scotland" (xxxiii) who was first attached to the Court of St. Germain, France, but was so inflexibly Protestant that he had to quit it. For a while he was a minister of the Church of England in Amsterdam, but ended his days serving in Middlesex.

In her introduction to the recent reprints of Trotter's plays, Edna Steeves draws the inference that since Trotter stopped playwrighting after her marriage, "playwrighting was not considered a proper occupation for a clergyman's wife" (xiv), as Trotter explains in the letter mentioned above, which she wrote, but never sent, to Alexander Pope:

> 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 I scarce knew, whether there was any such thing as books, plays or poems stirring in Great Britain. ("Life" 1:xl)

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Cockburn's refusal to sign the oath of allegiance to George I (an action seemingly at odds with Trotter's own Whig stance), caused him to lose his position as curate at St. Dunstan's, Fleetstreet, and made the family's existence a rocky one. According to Birch, they were "reduced to great difficulties," and Cockburn taught Latin at an academy in Chancery Lane in order to get by (1:xxxiv).

By 1726 Cockburn "was reconciled" (1:xxxiv) to taking the oath, signed it, and was made minister for the Church of England in Aberdeen. Matters improved further when he was also given the living of Long Horsley, Northumberland, which he held in absentia for almost ten years. By 1737 the condition in that parish was so bad that it could no longer be ignored, so the Cockburns were called to live there, and that is where Cockburn died in January 1748/9. Within five months Trotter followed him to the grave. The epitaph is from Proverbs: "Let their works praise them at the gates."

By January 1726/7, though, Trotter had again entered the public forum with her Letter to Dr. Holdsworth, followed by her A Vindication of Mr. Locke's Christian Principles, from the Injurious Imputations of Dr. Holdsworth. She continued to write and publish until a few years before her death, at which time she was working on the subscription edition of her works that Birch ultimately completed.

Birch's only acknowledgment in the "Life" that there ever had been any question of Trotter's morality was his remark that Delarivier Manley had spread some vicious gossip about Trotter in her History of Rivella, Memoirs of Europe and The New Atalantis, but he dismisses the scandal:

> such a pen as Mrs. Manley's can injure no reputation but her

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> own; and the occasion of her resentment does honour to Mrs. Cockburn, as the only provocation to it was the withdrawing of herself from the acquaintance she once had with Mrs. Manley, on account of the licentiousness both of her writings and conduct. (1:xlvii-xlviii)

The rumors that had prompted this denial were Manley's pillorying of Trotter in her highly popular narratives. In The New Atalantis, using the code name "Daphne," Manley says of Trotter, "she has an Air of Youth and Innocence, which has been of excellent use to her in those occasions she has had since to use upon the World, as to Matters of Conduct!" (1:585). She also tells us that Daphne is a playwright, and implies that she is in a lesbian relationship. Manley also states that Daphne has an older male lover whose story closely follows that of Cleander in Olinda's Adventures.

> I could enumerate, were it not too tedious, many of Daphne's Adventures; by which she was become the Diversion of as many of the Town as found her to their Taste, and wou'd purchase: Yet she still assum'd the Air of Virtue pretended, and was ever eloquent (according to her own stiff manner) upon the Foible of others. She also fitted herself with an excellent Mask call'd Religion; having as often changed, and as often professed herself a Votary to that Shrine, where was to be found the most apparent Interest, or which Priest had the greatest Art of Persuading. (1:587)

Daphne goes on the marry a clergyman to save herself from falling into extreme contempt once her youth and beauty were fading.

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The satirical treatment of Trotter in Memoirs of Europe is brief. There she is identified as Läis, a legendary prostitute of the classical past. But Manley gives her a fuller treatment in The History of Rivella. There Manley presents Calista, the name used to satirize Trotter in The Female Wits, as a "sister authoress" who comes to plead for Rivella's help in saving a man of her acquaintance, Cleander. In the key we learn that Cleander is John Tilly, a real-life lover of Manley. Rivella asks Calista if she is asking help for her lover, and "Calista who was the most of a Prude in her outward Professions, and the least of it in her inward Practice, unless you'll think it no Prudery to allow Freedoms with the Air of Restraint," smugly answers, no (2:802).

Rivella later humorously relates that Cleander confessed to her that "Calista was the first lady that had ever made him unfaithful to his Wife" (2:837). His story is that Calista's mother, being in debt to him, "offered her Daughter's Security" (2:837). We are then told that "Rivella laugh'd in her turn, because Calista had given herself Airs of not visiting Rivella, now she was made Town Talk by her scandalous Intriegue [sic] with Cleander" (2:838).

According to Jacqueline Pearson, Manley is the only critic of Trotter's morals (181), but this statement isn't quite true. The anonymous author of Animadversions on Mr. Congreve's Late Answer to Mr. Collier (1698) attacks Trotter more than once. In the opening poem he attacks Trotter and Pix together in the longest stanza in the work. To quote it almost in its entirety:

> Or I could write like the two Female Things,
> With Muse Pen-feather'd, guiltless yet of wings;

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And yet, it strives to Fly, and thinks it Sings.
Just like the Dames themselves, who flaunt in Town,
And flutter loosley, but to tumble down.
The last that writ, of these presuming two,
(For that Queen Ca----ne 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 to 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.

(18-34)

The "two Female Things" can be identified as Trotter and fellow playwright Mary Pix through the allusions to both Pix's Queen Catherine and the dedication to Princess Anne of Trotter's The Fatal Friendship in which Trotter claims glory for her sex. The sexual innuendoes and puns here are perfectly clear. Later in the main text the author refers to "the Lightness in both Head and Tail of the presuming T----r" (14). While it was a long established tradition to attack the chastity of females who presumed to write, one must wonder if there's more to these aspersions than conventional misogyny.

Some have argued that Manley's attack springs from political

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differences. Trotter's closeness to high-ranking Whigs would have been reason enough for Manley to attack, but there was something more. While Manley was not reticent when attacking political enemies, I find it very strange that her attitude towards Trotter could change so radically in such a relatively short time. In 1696 Manley contributed this highly complimentary commendatory verse for Trotter's Agnes de Castro:

> 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 favor of our kind
> With Stronger Arms, their empire have disjoined
> And snatcht the Lawrel which they thought their Prize. . . .

Of course, poetry of praise need not be sincere, but Manley need not have written the commendatory verse had she disliked Trotter.

There is a very unusual passage in Trotter's collected letters which I can't explain, but its presence may illuminate much, not only the severity of the rift between Trotter and Manley, but especially a number of the seeming paradoxes surrounding Trotter. On December 13, 1707, when she was twenty-eight years old and engaged to Cockburn, Trotter wrote a long, rambling letter to her friend George Burnet. In the middle of it comes this rather confusing paragraph:

> Yet even from thence, I may send you something new; and I believe you will be surprized to know, that the lady, with whom I went to the country, was Mr. Le Clerc's sister-in-law, the youngest mistress Leti, who is married to my son,

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> and has already made me a Grandmother. He had reasons to conceal his marriage for some time, but he has now owned it to his relations, so that I am at liberty to speak of it. This business took up much of my time last winter, and occasioned some things in my conduct since, which perhaps you might take ill; but I was not mistress of another's secrets, and was obliged to do nothing, that might endanger the discovery of it. She is now gone to Holland, where her husband will meet her, and next May I hope they will return here together. I am extremely pleas'd with his choice: she has many virtues, that will greatly supply her want of fortune; which, though the great motive of most marriages, perhaps, oftner hinders, than it makes the happiness of them. Bating that, she is all that I could have wish'd in a wife for him; and I have a double satisfaction to find in a worthy daughter an agreeable and affectionate friend. Her elder sister in now at Hanover, of whom I hear a great character: Mrs. Burnet in particular (who saw her there) says extraordinary things of her. (2:203)

The letter then goes on to discuss mundane matters like Lady Burnet's health and Mr. Cockburn's visit. But one thing is clear: that it is indeed Catharine and not her mother or older sister writing. It also seems clear that in this letter Catharine Trotter, the epitome of chaste womanhood, is discussing her son, who is old enough to be a married father himself. There is no evidence that Cockburn, who was only a year older than Trotter, had a child by a previous marriage or liaison, so

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she cannot be speaking of a step-son. If this letter means what it appears to mean, Trotter had an illegitimate child when she was a young girl of 12 or 13. While not impossible, this is not probable. The more likely explanation is that Trotter lied about her age, and Birch, who supplies us with her birthdate, either went along with the lie or did not know it for one. Trotter must have been closer to 35 when this letter was written. She still could have had her child when she was around 16, thus been a grandmother 19 or 20 years later.

Trotter was probably involved in some sort of marriage to the father of the child. Since the Burnets, including Lady Burnet, wife of the powerful Bishop Gilbert Burnet, knew of the child, there had to have been some kind of marriage ceremony involved in order to allow Trotter's continued acceptance into society. But the fact that this marriage is never discussed in any contemporary sources or subsequent biographies leads me to believe that perhaps some questions could have been raised about its validity. Perhaps Trotter was below the age of consent, or there was some question about the man's qualifications for marriage – perhaps a living wife or a pre-nuptial contract with another.

Unfortunately, the only clues we have to the identity of the father come from fiction – Olinda's Adventures and Manley's narratives. Trotter's fiction, once thought to be written when she was fourteen years old, is the tale of a young girl's virtuous defense of her honor against the advances of an older, married, and powerful lover, Cloridon. Although she loves him, she loves her honor more, so she allows her mother to arrange a marriage for her which Cloridon uses his position to thwart. By the end of the tale, young Olinda has retired to the country

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to await the death of Cloridon's wife so that they may be honorably married.

Robert Adams Day calls the narrative "surprisingly mature" and adds that if it is the work of a girl of fourteen, "we must look to the juvenilia of Jane Austen for the first comparable phenomenon."[3] The maturity of style and theme now have a different explanation. Day also writes that "its virtues could also be explained in part by seeing it as a romanticized autobiography" (iv). Indeed, Olinda is most likely romanticized autobiography, but it was the work of an older Trotter-- perhaps sixteen to eighteen years old, and most likely a mother by that time.

The story in Olinda's Adventures, then, is an "improved" set of the facts of Trotter's life, just as Manley's version of the story is "maliciously distorted" (Day v). Indeed, it now looks as though the facts have been improved more than most readers ever thought, and perhaps Manley hit closer to the mark than most ever suspected. But no matter how much the truth was distorted in these two accounts, these "facts" would point to a much older, powerful man being the father of Trotter's child. Both authors give the same type of man as the lover, and perhaps his position would account for Trotter's later acceptance into society. This would perhaps explain Trotter's attitude towards marriage as evidenced in some of her letters to Burnet. She mentions to him that she isn't inclined towards marriage, yet within a few years she decides to marry a clergyman. Perhaps a young widowhood allowed a remarriage, something she could not attempt with her first husband still alive. Obviously, there was something wrong with the marriage, either

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technically or between the two partners, since it was never publicly discussed. One can only suppose and construct possibilities, but to use Trotter's own drama for a clue, in The Fatal Friendship, Felicia, who has been secretly married for two years and has just learned that her husband has publicly married her kinswoman Lamira, tells Lamira:

> The Marriage Vows are not conditional,
> The Tye's as strong, my Duty still the same,
> Howe'er he fail in his.
>
> (5.1.41-43)

This line of inquiry raises a whole set of questions that are beyond the scope of this dissertation, but they are definitely worth exploring. If Trotter is discussing the child with Burnet, the boy was obviously not shunted entirely out of her life, but how was he raised? Trotter is clearly acknowledged as his mother, but there is absolutely no evidence of him in her life in London. How secret was this child? Who was his caretaker when he was young? His existence could not have been generally known or surely he would have been referred to in The Female Wits or some of the other satires.

Bishop Burnet's wife had reservations about the playwright's reputation, and when Locke expressed a desire to send Trotter a thank-you gift for her published defense of his writing, Lady Burnet wrote to him:

> the fassion of her religion which allows great libertys, her stract curcumstances, and being forced as it were to write plays, and consequently to contract Idle acquaintance, has left great blemishes on her reputation, and tho I am very

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> willing to think her in great measure injured, yet my charity will be laughed at if not sencured [sic] should I show that regard that is due to her good understanding. (qtd in Medoff 41)

Perhaps Lady Burnet knew another secret of her friend's and did not want to recommend her wholeheartedly to Mr. Locke? The language in this letter points to that possibility. Lady Burnet feels Trotter "in great measure injured" by someone or something.

Until more is learned about this possible son, we will not know the answers to these questions. Indeed, it is very surprising that this letter was even included in the collection, since Birch was so careful about censoring the material that did get in. He didn't even mention Olinda's Adventures, and he chose to omit four of the plays, only publishing The Fatal Friendship, even though he had all five available while he was preparing the collection. He also censored some of the "potentially embarrassing fan letters from effusive male admirers . . . as well as the warm epistles of Trotter's devoted friend, Lady Piers" (Medoff 47).

This entire episode does seem a bit fantastic today, but if contemporary satire is to be believed, this type of "disappearing baby" scenario was not unusual in the world of the theater. In A Comparison Between the Two Stages, Ramble, Critick and Sullen are discussing the morality of theater people. Critick brings up the point that many are mothers without being married and explains:

> [t]hey trade like our East-India ships, they take in their Lading the beginning of Winter, and having calculated the

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Voyage just for Nine Months, it falls out very opportunely for 'em to unlade again in the long Vacation.

**Sullen**: That is--when the Town's empty, the Play-houses shut up; and a ramble into the Country for six Weeks brings it all about. (19-20)

He later adds that "to this Day, after such an exploit as I have been telling you, one of 'em wou'd perswade the Town that she's an Immaculate Virgin" (21). And the practice isn't limited to the actresses, either. As Critick assures his listeners, such immoral behavior is practiced by all – "the Players, the Dancers, the Poets and the Masters" (21). One can't help but think of Trotter's situation.

No matter what the facts turn out to be, it is difficult not to have one's readings of Trotter's work colored by them. I have already mentioned the effect this information has on one's reading of Olinda's Adventures, and Trotter's constant warnings in her plays and poetry about the faithlessness of men become more poignant. Almost all of her songs deal with this topic. "The Caution" is quite explicit in pointing out the danger:

Soft kisses may be innocent,
But, ah! too easy maid, beware;
Tho' that is all thy kindness meant,
'Tis love's delusive fatal snare.
No virgin e'er at first design'd
Thro' all the maze of love to stray,
But each new path allures her mind,

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> Till wand'ring on, she lose her way.
>
> (2:568 ll. 1-8)

The fate of the secretly married pair in her play The Fatal Friendship is much more heart-rending in light of this possible child, and her words to her Cockburn son in her "Letter of Advice to her Son" take on a particular urgency. She could have been speaking from experience when she wrote:

> for no one knows how far their passions may carry them, if they once give way to them. There are not a few instances of persons not viciously inclined, who have by degrees been drawn into attempts or compliances, which they have imagin'd themselves incapable of, and which have ended in ruin, grief, and remorse. (2:121)

Thanks to Birch's hagiography, Trotter has rested secure in the reputation he helped her win. True, she had started to build it herself – her own children were unfamiliar with their mother's early works (Medoff 47) – but he effectively stopped further inquiry with his effusive language and authoritative tone, and no biographer since has even attempted to corroborate his facts.

Before moving on to a closer examination of her works, I would like briefly to discuss the people of Trotter's circle, for they help shed light on Trotter herself. In the theater world, Trotter and Pix may have spent some time together, since they are linked together three times in Animadversions on Mr. Congreve's Late Answer to Mr. Congreve, but that could have been prompted by the fact that they were both protégés of Congreve. Trotter provided an epilogue to Pix's Queen

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Catherine, but that can also be explained as customary practice. That Trotter was friendly with Congreve we know, since we have the letter he sent her in reference to a draft of Revolution in Sweden which she had sent to him for review and commentary. His answer shows an easy familiarity between the two.

One close friendship we are sure of is with Lady Sarah Piers. Trotter's letters are full of references to visiting or staying with Piers, and Trotter dedicated Love at a Loss to her. A poet in her own right, Piers often wrote poems to preface others' works, and she was "Urania" in The Nine Muses collection, nine elegies for John Dryden written by women – Trotter, Pix, Manley and Sarah Fyge Egerton among them. One of Piers's commendatory poems can be found prefacing The Unhappy Penitent. But although she wrote, she was "more of a patron than a creative force in the literary set she was a part of at the end of the seventeenth century" (Todd Dictionary 250). The letters between Trotter and Piers, dating from the mid-90s until 1709 "attest to a deep and passionate friendship" (Medoff 207 n 42).[4]

Trotter was also a close friend of both Bishop Gilbert Burnet and his wife, the "pious Elizabeth Burnet," the author of the well known Method of Devotion, as well as members of their extended family. Many of the letters between the bishop's cousin George and Trotter appear in her collected works. Indeed, George may have been her suitor at one point. Bishop Burnet is the same one Behn addressed in her poem discussed in the last chapter. The bishop was a prolific writer himself with a notable "intellectual integrity" (Sutherland English Literature 251). His works, which number thirteen volumes, include the "fascinating

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and at times moving" Some Passages of the Life and Death of John Earl of Rochester, published in 1680 ; the influential History of the Reformation in three volumes; and the posthumously published but important Bishop Burnet's History of his Own Time (1723), "a blend of history, autobiography, anecdote, mixed with shrewd and well-informed, but also at times ill-formed, comments on the world of his own day" (Sutherland 282).[5]

Burnet was a leading Whig, and he "played a considerable part as a Whig bishop from his ordination in 1689 until his death in 1715" (250). Although Trotter denied she was a Whig, she "wrote three occasional poems singing the praises of Whig luminaries" (Clark 50). She most definitely was acquainted with the Marlborough family, and the connection may have come through her sister's husband Ingliss, physician-general to the Army. The Duke of Marlborough admired the verses Trotter had written about him after his victory at Blenheim, and it is likely that Ingliss brought the verses to the Duke (xii).
We also know that one of Trotter's correspondents was John Norris, an Oxford man, who was "the last offshoot of the Cambridge Platonists" and an "English follower of Malebranche, holding with the French philosopher the idealist position that 'we see all things in God'" (Sutherland English Literature 348). Norris had been a correspondent of Mary Astell's since 1693, and as early as 1690 she had been trying to persuade Norris of the truth of Locke's essay, though by 1705 she had turned against Locke (Hill 49). The relationship between Astell and Norris is important, because there are such clear parallels between Astell and Trotter that Trotter must have been influenced by Astell's

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works. It appears that Astell knew Thomas Birch as well (Hill 10), so I am convinced that if these two women never met (and there is absolutely no evidence to support such a claim) they must have known of one another. I cannot see both Norris and Birch corresponding with two women on philosophical matters during this period and not mentioning one to the other.

Like Trotter, Astell was sufficiently familiar with Scripture and the contemporary theological debates to take on some of the leading religious thinkers of her time. And like Trotter she was full of paradoxes in her thinking; for instance, though a devout Anglican, Astell still felt and resented the pressure put on women by Church authorities to be subservient to men and be silent and obedient wives (Hill 2).

**Part 2 The Works**

Trotter's feminism was only one aspect of her writing that makes her forward-reaching, and Mary Astell was not the only contemporary philosopher whose views were manifested in Trotter's work. She was also writing in the more sentimental mode suggested by Jeremy Collier's calls for stage reform.[6] Janet Todd gives an excellent working definition of sentimentalism in her study Sentimentalism: An Introduction in which she lists the great archetypal victims: "the chaste suffering woman, happily rewarded in marriage or elevated into redemptive death, and the sensitive, benevolent man whose feelings are too exquisite for the acquisitiveness, vulgarity and selfishness of his world" (4). Both types are found in Trotter's plays.

Todd also notes the influence of Locke's Essay Concerning Human

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Understanding on sentimentalism, and that the Second Earl of Shaftesbury, who was a pupil of Locke's, "is often considered the founder of, or the prime influence on, sentimental philosophy of the moral sense school" (24). Trotter not only read and approved of Locke, she wrote in his defense; she whole-heartedly supported the premises of his Essay. It is not remarkable then that her plays tend toward the sentimental.

Finally, Trotter looks both forward and back to Behn's influence in her first major published work, Olinda's Adventures. The epistolary narrative looks back to Behn's Love Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister, and together the two anticipate later works of Richardson and Fielding.

Originally published anonymously, Olinda was rather successful. It had the "nearly unique distinction" of being translated into French as Les Amours d'une belle Angloise: ou la vie et les adventures de la jeune Olinde: Ecrites par Elle mesme en forme de lettre a un Chevalier de ses amis (Olinda ii-iii). The 1718 edition was part of a "best of/most popular of" collection of Samuel Briscoe's miscellanies, appearing in the august company of Pope's first letter of Heloise to Abelard and writing by Behn, Dennis, Otway, Etherege, Dryden, Manley, Farquhar and Centlivre (Olinda ii). Olinda is story of a young girl's defense of her honor in the face of seduction by an older, powerful and experienced lover. But that is just one aspect of the story. In the tale, Olinda is writing letters to her platonic friend, Cleander, telling of the romantic adventures of her young life, of which she has had many. Throughout the course of this relatively short narrative,

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Olinda has <u>seven</u> lovers: her first fiancé, Berontus, a goldsmith who loses his fortune and is therefore unable to fulfill his agreement with Olinda's mother; an old Dutch colonel of 60 who asks Olinda to be his mistress and whom she coldly refuses; an army officer who is delightful company until Olinda realizes he has improper intentions; a French beau in whom Olinda is not at all interested; Cloridon, the above-mentioned older lover; Antonio, a foreigner who discovers Olinda's and Cloridon's love, loves Olinda in vain, and finally goes off to his own country to pine for her; and finally, Orontes, Olinda's second fiancé. Cloridon prevents the marriage and Orontes ends up dead from smallpox.

There is also a subplot involving Cleander's growing love for Olinda's friend Ambrisia and Olinda's encouragement of the relationship. In order to encourage him in his suit, Olinda gives her friend much insight into the workings of women's minds while they are being courted. Day calls this subplot "ingenious" and explains that it "varies the narrative and helps the letters to seem like genuine correspondence" (<u>Told in Letters</u> 184). For this subplot and for its sense of timing and suspense, Trotter shows "an awareness of fictional mechanics that is far from elementary" (Day <u>Olinda</u> vi).

Olinda herself is a much more pleasant character than a modern reader would anticipate after reading Trotter's critics. She has a sense of humor, and while proper, she's never pompous. She occasionally makes jokes at her own expense. Olinda intrigues with her lover but always maintains her honor. But it is a struggle for her (and a humanizing trait); she acknowledges the dangers of passion in one of her letters to Cleander:

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> I find by Experience 'tis but bravely, heartily, and thoroughly Resolving upon a thing, and 'tis half done: There's no Passion, no Temptation so strong, but Resolution can be overcome: All is to be able to Resolve; there's the Point, for one must lose a little of the first Ardour before one can do that, and many of our Sex have ruin'd themselves for want of time to think. 'Tis not a constant settled purpose of Virtue will do; there must be particular Resolutions for a particular attack. (12)

Olinda is tempted throughout the story, and gets angry at herself for loving Cloridon, so much of the story can be seen as a young woman's working out of her improper feelings towards a married man. Of course, readers get the idea that Olinda's virtue will be rewarded at some point in the future. She is being handsomely provided for, without having to sacrifice her honor, and the paragon of a man who loves her will someday be hers. She is not one of Behn's sprightly heroines who actively finds herself a proper love. In fact, Olinda is totally obedient to her mother's wishes, but she is not far from the Behnian characters who know their own worth and find a suitable mate.

After the anonymous publication of <u>Olinda's Adventures</u>, Trotter moved into the world of theater, where her plays run the gamut from fair to terrible. Her four tragedies are uneven, but her comedy, something she saw as a sop to current tastes, is quite readable today. Had she not felt comedy to be slightly improper, Trotter might be better known today, for she shows a flair for it. She was openly a follower of Collier, yet her tragedies contain the usual number of bloody deaths in

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the fifth act, and sex is a theme in her comedy and apparent in her tragedies as well. It is not the "wink, nudge" type of sexual humor found in the comedies of the 70s, but some of the discussions of sex are quite frank.

Her plays do have some strengths. She shows a keen insight into emotional dilemmas and depicts them vividly. She also has a good sense of plotting and stagecraft. If Trotter hadn't had such a strong agenda as a stage reformer, she could have written better plays. Her comedy Love at a Loss, her least didactic play, shows much more promise than her stilted "lesson" plays. And her instincts as a playwright were good. She knew the public would have trouble accepting The Revolution of Sweden as written, but she presented it anyway to make her point. While not a total disaster, the play is too long, overly didactic, and lacks sufficient stage action to keep an audience's attention. Some of her plays were modestly successful in her own day, but as the eighteenth century progressed, attitudes towards Trotter's plays changed. Indeed, by 1751 only one was deemed "good" enough to be included in her collected works.[6]

Agnes de Castro was produced at Drury Lane some time in December 1695 (see Clark 65-66). It was based on Behn's narrative of the same name, and indeed, passages from Behn's version are lifted verbatim. According to Giles Jacob's Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets (1719), the play "met with very good success" when it opened (260). Perhaps this was for the novelty of its being by a woman, but it was not a bad play by any means. And the fact that it was a success is "worth noting since its competition at Lincoln's Inn Fields was

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Congreve's Love for Love" (Steeves xi).

Originally presented as "by a Young lady," Agnes de Castro is the story of a royal love triangle. The prince of Portugal is in love with his wife's highly virtuous lady-in-waiting, Agnes. To complicate matters, Elvira, his ex-lover, who thought she would marry the prince, is jealously plotting to destroy his happiness. Her brother Alvaro, the King's favorite, is also in love with Agnes and wants her for himself. Meanwhile, Agnes doesn't want either of the men. She does not love Alvaro, but she does love her mistress and is far too loyal to return the prince's affection. In Trotter's version of the story, the princess is murdered by Elvira, who goes mad; Alvaro, trying to kill the prince, accidentally stabs Agnes to death, and the prince is only saved from committing suicide by his duty to the throne and the people.[7]

For those familiar with Behn's Agnes, this play is a very different affair. While the main characters are the same, Trotter attempts to work within the unities by allowing her play a twenty-four-hour time span. To accommodate condensation, Trotter must do much cutting, since Behn's version covers a four- or five-year time span. Trotter eliminates certain antecedent action, i.e., the prince's first marriage to Bianca and his early affair with Elvira. In Behn's version, the princess dies of grief, the prince and Agnes are secretly married, Alvaro kills Agnes, and the prince spends the rest of his life seeking revenge. Trotter adds the princess's murder, the madness of Elvira, and changes the ending so that the prince fulfills his duty.

Trotter's Agnes opens with a strong women-only scene. The two villainesses, Elvira and her woman Bianca, are plotting against the

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prince, the princess and Agnes. But before the audience enters the world of Agnes, they are welcomed into the theater by a highly misogynistic prologue written by William Wycherley. Originally spoken by Mr. Powell, who played the prince, it reads in part:

> To day, t'incite your Charity the more,
> A Female Author does your smiles implore;
> Not but I fear, 'tis now a thing uncommon,
> For Men of Wit to raise a falling Woman!
> Why should vain man the Gift of Sense engross?
> Since Woman's Wit was never at a loss?
> Husbands to Wives their Whoring must reveal,
> (For Unfed Passions will expect their meal)
> But Womens Wits with Ease their Roving Love conceal.
> And Faith inspight of all the Hen-Peckt Fools can do,
> They've oft the Breeches worn, why not the Lawrel too!
>
> (7-17)

Because contemporary theater audiences viewed prologues as status items, (the "name" of the author was the most important detail), content was often irrelevant. But for readers of the printed play, these lines can unfortunately undercut the strength of the women to follow. It is also a strange prologue in light of the plot, because the play is about a man whose love has strayed – the women are totally faithful throughout.

The play continues to be female-driven. It is "unusual in allowing women to speak more than half the lines" (Pearson 188). Jacqueline Pearson calls this Trotter's "most radical play" (23), and sees Trotter becoming more conventional with each play. Perhaps in form

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and in number of lines spoken by women, yes; but the women in Revolution of Sweden are much more radical than the Princess and Agnes. While both are paragons of virtue who sentimentally go on to redemptive and elevating deaths, both are passive participants in the drama of their lives. Agnes's most "radical" act is refusing to honor the king's wish that she marry his favorite, Alvaro. The King orders her, but she steadfastly refuses to marry without love.

Kathryn Kendall sees a different emphasis in Agnes's character, linking her to some of Aphra Behn's poetry. "Trotter's Agnes de Castro is probably the first lesbian heroine in English stage history" ("Lesbian Heroine" 9). She sees the play as about the "love of two women and how that love triumphs over the conflict caused by a man" (9).[8] While this is indeed the story of the love of two female friends, the princess is in love with her husband and pines for the loss of his love. Kendall's argument has some basis, though, for Agnes clearly holds the princess as her primary love object. Perhaps Agnes can be seen as a lesbian, and the play loses nothing if she is, but Trotter's message was that love and friendship are highly important no matter what sex is involved. She was operating under the theory, which she shared with Behn, that the soul is androgynous, and that therefore emotions can be as well. Although the princess loved her husband, she loved Agnes as well. Trotter is showing us that jealousy is not an automatic emotion of the female sex; in fact, although it is Elvira's motivation, we also see it as Alvaro's main motivation.

In April or May 1698 Trotter's second play, The Fatal Friendship, was presented at Lincoln's Inn Fields (LS 1:117). It concerns the fate

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of a secretly married pair, Felicia and Grammont, whose poverty is causing them to be pressured into marrying others for money. Felicia's guardian, her brother Belgard, insists she marry Count Roquelaure, Grammont's father, while at the same time Bellgard is attempting a match between his kinswoman, the wealthy widow Lamira, and his friend Castilio. Count Roquelaure is also trying to match Lamira, but with his son, Grammont. Unbeknownst to Felicia, her infant son, who is hidden away with a nurse at the sea shore, has been kidnapped by pirates and is being held for ransom. If the ransom is not paid, the child will be murdered. In a subplot, Grammont's friend Castilio, who is secretly in love with Lamira, is unjustly imprisoned for treason without bail money.

In order to save his child and friend, Grammont agrees to marry Lamira, but after the ceremony, he refuses to consummate the marriage. Suspecting infidelity, Lamira vows revenge. When Felicia discovers the marriage, she confesses her marriage to her brother, who also vows revenge. In the meantime, Lamira has enraged Castilio against his friend Grammont, and Castilio seeks revenge as well. In the last act, Grammont and Felicia are reconciled, as are Grammont and Castilio, but in the final scene come the inevitable deaths. While trying to break up a duel between Castilio and Bellgard, Grammont kills his friend. He stabs himself to death just as a messenger arrives from his father saying that all is forgiven, and that Felicia and the child will be cared for by him. Castilio has also been cleared of all charges.

This is not a bad play. The plot moves along at a fast clip, and while sentimental, it is not sloppy. The fifth act holds the reader in suspense, and the ending is surprisingly moving. The play was

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successful in its own day. As Charles Gildon notes:

> I need say nothing of this play, the town has prevented by 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 severer and abler judges. (179)

Trotter is also toasted in A Comparison Between the Two Stages, which Gildon may have written, but the tone of the passage is more condescending than complimentary.[9]

This was the only play of Trotter's that Birch saw fit to include in her collected works. And as the Biographia Dramatica notes, it is "still thought the most perfect of her dramatic performances" (720). But all of this praise did not protect the play from detractors. In the later eighteenth century, James Beattie wrote that it "ought to have been suppressed" for it showed Trotter to be "at eighteen a greater adept in love matters than unmarried women of her age ought to be" (qtd in Maison 406).

In the dedication to the very High Church and firmly religious Princess Anne, Trotter wrote that the aim of the play is "to discourage Vice, and recommend a firm unshaken Virtue," so it is no surprise to find that Jeremy Collier admired the play.

Like some of Behn's works, the play itself is not particularly feminist in tone, though there are a few telling asides. As with Behn's work, the preface makes a feminist statement. Trotter writes: "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

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recommend herself by what the other Sex think their peculiar Prerogative." And, she realizes, since so few of her sex have even attempted public play writing, this alone "may draw some malice on me." Trotter's hope is that the patronage of such an illustrious princess as Anne will protect her.

While all of the commendatory verses which preface the published play applaud Trotter's reforming stance, some are also feminist in tone. One anonymous offering adds Trotter's name to feminist history by linking her to both Aphra Behn and Katherine Phillips:

> The fam'd Orinda's and Astrea's Lays,
> With never dying Wit, bless'd Charles's Days,
> And we suppos'd Wit cou'd no higher rise,
> Till you succeeding Tear from them the Prize.
>
> (1-4)

And another anonymous poem from a man uses even stronger language:

> In Body weak, more Impotent of Mind —
> Thus some have represented Woman-kind;
> But you your Sexes Champion are come forth
> To fight their Quarrel, and assert their Worth.
> Our Salique Law of Wit you have destroy'd,
> Established Female Claim, and Triumph'd o'er our Pride.
>
> (26-31)

In the play itself, the two main female characters, Felicia and Lamira, are very different indeed, most obviously in their respective financial situations. Lamira is a wealthy widow while Felicia is financially dependent upon her brother. Again we see money as a motive

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in Trotter's work. Lamira's financial independence and widowhood give her much more freedom than the poor and dependent Felicia can assert. On the whole, Lamira has better lines than Felicia.

Lamira is presented as the villainess, but Trotter builds sympathy for her. She is as greatly wronged as Felicia, and her villainy comes from her desire for revenge and her attempts to hurt her cousin Felicia, not from inherent evil.

Felicia, on the other hand, is never anything less than the wronged heroine. Impoverished, she is financially dependent upon her brother, but she is emotionally independent enough to marry Grammont secretly against her brother's wishes. As Grammont's own financial distress makes her unable to announce her marriage, she still lives on her brother's beneficence. At times her brother tries to act the tyrant with her. In Act I, when he is trying to force her to marry the Count, he tells her:

> I wou'd prevent your ruine and my own;
> And if you'd have me still a Parent to you,
> I shall expect th' obedience of a Daughter.
>
> (1.1.101-103)

The hypocrisy of his position is revealed in the very next scene when he is trying to convince his cousin Lamira to marry his friend Castilio. He points out to her that her parents had forced her to marry someone she didn't love, but now that she's finally a widow, she deserves "to let her heart direct her second choice" (1.2.94). The irony of the situation is that this is exactly what he is denying his own sister.

While hurt by Grammont's apparent infidelity, Felicia remains true

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to him and true to her marriage vows. But she does accept guilt for her actions. When she has confessed her marriage to her brother after learning of Grammont's bigamy, she lets him rant, then answers, "O I deserve this, that cou'd deceive/ And disobey the best of Brothers" (3.2.91-92). Of course, her brother immediately forgives her, asserting his position as her protector:

> Alas, she moves my soul—Prithee, no more;
> Thy fault was great; but now thy Punishment
> Has so exceeded it, I must forgive thee;
> Rise, Felicia; I am still a Brother;
> Wipe off these Tears; thou shalt have Justice done thee,
> Trust me, thou shalt.
>
> (3.2.108-113)

At the end of the play Felicia is rewarded by gaining a "father" in Count Roquelaure and control of Lamira's fortune, but she loses her husband to death. Lamira retires from the world, to live her days as a "holy nun" in seclusion and away from perfidious men.

For her third play, Trotter chose a more Behnian form, the intrigue comedy. Love at a Loss; or The Most Votes Carry It opened at Drury Lane on November 23, 1700 (LS 2:5). The play was not a success, and according to Biographia Dramatica, the published version was so poorly done that it angered Trotter. It claims that she later revised it as The Honorable Deceivers; or, All Right at the Last, but no copies of that edition survive (1:722).

The play involves three couples: Lucilia and Phillabel, the moral "voices" of the play; Miranda and Constant; and Lesbia and Beaumine, a

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rake who is eventually reformed. Each couple has its own subplot, and they intertwine throughout the play until all are righted in the final scene. At her woman Lysetta's urging, Lucilia has written letters to a "vain affected fellow," Cleon, who now threatens to break up her pending marriage to Phillabel. She plots to avoid that disaster, since she very much wants to marry Phillabel.

Miranda, "a Gay Coquet," does love her fiancé Constant, but they show a mismatched set of humors. She tortures Constant with teasing and flirts with Beaumine until she almost loses the man she loves. Lesbia has the most pressing problem. Lawfully contracted to marry Beaumine, she had foolishly consummated the relationship before the wedding. Now Beaumine's interest is waning, and a new man, Grandfoy, is interested in her. She is interested in Grandfoy as well, but her honor tells her that her first commitment is to Beaumine; if he will, she will marry him.

All three of the plot lines are worked out with twists, dropped letters, misunderstandings, and the usual devices of this period's comedies, but all in all, it is not a bad play. The final device of having the characters vote on who gets to marry Lesbia is original and works well. The play is also an excellent showcase for Trotter's feminist ideal of marriage. She sets her theme in her dedication to her friend Lady Piers by using Piers's marriage as an exemplum:

> Sir George Piers, who is indeed a living Instruction of the Moral in the last Verses of this Comedy; and so well recommends his own worth by his Respect and Value for you, and (in an Age where Wives are scarce look'd on but as

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> impediments of a Man's Pleasure, or at best a Convenience in the settling of his affairs, without aiming at a Satisfaction in her self) has found his Felicity in making yours.

She goes on to tell Lady Piers that comedy is not her forté, and that she

> never thought of making a pretence to a Talent for Comedy, but writ this when the Town had been little pleas'd with Tragedy intire, mingled with one of mine, which since the tast is mended, appear'd alone; and this lay by me a considerable time, till Idleness reminded me of filling it up, thus it was piec'd with little Care or Concern for the success.

It is regrettable that Trotter did not put more stock in the value of comedy and produce more, for this play shows a clear talent for it. I am surprised that it failed, since it is not poorly done at all. And like the comedies of Behn, in many ways, this is a very feminist play.

The play opens, as with Behn's most feminist plays, with two women, Lysetta and Lucilia, having a frank discussion. In this case, it's on the importance of <u>keeping</u> one's virginity because men are deceivers. This sets us up for the entrance of Lesbia, who confesses to her friend Lucilia that she has indeed lost hers to Beaumine, and that he is in fact lying to her. Beaumine had promised her that he would marry her as soon as his mother died, since she objects to the match, and Lesbia has just found out that his mother died some time earlier.

Reading this scene after having read Trotter's letter about her

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son, it is very difficult not to wonder if Lesbia is not a little autobiographical. Beaumine first asked that they live together as husband and wife without the benefit of clergy, and when she resisted, he asked for consummation of their love. When he pressed, she tells Lucilia, "I don't know how he found the yielding Minute, betwixt you and I, Lucilia; Is not there one of which we are not Master?" (4). And even though she has the power to, Lesbia won't force him into marriage against his will. She tells Lucilia that she believes that Beaumine jests about marriage because a "man of this Age must no more speak well of it, than of Religion, and yet perhaps there's as few Marriage haters as Atheists" (4). In a very forward-looking manner, Lesbia tells Lucilia that men behave as they do towards women and marriage because they are socialized to behave that way. Their friends expect it of them, and they can't "bear with their being the Ridicule of their companions" (5).

Act II, scene ii, is another scene which opens with women and is then dominated by them. In it, Miranda and Lucilia discuss the proper way to show love and respect in a relationship. Act IV, scene i, also opens with two women, Lesbia and Miranda. While the scene starts with them thinking themselves rivals for Beaumine, it ends with their working together to secure Lesbia's happiness. When Lesbia gets serious, so does Miranda:

> Les: Then I will own to you, Beaumine and I are so solemnly engag'd, that if he has made you any Proposal, he's the most perfidious Man on Earth.
>
> Mir: Nay, then 'tis past jesting, and I must tell you, what

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I said was only to try you; all his Discourse to me was a meer Gallantry, and with his usual Gaity of Humour; yet by the care I find he has taken to hinder us from confiding in one another, I apprehend he may have some farther Design.

Les: Then if you have none upon him, you may assist me in one I have of Consequence.

Mir: With all my Heart, for whatever little Inclinations I may have, they only amuse me for the present. (35)

The two women then prepare a trick for Beaumine to force him to reveal his intentions, whatever they may be.

Finally, Act V, scene iii, opens with Lucilia and Lesbia having a strongly moral conversation in which they repent their sins. The play soon ends with the reformed rake Beaumine giving the play's moral about loving and respecting wives:

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

Trotter's return to tragedy was her The Unhappy Penitent, which opened at Drury Lane on February 4, 1701 (LS 2:7). Its failure is not surprising. The language is stilted; the subject matter, a love triangle, is stretched to the point of the bathetic; and the characters

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are unengaging. The play is set in the court of Charles VIII of France, who has been engaged to the paragon Margarite of Flanders since childhood, and subsequently, she has been raised at his court. But when another paragon, Ann of Brittanie, comes to court to visit, Charles falls in love with her, a love she secretly returns. In the meantime, Margarite has fallen in love with the Duke of Lorrain. Because Charles has taken so long to marry her, and since he is obviously in love with another, Margarite secretly marries Lorrain. Jealous because he secretly loves Margarite, the Duke of Brittainy publicly accuses her of being his ex-mistress. With the help of Heaven and Ann, Margarite clears her name, but she has promised to foreswear Lorrain as her penance. She lives up to her vow, and Ann and Charles are able to marry.

While the play itself is boring, the entire issue of the importance of vows is very interesting in light of the "phantom child" issue. The closing lines of the play, spoken by Charles, echo one of the themes of <u>The Fatal Friendship</u>, <u>Olinda's Adventures</u>, and even <u>Agnes de Castro</u>:

> But we who sacrific'd to Virtue, our desires
> Have in submissively resigning,
> Obtain'd our utmost wishes; th'event of things
> Wise Providence directs, leaves nothing to our care,
> Or charge, but our own actions;
> Yet with Preposterous idle diligence,
> We to dispose of Destiny project,

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And the small Provence in our Power neglect.

(48)

Because Trotter was attempting to make points about the importance of vows and about the nature of tragedy, not much room was left for feminism. But in Act II we do see women working together in order to be able to marry the men they choose. Unlike Behn's plotting women, these women plan to use total honesty so that all is accomplished without infamy. It is Margarite's downfall that she was not scrupulously honest, and she also allows herself to be swayed by Lorrain's arguments. Ann had warned her: "Be Mistress of yourself, and firm to Virtue" (14).

The three female characters are all paragons of womanhood. Ann is perhaps superhuman in her morality; Margarite falls because she is merely human; and Madame de Bourbon, the king's sister, is the wisest woman of them all – at least in terms of human nature. When she realizes that people are arranging marriage based on past duty instead of mutual love, she foresees trouble (17).

Trotter's feminism is again apparent in her dedication to the play written to Charles, Lord Halifax. More than just fulsome praise of the dedicatee, the dedication is Trotter's main piece of literary criticism. She discusses the merits of Dryden and Otway and goes on to discuss how theater should be a concern of the state, since it is important for people's instruction. Characteristically, Trotter writes about theory without deferring to male prerogative, as if it is her right to discuss it and not a daring step. The only time when Trotter says she is working beyond her talent is in trying to praise her subject, a convention of dedications.

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Trotter's last play, The Revolution of Sweden, first staged on February 11, 1706, at the Queen's Theater (LS 2:117), is her most complex on many levels. It has two unusually strong feminist heroines, and it is also her most overtly political play. Thanks to Downes's Roscius Anglicanus we know the that play was a failure – it lacked "the just decorum of plays and expired on the sixth day" (102). Its failure is not surprising, for while a very interesting play to read, it is far too polemic and theatrically inactive to work on the stage, especially in an era used to very busy stagecraft.

Based on René Aubert de Vertot's Histoire des revolutions de Suède (1695), which was translated into English in 1696, Trotter's play deals with two couples: Constantia and Arwide and Christina and Beron. Set during the Swedish revolution against the Danes, the play revolves around the theme of honor. The hero of the piece is Gustavus, the leader of the Swedish resistance. Arwide is his right-hand man, and Beron is a traitor who is working with the Danes. After helping Gustavus escape, Christina flees her husband dressed as a man and ends up fighting in the Swedish army under the name Fredage. She is later captured by the Danes and poses as her own nephew.

Constantia is captured by the Danish forces and shows amazing fortitude. She refuses to be the viceroy's mistress, and when for strategic reasons she is falsely informed that her beloved husband is a traitor, she reports his treachery to Gustavus. Arwide is arrested and sentenced to die. In a fifth- act rescue, Christina, in whom Beron has confided thinking that she was his spying nephew Fredage, reveals the truth and her own identity just before she dies of a wound.

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The play's first critic was Congreve, to whom Trotter had sent a draft and asked for his comments. And he gave her his honest opinion:

> 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 . . . . 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 . . . and certainly you can never be too careful not to offend probability, in supposing a man not discover his own wife. [Christina works alongside her husband, Beron, disguised as a male; although Beron sees a family resemblance, he accepts her statement that she is Christina's nephew, Fredage.]
>
> 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 act intimating so strongly, why we might expect 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.
>
> . . . To conclude, I approve extremely of your killing _Fredage_ and _Beron_. Poetical justice requires him; and for her you may easily drop a word, to intimate her delivering of _Gustavus_ to have proceeded from some spark of love, which afterwards she may repent of, and her character remain as

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perfect as nature need require. (Congreve 212-213)

Since we do not have the draft Congreve saw, we do not know how much of his advice Trotter took. But luckily, she did not take his advice regarding Christina's motivation. She kept to her own feminist agenda by keeping Christina's motives purely political. In fact, she may have reacted against Congreve's advice by giving Christina a scene in which she is disguised as Fredage and discusses herself with her unsuspecting husband. Beron has just told Fredage that his aunt Christina is an adulteress. When asked by his disguised wife how he knows that for a fact, he answers,

> What other motive cou'd she have
> To Sacrifice her Int'rest for Gustavus,
> But that he was a Youth, Handsome and Amorous,
> Form'd to her wanton Wishes?
>
> (31)

From Christina herself we learn that this is not true, so it appears that Trotter went out of her way to make sure that the audience knew Christina's motives were pure.

Christina flees her unjust husband and makes her way to the Swedish army where she proposes to live and fight as a man. When facing her first battle she soliloquizes on whether women and men are different because of Nature or nurture. She decides the differences are an outgrowth of nurture, a truly revolutionary notion for her time:

> Why do I dread what will enflame
> The meanest Soldiers Courage? Are our Souls too
> Like their frail Mansions of weaker frame than mans?

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> Or can the force of Custom and Opinion
> Effect the difference? 'Tis so, the Hero
> Who undaunted, faces Death midst Cannons,
> Swords and Javelins, sinks under the less
> Honourable Dangers of Pain, Disease;
> Or Poverty, below a woman's weakness:
> And we whom Custom bars this Active valour,
> Branding it with reproach, shrink at th' alarm
> Of war, but where our honour's plac'd, we oft
> Have shewn in its Defense a no less Manly daring
> Yet Death is still the same in every form,
> And everywhere my Friends, I'll try to Face him in
> The dreadfull'st Pomp and Horror of the Battle.
>
> (17-18)

On her part, Constantia unapologetically argues theology and political liberty with an archbishop and is never made to look foolish or out of place. She may be a prisoner, but she is erudite and not about to give in to wrong thinking. During her captivity she talks and acts no differently than if her name were Constantine. In these two heroes, Trotter makes her pointed argument that intellect, honor, and bravery are asexual qualities, and that if given the opportunity, women can display them as well as men.

Trotter underscores this message in her dedication of the play to Lady Harriet Godolphin, daughter of the Duke of Marlborough. Almost the entire dedication is a plea for equal treatment for women. She begins her argument right away, with nary a preface:

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> There are so great Difficulties, and such general Discouragement, to those of our Sex who wou'd 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.

Trotter then goes on the praise the Duchess of Marlborough and her family, and especially Lady Harriet. She continues in her argument, wondering why the women of England are treated with less respect then the women of France:

> Were such an Encouraging Indulgence to the Endeavors of our Sex, imitated by many of your Ladiships 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; Numbers we know among them, have made considerable Progress in the most difficult Sciences, several have gain'd the Prizes of Poesie from their Academies, and some have been chosen Members of their Societies. This without doubt is not from any Superiority of their Genius to ours; But from the much greater encouragement they receive, by the Publick Esteem, and the Honours that are Done them.

Then after asserting that women could do just as well as men in both the arts and sciences, she again states that the purpose of her play is to

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"serve to correct our Vices." It is tempting to believe that the vice she wishes to correct is the sexism in her society.

In some ways, this play is very much like Behn's political plays, except here the party being supported is the Whig. Steeves points out that Mitchel's translation of Vertot's Histoire compared the events in Gustavus's Sweden to current events under William and later Anne:

> The fears that a foreign born king might align himself with European powers, particularly with France, and thus threaten English independence lapsed with the advent of Anne to the throne in 1702. Yet in the same year, war with Louis XIV again broke out, and the Danish king's usurpation of Sweden could be likened to Louis' threat to the English Throne. When Mrs. Trotter began writing The Revolution of Sweden around 1703, dramas with a libertarian theme were popular in English theater. It is to her credit that . . . she has succeeded in fusing history and contemporary political feeling in an emotionally affecting tragedy. (xxx)

While not as satirical as a Behn play, Revolution has two very Whiggish speeches given by two main characters. In the first act, Gustavus is lecturing on political power when he says that those who:

> fight for Justice, for the Laws, the Rights,
> And Priviledges of our Nation, ought
> To be most careful that the means we use
> Be strictly just and pious as our Cause:
> Supressing Tyranny's an ill pretect [sic]

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For our becoming tyrants.

(4)

In other words, fighting tyrannical leaders in a search for justice is worthy. Later, Constantia articulates a contemporary political problem while debating religion and politics with the archbishop in Act II:

Wou'd Princes govern as if they themselves
Believ'd they were accountable to Heav'n,
There had been no occasion to contest
Whether their Pow'r be of Divine, or
Humane Institution, Strong Necessity
Becomes the People's casuist, proves that Piety
And Justice must allow that self-defense, to which
Nature so universally incites.

(20)

Here it seems as if Trotter were saying that there's really no reason to debate whether the Whigs or the Tories are correct in their vision of kingship, but since kings have become tyrants, it is the people's right to defend themselves – a decidedly uncompromising position from a decidedly strong-minded woman.

After leaving the stage for good following the presentation of The Revolution of Sweden, we next find Trotter engaged in the field of theological and philosophical debate. Martha Brandt Bolton's study of Trotter's philosophical work is extremely useful, especially for scholars not in that field.[9] Through Trotter's philosophy, we can see the breadth and scope of the reading she must have been doing. Trotter's philosophy is not feminist per se, but the fact that she wrote

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it is. Trotter is often remembered as a defender of Locke and Clarke but, "it is a mistake to think it gives the sum and substance of Trotter's philosophical work. For the description suggests her opinions are derivative and may encourage a dismissive attitude" (Bolton 567). Trotter did not invent the moral theory she shared with Clarke, but she didn't learn it from him. She advocated the same theory, and "recognized its importance as an alternative to the voluntarist scheme before Clarke produced the statement of the view that attracted all the attention" (Bolton 576).

Unfortunately, much of Trotter's philosophical work is very difficult to read. As Gosse put it, some of the pieces are "so dull that merely to think of them brings tears to one's eyes" (113). But, they do show the depth and precision of Trotter's mind. What is interesting is that Trotter was never mocked for her learning; in a period when even men who took their scholarship seriously were the subject of ridicule, particularly in the writings of satirists like Swift and Pope, Trotter was never attacked.[10] Indeed, she is praised for them. As Duncombe wrote in The Feminead:

> 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 the Laurel Shade.
>
> (ll. 129-132)

In her letters, Trotter also defends women's right to intellectual cultivation. In one of her more well-known letters she castigates George Burnet for thinking that another woman had taken credit for work

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that was not her own:

> 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 that a woman of her character 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, that they cannot deny their approbation to, are sure to rob us of the glory of it, by concluding 'tis not her own; or at least, that she had some assistance, which has been said to my knowledge many times unjustly. (2:190)

In this letter she echoes the angry sallies of Behn.

In her above-mentioned "Letter of Advice to her Son," Trotter gives her child very sound – and feminist – advice, indeed:

> But do not imagine, that women are to be considered only as objects of your pleasure, as the fine gentlemen of the world seem, by their conduct, to do. There is nothing more unjust, more base, and barbarous, than is often practiced against them, under the specious names of love and gallantry; as if they had not an equal right, with those of the other sex, to be treated with justice and honor. (2:119)

She goes on to say that if men were to treat their male friends as they do women, taking advantage of them and ruining their reputations, they would be thought the basest creatures imaginable. Yet, when they do the

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same thing to women, it is considered a "trifle" and "amusement." The double standard again.

Trotter's feminism is also quite apparent in her poem "Occasioned by the Busts Set up in the Queen's Hermitage," which first appeared in The Gentleman's Magazine in 1737.[11] According to the title, the poem was to be presented to Queen Caroline with a copy of Trotter's vindication of Locke, but the Queen died before the presentation could be made. But the poem itself is a wonderful statement of Trotter's desire for literary fame. She asks the queen's protection so that she might have a place in "Merlin's cave." And she also pleads for women's right to education and that the "restraints" placed on her sex which "check the soaring mind" be removed.

> Learning denied us, we at random tread
> Unbeaten paths, that late to knowledge led;
> By secret steps break thro' th'obstructed way,
> Nor dare acquirements gain'd by stealth display.
> 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.
>
> (2:573 ll. 50-57)

She hopes that Caroline can ease the restrictions placed on women.

Undoubtedly an heir of Behn in her choice of genres, her ardent feminism, her political writing, and her erudition, Catharine Trotter follows in the footsteps of the great Astrea. Although she chose to live a more chaste and conventional life, it could also be said that she

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chose to do so because of Aphra Behn. Behn died poor, struggling, and seemingly alone. Trotter, while not rich, was comfortable and, perhaps more important if we judge by her letters, surrounded by a family. Her children knew nothing about their mother's extraordinary life, and that was as she wished. But she has left us an important legacy, and, moreover, she left us some of the clues we need to discover it. Now it is our duty to explore it more thoroughly.

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## NOTES

[1] In her later writing Trotter used her married name, Cockburn. In history and criticism she is variously listed as both Trotter and Cockburn. While Constance Clark has used the appellation Trotter-Cockburn, I shall use Trotter throughout this work. Her first name has also been variously spelled as Catherine and Katharine, but I shall use the form she signed with, Catharine.

[2] Unless otherwise noted, the biographical information in this section is from Birch's "Life," Works of Mrs. Catharine [Trotter] Cockburn, (1751; Michigan: UMI, 1991) 1:i - xlviii.

[3] Jeslyn Medoff is currently at work on an essay which discusses this correspondence: "After Aphra: Women Writers and their Public Personae 1660 - 1740."

[4] For a complete listing of Burnet's works see James Sutherland, English Literature of the Late 17th Century (NY: Oxford UP, 1969) 512-13.

[5] See Calhoun Winton, "Sentimentalism and Theatre Reform in the Early Eighteenth Century," Quick Springs of Sense: Studies in the Eighteenth Century, ed. Larry S. Champion (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1974) 97-112, for a history of sentimental aspects in drama before the theatre reform movement's peak in the 90s. Winton points out that sentimentalism was not truly a product of the stage reform movement, for "[s]ome reformers looked to the classical past for models, some to the future, some were looking to the main chance" (110).

[6] "As the 'rules' for playwrighting, women's writing and writing changed, her plays were regarded as, at best, unfashionable, at worst, shocking and inappropriate for a woman's pen." Jeslyn Medoff, "The Daughters of Behn and the Problems of Reputation," Women, Writing, History 1640 - 1740, eds. Isobel Grundy and Susan Wiseman, (Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 1992) 45.

[7] In her study Three Augustan Women Playwrights (NY: Peter Lang, 1986) Constance Clark gives detailed synopses of Trotter's, Pix's and Manley's plays. Since she is so thorough, and the plots tend to be complex, I will give bare outlines.

[7] For fuller details see Kathyrn Kendall, "From Lesbian Heroine to Devoted Wife; or, What the Stage Would Allow," Journal of Homosexuality 12.3-4 (1986): 9-22.

[8] See [Charles Gildon], A Comparison Between the Two Stages, (1702; NY: Garland, 1973) 26-27.

[9] Martha Brandt Bolton's essay "Some Aspects of the Philosophical Work of Catharine Trotter," Journal of History of Philosophy, 31 (1993): 565-88, was extremely helpful in assisting me to place Trotter's

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accomplishment in their proper perspective.

[10] "The intellectual milieu of an influential portion of eighteenth century society did not value the theoretic sciences," see Mary Elizabeth Green, "Elizabeth Elstob: The Saxon Nymph," Female Scholars: A Tradition of Learned Women Before 1800, ed. J.R. Brink (Montreal: Eden, 1980) 138.

[11] The Gentleman's Magazine 7 (1737): 308.

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## Chapter Three

## Mary Pix

Mary Pix, when she is remembered at all, is usually recalled as a playwright who specialized in Behnian intrigue comedy, but this partial picture obscures many of Pix's actual accomplishments. Along with six comedies, she wrote six tragedies (seven if one includes Zelmane), a novel, and a verse translation of one of the tales of The Decameron, as well as commendatory verses for Egerton, Trotter, and Manley. While she is perhaps the least influential author in this study, Pix's role is pivotal, for it is she who creates the bridge, first, between Aphra Behn and the Female Wits, then again between the Female Wits and Susanna Centlivre.

The oldest of these later playwrights, Pix was born sometime between 1665 and 1667. We know that by 1684, the year of her marriage to a London merchant, she was living in the City. She was then a young matron of twenty-one to twenty-three when Behn died in 1688. As a person who had had literary aspirations since childhood (a fact she reveals in the dedication of her second play), it is unlikely that Pix would not have been aware of the leading female playwright of her day. If Pix lived in London from at least 1682, two years before her marriage, she could have seen a number of Behn's plays during their original runs: The City Heiress, Like Father, Like Son, The Lucky Chance, The Emperor of the Moon, and The Widow Ranter all premiered between 1682 and 1689. Pix was the only "Female Wit" who was an adult during Behn's life, so she is the only one who could have mature memories of Behn's personal reputation during Behn's own lifetime and

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how it affected response to her works.

The anonymous "Ariadne," whose She Ventures and He Wins opened in 1695, was probably Pix,[1] as there are textual and stylistic similarities between it and the plays Pix acknowledged. "Ariadne" was very much aware of Behn, for in the preface to the play she writes of the inclination she had had for "Scribling" since her childhood: "And when our Island enjoyed the Blessing of the Incomparable Mrs. Behn, even then I had much ado to keep my Muse from shewing her Impertinence; but, since her death, has claim'd a kind of Privilege; and, in spite of me, broke from her Confinement" (sig. A2). And in the preface, "Ariadne" apologizes for the "Error of a Weak Woman's Pen" (sig. A2), a theme repeated in a number of Pix prologues. The play also has six female roles, another Pixian trait, as I discuss below. It opens with the two female leads, Charlot and Juliana, dressed in men's clothes, declaring that they have the right to choose their husbands for themselves – a theme Pix shared with Behn. Through their own actions and wit, the heroines are able to settle into happy marriages based on mutual love and respect, an ideal we shall see represented throughout Pix's comedies.

In the preface to the play, "Ariadne" also writes that this play was not a "fluke"; she is indeed planning on writing for the stage again. But more important, if this play succeeds, she will write openly:

> I venture to send [the play] abroad, where, if it finds but a favourable Reception from my own Sex, and some little encouragement from the other, I will study in my next to

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> deserve it: which then, perhaps, may make me ambitious enough to be known. (sig. A2)

Pix's tie to Centlivre is much stronger. While the Female Wits and Centlivre's debut were only four years apart, Centlivre is often thought of as being from a different period. By the time Centlivre was writing her most popular plays, Trotter had retired; Manley had turned to other genres, only occasionally writing plays; and Pix had died. But before her death, Pix offered yet another valuable link in this female literary history. While Centlivre never acknowledges it in print, there is very good evidence that Pix tutored the younger woman in stagecraft and actually helped write some of Centlivre's most popular plays (see chap. Six).[2] Indeed, as I will argue in detail below, Dandle in _The Different Widows_, is a prototype for Centlivre's Mar-plot, the title character of her play _The Busie Body_. According to the May 26-28, 1709, issue of _The Post Boy_, "the greatest part" of _The Busie Body_ "and also of that of The Gamester" were written by Pix (qtd in Bowyer 94).

Therefore, while her reputation is eclipsed by her more famous literary sisters, Pix is a very important link in this matrilineal dynasty. And while she may have been obscured by Manley's and Centlivre's later fame, for the ten years between her stage debut in 1696 and her last play in 1706, Pix was the _de facto_ holder of Behn's vacant throne, by virtue of the sheer number of her plays produced in the theater. While not a literary giant – her blank verse is feeble, her plots often borrowed – she was a master of stagecraft.

## Part 1 Biography

While Pix was a successful playwright in her day, very little of

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her personal history is known: we still don't even know the date of her death. The Biographia Dramatica reports:

> of this lady, though a woman of considerable genius and abilities, we can trace nothing further than that she was born at Nettlebed, Oxfordshire, and that her maiden name was Griffith, being the daughter of one Mr. Griffith, a clergyman, and that, by the mother's side, she was descended from a very considerable family, viz. that of the Wallis's. (575)

The DNB has been able to ampiify those scanty facts. There, Pix's parents are given as the Rev. Roger Griffith, vicar of Nettlebed, and Lucy Berriman. Mary married George Pix, a merchant tailor, on July 25, 1684 at St. Benet Fink Parish, London. According to their marriage license, Mary was a spinster around the age of eighteen, and George was a bachelor of about twenty-four. Both were from St. Augustine's Parish, Watling Street, and Mary's mother Lucy is listed as a widow (Barbour 4). The couple had a daughter who died in 1690 and is buried at Hawkhurst, George Pix's family's area.[3] Nothing more is known of Pix's personal life, but many have tried to embroider the facts.

Whatever became of George Pix is also a matter for speculation. No one has been able to ascertain whether he was alive during Pix's writing career. Even contemporary commentaries 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,'" yet in The Players Turn'd Academicks (1703), her husband is referred to, as she "had written her husband in Debt" (see Clark 185-6).

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While critics have argued that Pix was driven to write from financial need (Bowyer 94; Pearse 12; Kendall "Finding" 165), I agree with the view that she was most likely financially comfortable (Clark 186). This is based, in part, on Thomas Brown's comment in his "A Criticism of Several Plays" (1704):

> The jolly poetess scribbles neither for fame nor money, but for the claims of Bacchus and Ceres; if the third day produce a Bottle and Cacklers [slang for chickens], she has had her end; and treats Madam B[arry] as her great benefactress. (qtd in Clark "Introduction" vii-viii)

Pix's bounty and love of table and bottle seem to have been common knowledge for her contemporaries. Indeed, the name used to satirize her in The Female Wits was "Mrs. Wellfed." This picture of a relaxed gastronome who loves to treat her friends does not suggest a woman struggling to survive.

Contemporary commentary also tells us something about her friendships with women. As noted above, she had at least a working relationship with Susanna Centlivre. When Pix is leaving for the country, Centlivre follows behind:

> While Carrol [Centlivre], 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.
>
> (The Players Turn'd Academicks 3)

Pix seems to have been a friend of Catherine Trotter's as well. The two were linked together in contemporary satire. Kendall also

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points out a shared network of literary acquaintances – Congreve assisted them both professionally, and the two women also shared ties with Bevil Higgons ("Theater" 118). Pix wrote a commendatory verse for Higgins's The Generous Conqueror. Edmund Gosse, Trotter's nineteenth century defender, reverses Trotter's and Pix's roles in the relationship when he calls Pix "the stage-struck consort of a tailor" who professed herself a "follower of Catherine" (95). Although Trotter made her writing debut first, Pix was the better playwright. But Gosse does allow that Pix's plays were "not without some success" (95).

Elizabeth Barry is also linked with Pix in a number of contemporary sources. Their friendship is noted in three contemporary satires, and The Players Turn'd Academicks (1703) graphically describes their closeness. The two are going to the country together: "The first that took coach and had often took T[arse? (penis)]/ Was the fam'd Mrs. B[arry] with P[i]x at her A[rse]" (3). As a Lincoln's Inn Fields shareholder, Barry had the power to sponsor plays, and many of Pix's plays had roles for Barry, the leading tragedienne of her day.[4]
One unique aspect of Pix is that she herself has left behind no glimpses of her own relationships with other people; therefore, we never see her interacting with or even personally commenting on men. We have a volume of Trotter's personal letters, at least a few literary letters between Centlivre and her circle, as well as some comments in her own poetry, and reams of commentary by Manley, including her autobiography. We are able to place these three in a setting, interacting with both the men and the women around them. But the few contemporary accounts of Pix which are extant today (all of which are satiric), always link Pix with

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women. In Animadversions she is seen with Congreve, but she is also with Trotter, and they are dismissed together as "the two she-things." This solidarity with women is important in light of the questions surrounding Pix's feminism. In her prefaces, she is self-effacing, and constantly apologizes for her works as being "mere woman's." This caution has left many feminist critics unsure as to whether or not Pix's writing can be considered "feminist."[5]

Perhaps Pix wasn't as vocal or as militant as Trotter, Manley, and Centlivre, but (especially under Kelly's definition) she is decidedly feminist in a quiet, steady, and determined way. She successfully competed in a traditionally male sphere for ten years; she created strong roles for actresses, and often featured three to four important female characters in her comedies in a time when the majority of plays, including those by the other women playwrights, featured only two actresses. In fact, The Innocent Mistress actually has a majority of females in the cast. And Pix's female characters were not always the stereotypes of her day. Like Behn before her, Pix created female characters who were independent, funny, sometimes bawdy, and often powerful.

Another aspect of Pix's feminism is her willingness to help other women succeed. This is exemplified in the commendatory verses she wrote in support of her fellow women playwrights and the poet Egerton, as well as in the tutoring she offered Centlivre. We see it again in her dramatic creations, which exhibited the talents of London's leading actresses, especially Barry and Anne Bracegirdle. We will never know why Pix chose a less militant stance than her literary sisters; perhaps

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it was just her nature. This is borne out in her politics as well. While her plays are quietly Whiggish, she is never militantly political. Some have viewed this reticence as a consequence of Pix's not being an intellectual. She has been called "the mental lightweight of the poetesses" (Lock "Astraea" 30), and her lack of learning, especially when compared with Manley's and Trotter's, has often been noted. But, while Pix admits that she did not have Latin or Greek, she was not unread. She especially knew her Renaissance drama – her tragedies are often reworkings of Fletcher's plays. And while Trotter is satirized for her learning in The Female Wits, Pix is shown as the wiser writer. When Calista attempts to show off her learning at Pix's expense, she ends up looking more ridiculous than her victim:

> **Calista**: Madam, I have read all your excellent Works, and I dare say, by the regular Correction, you are a Latinist, tho' Marsilia laugh at it. [This is a hit at Pix's blank verse, which is notoriously poor.]
>
> **Mrs. Well**: Marsilia shews her Folly, in laughing at what she don't understand. Faith, Madam, I must own my ignorance, I can go no further than the eight Parts of Speech.
>
> **Calista**: Then I cannot but take the Freedom to say, you, or whoever writes, imposes upon the Town.
>
> **Mrs. Well**: 'Tis no imposition, Madam, when ev'ry Body's inclination's free to like, or dislike a thing. (15-6)

This exchange points out Pix as perhaps ignorant, but not unintelligent. It is the learned Calista who has less of a sense of

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stagecraft.

Her plays Ibrahim, Queen Catherine, and The Czar of Muscovy are all based on actual events and show an interest in history. She did not have to write historical tragedies; she chose to. Her nondramatic writing also suggests a woman who read widely. The Inhumane Cardinal is based on a novella by a very minor Italian author of the sixteenth century, and her verse narrative is a translation from The Decameron. While Pix's immediate sources were most likely the English translations (we have no evidence that she knew Italian, but could it be more than mere coincidence that both of these sources were originally in Italian?), they show a woman who read. Kendall points out that Pix's source for Ibrahim was "a quaint and little-known history book which included an historical essay by Delariviere Manley's father" (Theater 118). She sees this as proof of a connection between Manley and Pix, but this is unlikely. In the play's dedication, Pix mentions that she read the tale during a visit to a country home. It is more likely proof of her being a reader than of being a friend of Manley.

Pix made her debut in print some time in the beginning of 1696 with her novel The Inhumane Cardinal. This was a banner year for Pix as she had two moderately successful plays produced as well, but according to The Sessions of the Poets, the "very first Venture she expos'd unto public View was a Novel, a very barren Discourse, abounding with neither language nor Intrigue furnish'd out at the Bookseller's Charge, but I am very confident will not defray the expense of the Impression" (qtd in Clark "Introduction" v). While not a masterpiece, the book is not that bad. But the estimate of its sales potential was accurate, for The

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Inhumane Cardinal is an extremely rare book. Only one copy is extant, which is held by the Newberry Library in Chicago. (Fortunately for scholars, a facsimile edition was published in 1984.) In his list of Pix's works in Lives and Characters of the English Dramatic Poets (1719) Giles Jacob was less harsh in his commentary about the book. He called it "a very ingenious novel" (204).

In May or June of that year, Pix's first play, the tragedy Ibrahim, the Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks, premiered at Drury Lane (LS 1:462). It was well received at the time and was revived in 1702, 1704, 1715, and most likely 1709. Within a few months, her comedy The Spanish Wives opened at the Dorset Garden and also did well (LS 1:464). It was revived in 1705 and 1711.

Pix not only contributed two plays to this Annus Mirabilis for women writers, but a novel and commendatory verses as well. Many have argued that it is because she wrote verses for Manley to preface The Royal Mischief that Pix is included in The Female Wits, but her great output in 1696 may have seemed threatening enough to incline The Female Wits's male author to include her in its satire, with or without her ties to the main butt, Manley. Its attack on Pix is rather mild, centering on her weight and proclivity for the bottle. In the Dramatis Personae, Mrs. Wellfed is described as "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". This is a much pleasanter description than the ones afforded to Manley (who is said to love her own work and flattery) and to Trotter (who is said to "pretend" to languages and "assume" the name of critic). And along with the

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compliments noted above, Pix's writing is given a nod as well: "A bouncing Dame! But she has done some things quite well" (11). The only reaction of Pix's to the satire in The Female Wits is that she abandoned Drury Lane for the rest of her career.

In the summer of 1697 the relatively successful comedy The Innocent Mistress was produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields (LS 1.481). Gildon writes that this "is a diverting Play, and met with good Success, tho' acted in the hot season of the year" (11). In November of that year The Deceiver Deceived, another comedy, appeared. For the most part, unlike her literary sisters, Pix had avoided controversy. But on one occasion it managed to find her, and this last work was the catalyst. In 1697, the actor George Powell's play Imposture Defeated; or, a Trick to Cheat the Devil was plagiarized from Pix's The Deceiver Deceived. Both Pix and Powell agree that Pix brought her play to Powell at Drury Lane. After this, though, the two accounts diverge. Powell claims that Pix "very mannerly carried the play to the other house" after he had persuaded the company at Drury Lane to act it ("Preface" Imposture Defeated). Pix claims that Powell read the play and stole her plot. In the prologue to her version she writes:

> Deceiv'd deceiver, and Imposture cheated!
> An Audience and the Devil too defeated!
> All trick and cheat! Pshaw, 'tis the Devil and all,
> * * *
> 'Tis t'other House best shows the slight of hand:
> Hey Jingo, Sirs, what's this? their Comedy?
> Presto be gone, 'tis now our Farce you see.

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By neat conveyance you have seen and know it

They can transform an Actor to a Poet.

* * *

Our Case is thus:

Our Authoress, like true Women, shew'd her Play

To some, who, like true Wits, stole't half away.

We've Fee'd no Councel yet, tho some advice us

T' indite the Plagiaries at Apollo's Sizes.

Powell claims that he never read Pix's play, but then he goes on to contradict himself by writing: "if I had really taken the character from her, I had done no more than a piece of justice." He then calls his play "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."

There is even a reference to the incident in Animadversions on Mr. Congreve's Late Answer to Mr. Collier, a piece attributed to Powell. If he was the author of this piece, it goes a long way towards explaining the hostility of its attack on Pix. Animadversions describes Congreve's leading a heckling party to a play, presumably The Imposture Defeated, accompanied by "the two She-Things called Poetesses, which write for his house" (Trotter and Pix) and attempting to hiss down the play. When the hiss doesn't take, Congreve purportedly "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" (34).

For the next three years Pix had one play a year produced. In June 1698, the tragedy Queen Catherine ran for four nights (LS 1:496).

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In May 1699, the unsuccessful "reforming" tragedy The False Friend ran for 3 nights (LS 1:511), and in March 1700 the comedy The Beau Defeated enjoyed a brief run (LS 1:526). This last play is important, because this is the first play we know of that Pix presented herself as "him" in the preface. Even as the anonymous "Ariadne" she owned up to her sex. For the rest of her career, Pix presented her plays anonymously and usually concealed her sex as well.

In 1700, Pix adopted the pseudonym "Clio," the Muse of history, in The Nine Muses, the elegy collection probably edited by Manley (see below).

In March of 1701, Pix had two plays come out almost simultaneously, the tragedies The Double Distress and The Czar of Muscovy (LS 2:8). Both did poorly. For the second play, Pix abandons blank verse and writes a prose tragedy. She then appears to have taken two years off, for her next play is the comedy The Different Widows, which premiered in November 1703. In 1704 it appears that she finished William Mountfort's Zelmane, left unfinished at his murder (see LS 2.80). This play ran for five nights. It was during 1704 that Pix published her second nondramatic work, the verse-translation Violante.

Pix's final plays were the tragedy The Conquest of Spain, which premiered in May 1705 and ran for six nights (LS 2:93), and the comedy Adventures in Madrid, which opened in June 1706 (LS 2:126). Both of these plays were performed at the new Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket.

After Adventures in Madrid no more is heard of Pix until 1709, when Centlivre's The Busie Body is being played as a benefit for Pix's estate. It is obvious that she died during this period, and the fact

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that a benefit is being held for her heirs would indicate that she had some sort of family left, but whether her husband, mother, siblings, or children is unknown. Like her life, Pix's death is shrouded in obscurity.

**Part 2 - The Works**

Pix's strongest link to Behn is her intrigue comedies. But Pix was not just imitating Behn's plays, for Pix was writing for a different audience. The Glorious Revolution had ushered in more than just changes in the government. By the time Pix was writing for the stage, audiences had become more heterogeneous than they had been in Behn's time. The middle class was attending more often, and the values that needed to be represented on stage were changing. Behn had noticed the change during her own career, but after the Revolution, sentimentalism gained ground. While Pix is never fully sentimental in her plays, the qualities of the sentimental hero and heroine start to manifest themselves. In most cases, Pix pairs a Behnian Restoration couple and a Sentimental couple as the characters struggling for happiness.

As with Behn, forced marriage is a plot device in Pix, but she was writing in an environment much more insistent upon political and social order than Behn's had been. Pix occasionally allows a character trapped in a forced marriage to escape - for instance, in both The Spanish Wives and The Innocent Mistress - but more often, her message is "accommodate one another inside marriage," and she seems to be more concerned than Behn with what the components of a good marriage are.

But unlike Behn, Pix was writing for a middle class audience; moreover, she was a member of that class. The child of a vicar and the

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wife of a merchant tailor, Pix was firmly of the middle class, much more so than Behn, Trotter, and Manley. A middle-class woman had no real choice but to marry. If she did not, the option was to be a despised spinster, becoming either an appendage to some branch of the family once her parents had died or, taking a step down the social ladder, a governess. Under those considerations, while the best course of action would be to marry the man of one's choice, the second best option would be to get along with the man one had married in a mutually supportive and agreeable atmosphere. When this choice is offered to the Governor's Lady in The Spanish Wives, she makes the most of it.

While Pix's middle class values mute her feminism they sustain its Whiggism. While not as overt in her Whig politics as Centlivre and even Trotter, Pix does display her party colors. Kendall notes Pix's two Whiggish prologues – to The Conquest of Spain and to Adventures in Madrid, but there are more Whiggish aspects to her work than just prologues. Many of her plays contain an acute awareness of national politics and class boundaries. In more than one play, the middle class is shown to be the solid foundation of a solid country. For example, in The Beau Defeated, Mrs. Rich appears foolish, but her brother-in-law Mr. Rich is a man of solid virtue. While Lady Landsworth is a positive character, many of the titled characters are foolish or worse. And, it must be remembered, Mrs. Rich and Lady Landsworth are sisters, so Lady Landsworth is really a member of the middle class by birth.

Class issues don't play a role in Pix's first published work, The Inhumane Cardinal, but politics certainly do. The main plot of the novel, which appears to be original, involves Cardinal Antonio

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Barbarino's treacherous seduction of the innocent young girl, Melora, daughter of the Marquess of Coure, Ambassador to the Vatican from France. In order to overcome Melora's scruples, the Cardinal disguises himself and woos the maiden in the guise of a lovesick nobleman who is in Rome to sue for his inheritance. He is aided in his deception by the evil Donna Olimpia, the favorite mistress of Pope Innocent X and _de facto_ ruler of his domain. Pix's probable source was _The Life of Donna Olimpia Madachini_ by Gregorio Leti under the pen name Abbot Gualdi, which was anonymously translated into English in 1667. "The account claimed to be an eyewitness report by an ex-priest. The characters and relationship between Innocent X (1644-55) and his powerful sister-in-law/mistress, Donna Olympia, are the same in Pix's work as they are described in the _Life_" (Clark "Introduction" x-xi).

As part of his plan to corrupt Melora, the Cardinal makes sure that she is told two romantic stories of true love – the story of Alphonsus and Cordelia, and of Emilius and Lovisa. Donna Olimpia tells the first tale. In it, while in Rome, Alphonsus, the son of the Duke of Ferrara and Modena, falls in love with Cordelia, whom he has spied in a garden. Wanting her to love him for himself, instead of his title, he disguises himself as simple Don Pedro before he woos and then wins her. Olimpia then uses great irony when she has Don Pedro further disguise himself as a priest in order to gain access to Cordelia. Don Pedro wins Cordelia's love; they marry and have a son. During all this time together, Cordelia is kept ignorant of her husband's true identity. When the old duke dies and Alphonsus inherits the dukedom, he brings his wife and son to court and they live happily together for eighteen years.

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At that point, Cordelia dies and less than a year later Alphonsus follows. Their young son then inherits the dukedom, but soon an enemy attacks his legitimacy and his right to be his father's heir, so the young man has come to the Papal court to sue for his rights. Olimpia then tells the susceptible Melora that her suitor is this man.

A servant of the Cardinal's tells Melora the second tale. When Emilius, the second son of the Duke of Parma, returns home from the wars, he falls in love with his mother's ward, Lovisa. She returns his love, but they keep their relationship a secret, for Lovisa fears the distance between their ranks. But they often meet in a group with other young people who have formed a Friendly Society whose members read each other's letters aloud to the group. One day, a letter of Lovisa's from her uncle informs her that he has arranged her marriage. The love between Emilius and Lovisa is then revealed, and the angered duke forbids the marriage, sends Lovisa from the court, and betroths Emilius to another woman. Lovisa is just about to enter a convent to avoid marrying a man she doesn't love, when the duke, on his death bed, relents and allows the marriage. The purpose of this second tale is to show young Melora that men and women should be able to choose their own mates, even in the face of parental disapproval. This tale helps persuade her to marry the "duke's son."

Aware of how easily Melora's emotions can be swayed, the Cardinal and Olimpia use the two tales as propaganda in their campaign to overcome her virtue. This same type of "device" is later used by Manley in The New Atalantis where male characters repeatedly use tales to corrupt the virtue of young women (see chap. Five). While this device

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was not new, it is tempting to see Manley as influenced by her colleague's earlier work. In any event, the tales work. Melora agrees to a marriage with her suitor, thinking that she will live a life of bliss. But after six months of satiating his lust, the Cardinal grows cool. When Melora becomes pregnant, the Cardinal realizes that he must be rid of her, for she has become a nuisance: he poisons her.

After Melora's death, her father learns of his daughter's betrayal, but finds Olimpia and the Cardinal too great to be punished. Olimpia may have escaped immediate punishment, but she is later exiled by the succeeding Pope, and dies "miserably" of the plague. Soon afterwards, Barbarino "loaded with Diseases, and Infamy, sunk to the Grave" (236).

The narrative of a woman betrayed by a man, is, of course, a Behnian choice. It is found in a number of her stories: for instance, "The Nun," "The Unfortunate Bride," and "The Wandering Beauty." Pix is obviously following in her predecessor's footsteps in her choice of genre and theme. But, of course, there are many differences between the two women's works. Pix's tale is vehemently anti-Catholic, and more important, while it appears at first that the two female leads are working together, in reality one is betraying the other.

There is no way to call <u>The Inhumane Cardinal</u> a feminist work; indeed, it is quite anti-feminist. Although we are told that the cruel, corrupt Olimpia wields significant power (she "govern'd both in Church and State"), she is a malevolent force who destroys Melora's innocence for her own gain. She wants only to have the Cardinal in her debt. And Olimpia has gained her power through her sexuality: she is a mistress

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who was able to take control. Her opposite, Melora, while beautiful, chaste and innocent, is not without fault. Her fall comes through another sin commonly attributed to women, social pride. She does not love Barbarino, but she is enthralled with the idea of being a duchess. At the thought of marrying "Duke Alphonsus of Modena and Ferrara," "a Scene of greatness strait appear'd to Melora; and she . . . beheld her self seated in a Palace, attended by persons, born above her" (81). The narrator then intrudes to underscore the message of Melora's folly:

> Women are generally ambitious, and opinionated of their own merit; and though Melora might justly boast she had one of the largest portions of Wit and Discretion: yet she was a woman pertook of the frailty of her Sex; was willing to believe this fine Story. (81)

But in many ways, The Inhumane Cardinal is a politically-motivated work. The villains are Roman Catholics, and from the Reformation onwards, religion and politics were so closely intertwined that a swipe at the Church of Rome was a de facto swipe at the Jacobites, and in some cases, the Tories. While Olimpia appears to be a thorough villain, the Cardinal, the "Prince of the Church," is painted much worse. He not only corrupts Melora, but he is the one who actually hands her the poisoned wine. He also has his servant, Francisco, removed and sent to his death for attempting to warn Melora of her danger. Pix even manages to let her readers know that not only does the Cardinal satiate his lust with innocent young women like Melora, but with prostitutes as well, "not to mention the more than Brutal Passion he hath oft had for his own Sex" (225).

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The novel was dedicated to Princess Anne, a devout Protestant. The dedication itself is typical in its praise to the dedicatee and her family, but there are some lines which make one wonder about Pix's relationship with the Princess. Many of Pix's biographers leave one with the sense that as part of the middle class, Pix did not have the same access to the upper classes that Trotter and Manley enjoyed. But this dedication belies this impression. Pix writes to Anne that while the princess is majestic, something "so agreeably affable is joined" in her countenance that her "humble Creatures find their Access both easy and delightful: And those who have the Honour and Happyness" to attend her Highness "plainly discover" Anne's princely qualities and high virtue. It would appear that Pix did indeed have some access to Princess Anne. One would be tempted to dismiss these words as mere hyperbole but for the fact that Pix later writes that Anne had given her encouragement. In the dedication to The Deceiver Deceived, Pix tells her dedicatee Sir Robert Marsham that "her Royal Highness shew'd such a benign Condescension, as not only to pardon my ambitious daring [in dedicating The Innocent Mistress to Anne], but also Incouraged my Pen." While these dedications give intriguing glimpses into Pix's social standing in her society, they do not reveal very much. Apparently, though, through her mother's connections, Pix enjoyed a higher social standing than she is given credit for.

The Emilius-Lovisa tale in The Inhumane Cardinal is strikingly close to the story told in Pix's verse-narrative Violenta; or, the Rewards of Virtue (1704), suggesting that she used the same source for both – Day two, Book eight of Boccaccio's The Decameron. Whereas the

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Emilius-Lovisa tale uses only a part of the book, Violenta retells all of Boccaccio's tale. Pix hews to Boccaccio's version, but makes slight changes in the female characters to enlarge their roles. She sentimentalizes her heroine, Violenta, to better suit the taste of her day, while at the same time she paints the villainess of the piece, the Dauphiness of France, in bolder strokes than Boccaccio had in order to intensify the contrast between the two women. Pix also spends time on the internal conflicts and turmoil of both these characters, something that Boccaccio leaves out.

Pix also increases the role of the Lord High Marshal's wife, the woman who makes Violenta her ward. This appears to be both a patriotic decision and a call for reform in her own society. When the wife decides to take in Violenta and raise her as her own child, the narrator reminds us that the wife is a truly good and truly typical British woman:

> In ancient Times, thus did they Merit Praise
> By Noble Acts, their Name and Country raise:
> Few Wanton Dames, no broken Nuptial Bed,
> The Wretched they reliev'd, the Poor they Fed:
> In Deeds, like this, dwelt their Renown of old,
> No Pride, no Falshood, no cursd'd Love of Gold.
> But Glory reign'd in every Brittains Souls;
> No lurking Vice their Greatness durst controul.
>
> (ll. 430-37)

Except for a few commendatory verses, these appear to be Pix's only non-dramatic works. Both were published under her own name, and

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there is nothing to indicate that she may have published anything else anonymously. Her strength was obviously the stage, and that is where she concentrated her efforts for the rest of her career.

Pix's first play, Ibrahim, the Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks (1696), met with success. In its preface, Pix apologizes that "those that will be so unkind to Criticize upon what falls from a Womans Pen, may soon find more faults than I am ever able to answer," but wishes to correct one egregious error – Ibrahim was actually the twelfth emperor. Pix explains that she made the mistake because she had read the original story years ago, and wrote the play from memory without having a chance to see the book again and refresh her memory until after the play was printed.

At first glance, Ibrahim appears a typical heroic play. Ibrahim, the tyrannical king, aided by his mistress, Sheker Para, rapes Morena, beloved of his general Amurat and daughter of the Mufti. Revenge is sworn, attained, and almost all the leading characters die in the fifth act.[6] The play is full of horrific action; at one point, Morena wants to kill herself with Ibrahim's scimitar; as she attempts to take it from him, she slices her hands open, making for a bloody scene. But according to Gildon, watching the play on stage was a moving experience:

> This Play, if it want the harmony of Numbers, and the Sublimity of Expression, has yet a Quality, that at least ballances 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. (111)

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And because critics usually discuss the play's overblown qualities, they seem to have missed the fact that it actually sends some unusual messages.[7] And like Manley's Homais in The Royal Mischief, Pix's Sheker Para is a woman turned to evil through the limits put on her sex by her society. In the original history Sheker Para was a "mere playmate and pimp" for Ibrahim, but in Pix's version she is transformed into the prime mover of the tragedy (see Clarke 232). It is obvious that she doesn't love the sultan – she baldly says so, and she is in love with Amurat – but she does love the power she wields through him. As she tells her eunuch, "I look down on the Sultana Queens, despise/ Their Pregnancy, and want of Power" (2:11).[8]

Although evil, Sheker Para does show insight into what it means to be a woman. On more than one occasion, she tries to give Amurat, the man she loves, insight into women's minds. First she tells him that the roles her society has placed on women, and men, are insufficient:

> Amurat: War, with its rough Idea, ought not Madam,
> To Disturb your gentler mind, by varying.
> Nature order'd the sweet mansion of love
> and soft desires.
> Sheker: But Almighty Nature sometimes fills
> Our Souls with both: as I Ambitious
> Look to war, so you methinks,
> Too Godlike Hero, might look down to love.
> (2:12)

Later in this discussion she tells him that the "Joys of Love are double, when our/ Sex desires" (2:13). Amurat is disgusted by Sheker

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Para's "unnaturalness," and since he is the hero of the piece, it is easy to believe that his ideas must be the correct ones, but later in the play the audience learns that Amurat is a rash and unthinking man. He ignores his responsibility when he commits suicide after Morena's death. If he could be wrong in this instance, and Pix makes sure the audience thinks he is by having the living characters condemn him for his act, it is conceivable that he was wrong about Sheker Para as well.

Sheker Para also dies a suicide. Although she doesn't love Ibrahim, she realizes that he is her source of power. Sheker Para becomes a perverse sort of "hero" who dies for her cause:

> Ibrahim! if in the other World
> The faithful Sheker can be useful:
> Lo she comes - Disdaining Life
> When thou art gone!
> (2:37)

Unlike Amurat, who rashly dies for love, Sheker Para dies for the honor of serving her sultan.

Morena herself is a stereotypical female character who has so internalized her society's ideas about virginity and purity that she commits suicide after she has been raped. First the threat and then the actual rape do rouse her to some sort of action - she tries to avoid the act by attempting suicide by snatching Ibrahim's scimitar; afterwards she stereotypically swoons. When she comes to she declares:

> But now I am by wrongs a Fury grown
> Holy Prophet, is it a sin to heave these
> Bleeding hands to thee, and Amurat for Justice?

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(2:29)

But it is not Morena's reactions that are startling; it is the reaction of the men around her. None of the men in her life think she has been soiled. There is no talk of hustling her to a convent, or whatever the Islamic equivalent would have been in contemporary English minds. Everyone fully expects that the marriage between Morena and Amurat will go on as planned. Her father refers to the "Heroick virtue" of her "spotless Soul" (1.26) and tries to assure her that Amurat will still love her. And her father is correct. Amurat's first words to Morena after her rape are

> – Speak lovely Mourner, speak
> To thy kneeling slave: Hath Nature
> Form'd a Monster, who durst with violence
> Approach thy Snowy vertue? Which
> I with a Devotion pure as that we pray
> To Heaven, have ever worshiped.
>
> (2:29)

It is Ibrahim who is the monster. Morena is still snowy white. Lest the audience not believe him, Amurat then threatens to set

> This Royal City in a blaze, till its bright
> Flames mount high as thy Chastity,
> And reach at Heaven.
>
> (2:30)

Unfortunately, Morena refuses to listen to the reason of the people around her. After she has taken poison and is waiting for it to

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act, she hints to Amurat that she may be dying; for that, he calls her "Inhumane fair," and declares that he wants her to marry him and share the glory which will be his. Ibrahim's death has wiped out any stain she might have had, but more important, he tells her

> Shall I foresake the Cristal Fountain,
> Because a Rough-hewn Satyr there
> Has quencht his Thirst? No! The
> Spring, thy Virgin Mind was pure.
>
> (2:40)

Amurat realizes that her mind and her body are two different things. Unlike the evil Sheker Para, who enjoyed sex, Morena is still pure and worthy of his love.

While this is still not a perfect analysis of female sexuality, it is better than most messages being given to women at that time. Pix was trying to show that a rape didn't irrevocably pollute a woman. Of course, the message would have been stronger had Morena been allowed to live, but the history of Ibrahim, and the taste of the town, would not allow this.

When Morena's pending death is evident to those around her, the most common reaction is anger, not pride. Unlike the father of Lucrece, who was proud of his daughter's suicide, Morena's father is angry. And Amurat cries out

> Oh! Morena! More savage –
> Than our Lord [Ibrahim]! for ever thou
> Hast Robb'd my Life of Joy, depriv'd
> My Eyes of Happiness.

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(2:40)

When viewed on stage, Morena's dilemma may have brought tears to the spectator's eyes, but when read, without the benefit of a ranting actress, Morena's actions seem like a foolish waste.

Along with these unusual messages buried in the play is an implicit Whiggish note. Through this play, Pix gives tacit approval to the notion that citizens have the right to overthrow a corrupt and unjust king. Just before Solyman fatally wounds Ibrahim in the fifth act, he lists the king's crimes: theft, multiple rapes and multiple murders (see 1.34-5). Although Pix is giving tacit approval to the dethroning of a corrupt king, she does not condone regicide. It is not the hero Amurat who kills Ibrahim; it is his friend Solyman. Historically, Ibrahim had to die, but Pix was careful not to allow her hero to do the killing. In fact, she goes as far as to have Amurat say he refuses to hurt his sovereign no matter what his crimes may have been. Nor is the regicide Solyman allowed to live; he is fatally wounded by Ibrahim.

It is through Pix's second play, The Spanish Wives (1696), that the ties to her predecessor Behn are most clearly shown.[9] Here we see the first of many pairings of the Restoration "gay" couple and the later Sentimental couple. True to the conventions of the time, there is no actual cuckolding in the play, for the tempted wife realizes the error of her ways before she can fall, but the possibility and the temptation allow Pix to titillate the audience.

In this play we see the introduction of another Behnian theme: women working together to help one another to happiness. Barbour points

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out that Pix actually changed her source, the French novel The Pilgrim by Gabriel de Brémond, in order to make the play more pro-woman.[10] In the original the two principal females were rivals, but in Pix's version they are sympathetic friends (68). And as well as having a sympathetic friend in the Governor's Lady, Elinora has very active assistance from her woman Orada, who is able to manipulate the jealous Marquess. In a tactic we will see again in Centlivre's Mar-plot (further evidence of a collaboration between the two authors), the servant Orada will convince the Marquess that she agrees with his policies towards his wife. She tells him that she berates Elinora in his absence, and constantly tells the young wife of the duty she owes her husband, but in reality she helps Elinora plot her escape to her beloved, Camillus.

And while Elinora might be a sentimentalized heroine, she does not passively accept her husband's treatment. When her husband tells her she is a "perpetual plague" to him, she answers "Inhuman Spaniard! – what woldst thou have? – Am I not immured, buried alive?" (Rogers 148). When he goes on to tell her that he will be burying her deeper in the country with no visitors whatsoever, she answers: "Know this, and let it gnaw thy jealous heart: Thy visits will be my severest punishment" (Rogers 149).

The play's anti-Catholic satire, centered around the character of Friar Andrew, a very funny but very duplicitous Catholic priest, earned it a reputation as a Whig play (Kendall "Theater" 146). Friar Andrew tells his friend Camillus that he will help him be reunited with Elinora because he has a "natural inclination to cuckoldom," but he is disappointed that Camillus has honorable intentions towards the lady and

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wishes marriage. He tells his young friend that "a wife's a cloy, and a mistress a pleasure" (Rogers 141). Unlike the typical Restoration play in which the witty rake voices the platitudes about the joys of sex without marriage, here the priest says the lines. Pix gets to use the laughs the sex comedy generates without "sullying" her hero and take a satirical swipe at the Roman Catholic Church in the bargain.

Pix again blends Restoration themes with a sentimentalized hero and heroine in her next play, The Innocent Mistress (1697). While this is chaste tale of platonic love for its principal couples, the play does hearken back to its earlier Restoration roots in the more minor characters' plots.[11] As chaste as the play may seem to readers in the twentieth century, it apparently had its detractors in its own time. According to A Comparison Between the Two Stages, "Here's the Innocent Mistress; tho' the Title calls this Innocent, yet it deserves to be Damn'd for its Obscenity" (32).

One of the most startling facts about this play is that it has an enormous cast - there are nineten key character, ten of them are for women. Each one provides at least one good showcase scene for the actress playing it. This sheer number of female roles does more than just provide acting jobs for a large number of actresses (which was unusual in itself), it also allows Pix scope to provide commentary about a variety of the women in her world.

In Pix's first post-Female Wits play, she takes at least one jab at male critics. The foolish "sharper and hanger-on" Spendall says that he told the witty heroine Mrs. Beauclair that "a she Wit was as great a Wonder as a Blazing-star, and as certainly foretold the World's turning

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upside down"; yet in spite of his comments, "the Lady will write" (7).[12]

Arranged marriage is again the prime object of attack. The main plot in this very complicated play centers around the love of the married Sir Charles Beauclair and Bellinda, alias Marianne, the runaway daughter of Lord Belmour. While still young, the poor second brother Charles was married off to a rich older widow, but Charles could never stand his wife and refuses to consummate their marriage. When his elder brother dies, Charles comes into the title and the family estate, and so he has been able to live without touching his wife's funds. In his misery, he meets Bellinda and the two fall in love. But the very chaste Bellinda will only allow a Platonic relationship, and Charles, while burning with love, is actually as chaste as his beloved and prefers a Platonic arangement.

Arranged marriage is also attacked in a number of subplots. In one, the young and rich Arabella is literally held captive by Lady Beauclair and her brother Cheatall. Their father had been named Arabella's guardian, and now the task had been passed on to these two. Their plan is to marry Arabella to the "very foolish fellow" Cheatall (as he is described in the dramatis personae), so that they will have perpetual access to her riches. A second subplot shows arranged marriage from a different perspective. Lady Beauclair wants to arrange a marriage for the daughter of her first marriage, Peggy, an ill-bred, heavily drinking young girl. The mother wants to arrange a proper marriage for her daughter, who will be worth £8000, but she wants to do it without the help of her husband – or anyone else for that matter. Because her pride and ignorance allow her to be taken in by the hanger-

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on Spendall, Peggy is married off to a penniless good-for-nothing. This happens not only because the mother didn't use her power over her daughter wisely, but also because neither Peggy nor Spendall married for love. Spendall wants Peggy's money, and Peggy wants the freedom of a wife. Her idea of married bliss is to be able to drink all the wine she'd like.

Although many of the characters in this play tend to be stereotypical, we do see many of the women working together in a supportive community. The three heroines, Bellinda, Mrs. Beauclair, and Arabella, are friends who lend each other support throughout the play. At no time are the three rivals, and each is paired with the man of her dreams by the end of the fifth act. The three are also loyally supported by their maids, Eugenia, Betty, and Dresswell. All three of the servants take active roles in helping their mistresses. Mrs. Beauclair, niece to Sir Charles, is at one point set up as a rival of Mrs. Flywife's, but because the two are from such disparate classes and situations (Mrs. Flywife is living as a man's wife without the benefit of clergy), a friendship between them would have been impossible.

Bellinda, the innocent mistress of the title, appears very passive throughout the play, but this is an illusion. It is she who has left home to avoid an arranged marriage. She remains in hiding in London and has managed to escape detection. When she realizes that her love for a married man is becoming too dangerous for her honor and that she is needed at home, she resolves to leave Sir Charles and go back to her father. But there is a reason for Bellinda's being the woman she is. It is not just native goodness in her soul; it has been nurtured.

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**Bell:** I'll conquer all these criminal Fires; I have the Goal in view, bright Honour leads me on, the part is glorious, but oh! 'tis painful too: Let me retire and tear him from my doating Thoughts, or in the better Conflict lose the use of Thought.

**Beau:** How strong are the Efforts of Honour where a good Education grounds the Mind in Virtue! (2:27)

Without a good education, women can fall prey to their sexual desires. This is a theme we see repeated in Pix, and we see it in the works of all of the women writers in this study as well. Pix may not have openly derided women's lack of education as her predecessor had, but she certainly makes her strongest heroines explicitly educated.

Behnian Restoration rakes are represented in this play as well. Sir Francis Wildlove, who lives for wine and women and who has a "horrible fear of Matrimony" (2:3), is paired with the witty and active Mrs. Beauclair. In her first attempt to test Sir Francis, she disguises herself with a mask. Thinking her a prostitute, after some verbal dueling, he "rushes upon her." She saves herself by unmasking, and just as this happens her uncle and Bellinda enter. While they chide her for her rash behavior, she says in an aside, "No great harm neither, to have a hearty Hug from the man one loves" (2:18). In her second test of Sir Francis's proclaimed love, Mrs. Beauclair dresses herself as a man and follows him to his rendezvous with Mrs. Flywife. She actively spoils his fun by wooing Mrs. Flywife for herself, which allows for a scene of flirting that the audience can conceive as "innocent" since there is no actual threat of consummation, but there is still a titilating

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undercurrent of lesbianism.

Whenever Sir Francis declares his feelings, Mrs. Beauclair brushes him off with a flippant comment: "Have a care of the dull road" (2:31). With all her frivolity, Mrs. Beauclair does love Sir Francis, and her last test is her most elaborate. She allows Sir Francis to believe that she has married the foolish Spendall. He discovers his mistake and is confronted by the laughing Mrs. Beauclair, who declares herself the winner in their battle of wits. She realizes that he wouldn't have been as concerned had he not loved her, and Sir Francis realizes it as well: "did I dissemble, Madam, your sense wou'd soon discover it, but by my Soul, I love you truly, and if you dare venture on me, my future life shall show how much I honour you" (2:46).

But Mrs. Beauclair knows her man, and is wise enough in the ways of the world to question his vows. He may propose, but in true Restoration fashion, Mrs. Beauclair refuses to let down her defenses. In truth, she does not really expect fidelity, only kindness:

> **Mrs. B.**: Can you then leave all the pretty City Wives, which a Man of your Parts and Quality, in a quarter of an hours siege, could overcome? In fine, all the charming variety of what was pretty, or agreeable in the whole Sex, and be confin'd? Oh, that's a hard word to me.
>
> Sir Fran: With more delight than those surfeiting Joys (that always left a sting behind 'em) afforded.
>
> **Mrs. B.**: Well, Sir, if you can give me your heart, I can allow you great Liberties: but when we have play'd the

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Fool and married, don't you when you have been pleased abroad, come home surly: let your looks be kind, your Conversation easie, and tho' I should know you have been with a Mistress, I'd meet you with a smile.

**Sir Fran**: When I foresake such Charms, for senseless mercenary Creatures, you shall correct me with the greatest punishment upon Earth, a frown.

**Mrs. B.**: You'll fall into the Romantick stile, Sir Francis; Mr. Spendall, shan't we see your Bride? (2:46)

Mrs. Flywife also depicts Restoration attitudes towards love and marriage. She has not even bothered to marry Mr. Flywife, but their relationship has all the trappings of a typical Restoration stage marriage. He is jealous and fears being cuckolded, and she tries her hardest to justify those fears. At one point she calls men fools and declares that for women, "When we love, our Liberties we lose,/ But when belov'd, with ease we pick and choose" (2:10). In the end, Mrs. Flywife loses Mr. Flywife permanently: it turns out that he is Lady Beauclair's lost husband who was presumed dead.

In Pix's next play, The Deceiver Deceived (1697), she again builds a strong community for her otherwise stereotypical female characters. And we again see a plot split between the sentimental couple, in this case Count Andres and Olivia, and the witty Restoration couple, Fidelio and Ariana.

Once again forced marriage is under attack. The misogynist Bondi is in a second marriage with Olivia, a woman not yet twenty-five. Her parents had arranged the marriage for financial reasons even though they

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knew that Olivia was already in love with Count Andres. In his turn, Bondi is arranging a marriage for his daughter Ariana with the foolish Frenchman Count Insulls. Although this is a comedy, there is much unhappiness portrayed whose cause is arranged marriage. Even the miserable old Bondi would be happier if he hadn't married the second time. He is determinedly misogynistic, convinced that his own daughter is evil only because she is a woman. In fact when his daughter Ariana, in front of company, asks for freedom of speech, he answers: "She's that's so free of her Tongue, commonly is as free –" (2:5); he's interrupted before he can finish the thought, but thanks to his previous comments, the audience can readily supply the missing word, "sexually."

The women in the play band together against Bondi to help each other attain happiness. Lady Temptyouth and her ward Lucinda join with Ariana and Olivia to help prevent Ariana's arranged marriage, and almost all receive some benefit from the plot. Lady Temptyouth wants a suitable marriage for her ward, Lucinda wants a "rich Fool" to manage, and Olivia wants to avoid Insulls. The women plot to have Insulls marry Lucinda, and all three women attain their goals. Olivia is denied happiness in love, but she is satisfied to see her stepdaughter, who is more like a younger sister, happy in love.

Ariana is cast in a Restoration mold – she tricks her father in order to avoid the fate he has planned for her – but she also looks ahead to the practical heroines of Centlivre's plays. When Fidelio asks her to foresake her father's fortune and elope with him, she refuses, for she doesn't like starving; "'twill be apt to take away all your Appetites, and then you won't care for me" (2:9). When he claims that

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this is not true, she shrewdly observes: "'Tis pretty to hear a young fellow one loves talk thus, but this wont do, Love and Plenty crown the encircling Year with Pleasure, but where either's wanting, Content scarce ever appear" (2:9). The practical Ariana is witty as well; she deflates her arranged fiancé's presuming ways with a few well-pointed comments and even fears marriage will spoil the love she shares with Fidelio. Right before the ceremony, she finally consents, albeit reluctantly: "I will venture on this Bug-bear-Marriage, but if thou shouldst prove ungrateful after all my obligations, what punishment dost thou deserve?" (2:44).

Her stepmother Olivia is the sentimental heroine of the play. Although she was in love with Count Andres before her marriage, she remembers her "scared Vow" to Bondi, and "dare not break it." Andres asks her to think about her situation – she is a young woman married to an old, spiteful man she never loved, and her first vows were to Andres – but she answers him

> The Man is mad, to bid a Woman think; no, talking Deluder, when we think we never yield. Now I have thought on the fatal consequence, and resolved from this minute to grow wise; that I have took the opportunity of my Husband's blindness, and seen you often, was due to your injurious wrongs. (2:11)

Although Andres woos throughout the play, Olivia never yields. There is no <u>deus ex machina</u> to free Olivia from Bondi. Her only wish is that she will outlive her husband and be a rich widow able to marry her first love. But until then, she is resigned to her loveless marriage. As she

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tells Bondi, her hope is that they "henceforth may live more quietly" (2:47).

The content of The Deceiver Deceived is not political, but the epilogue has a patriotic cast:

> Now Britain's waging Wars are at an end,
> Caesar adorns the Throne he did defend;
> Eternal Peace is fix'd, and all things smile,
> To Crown the happy blessings of our Isle.

It goes on to argue that during times of peace, literature was at its height, so therefore "Britain's Stage shall Athen's far excel." Although a conventional sentiment, it allows Pix to show her fealty to King William.

With her next play, Pix returns to tragedy. Queen Catharine; or, The Ruins of Love (1698) is purportedly modelled after the history plays of Shakespeare, but with the emphasis on the women. Pix prepares us for the subject matter in the Prologue, when she reminds the audience that English history has been the subject of Holinshed and Shakespeare. And, she notes, those writing after Shakespeare face his high standard:

> But how shall Woman after him succeed,
> And what excuse can her presumption plead,
> Who with enervate voice does wake the mighty dead;
> To please your martial men she must despair,
> And therefore Courts the favour of the fair:
> From huffing Hero's she hopes no relief,
> But trusts in Catharine's Love, and Isabella's grief.
>
> (sig. A2)

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Pix seems to imply that she will be writing something close to Shakespeare's work; indeed, at the end of Act Four, after Owen Tudor's murder by Gloucester, Edward IV's lines have an ironic echo of the opening lines of Shakespeare's Richard III:

> For as the sun must rise in blood, so shall
> His evening be, and he shall shine no more,
> Till he beholds no Rival in the British Throne:
> Gloucester, dispose of Tudor as you please.
>
> (2:38)

And in her dedication Pix states her intention to hew closely to history: "I could not, without a plain Contradiction to the History, punish the Instruments that made my Lovers unhappy; but I know your Ladyship will trace Richard into Bosworth Field, and find him there, as wretched as he made Queen Catharine." In Pix's version, Edward IV had once been in love with Henry V's widow, Catharine of Valois. She loves Owen Tudor and marries him. As an act of revenge, Edward vows to kill Tudor and prevent Catharine's son, Henry VI, from keeping his father's throne. In a sub-plot, Edward's brother Clarence is in love with Catharine's ward, Isabella. Out of a mixture of spite and political ambition, the third brother, Gloucester, hopes to thwart the marriage. In the working out of the plot Tudor and Isabella are murdered; Clarence plots revenge on his brother; and Edward sits uneasily on his new-won throne.

As with Ibrahim and The Inhumane Cardinal, Pix makes a pretense of keeping to the history. I find it puzzling, therefore, that she gets Plantagenet genealogy so wrong. Anyone familiar with Shakespeare's

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Henry V would realize that Catharine of Valois would have been too old to be an object of desire for Edward IV. Pix appears to have used the names from history, but without a reference to dates. In real life, Edward IV was born five years after Catharine died. She also predeceased her second husband Owen Tudor by many years, and contrary to Pix's version, the elderly Tudor was duly executed in the public marketplace, not stealthily murdered in his wife's closet. Perhaps Pix was confusing the story of Mary, Queen of Scots and her husband Darnley's murder of Mary's lover Riccio. Mary was six months pregnant when Riccio, whose ties to Rome upset the Scottish lords more than his relations with the queen, was brutally stabbed to death while visiting Mary in her closet. Or perhaps Pix was not confused, but realized that making the Scottish Queen Mary the heroine of her play would be interpreted as an extremely Jacobite statement. Perhaps she transferred the compelling story to the familiar English characters in order to avoid its political implications.

In actual history Clarence did marry an Isabella - Isabella Neville, daughter of the Earl of Warwick. They had several children, two of whom, Margaret and Edward, Shakespeare treats in his Henriad. I have yet to come to a satisfactory solution to Pix's obvious mangling of history. I would think it was nothing more than mistakes on her part if she had not seemed so determined to remind her readers that she was writing a history play. The Mary-Darnley-Riccio connection is the only reason I can come up with, and even that is not satisfactory. But whatever Pix was attempting with this play, she failed. The play was not a success, and prompting the anonymous author of Animadversions on

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Mr. Congreve's Late Answer to Mr. Collier to declare that it wasn't even a play and could be skipped over in discussion (3). However modern readers are able to find a bit more in the play.[13]

As we see in the women characters in plays by the other women playwrights, Duty and Honour can be applied to the female characters in this play by the traditionally male definitions. While Isabella loves Clarence, she realizes her duty to Catharine:

> But oh! I have another tie,
> Duty, Friendship, Gratitude plants me here.
> The mourning Queen, whose adversity has shook off
> Fawning crowds, must not be left by Isabella.
>
> (2:13)

Like the heroines in Trotter's and Manley's plays, Isabella is torn between the conflicting demands of love and duty:

> O draw me, Heaven, thro' this Labyrinth!
> For Love and Friendship pull me several ways,
> Like Cords upon the Rack; which ever way I yield,
> No ease is granted to my troubled mind.
>
> (2:14)

Unlike Trotter's and Manley's heroines, Isabella gives in to love; when she tells Clarence of her decision to flee with him to France, he is transported with bliss and starts spouting poetry. Ever practical, Isabella tells him, "Talk not so wildly, but instruct me in my flight" (2:14).

Isabella is wise enough to realize that because of her position in society, she is less in charge of her self than most women. She sees

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her maid as the luckier of the two:

> Oh happy! happy thou. If you consented to
> Some honest mate and fled, no Court wou'd
> Be allarm'd, no Pursuers, no life be lost.
>
> (2:23)

Kendall sees an erotic attraction between Catharine and Isabella, and she believes that Isabella's main struggle is deciding where her primary loyalty should be.[14] This is an enlightening reading, linking Pix with Trotter, who not only wrote the epilogue to the play, but whose Agnes de Castro Kendall sees as having a similar theme, which then forms a further link to Aphra Behn. But while Isabella's central dilemma is indeed to decide where her primary loyalty lies, I don't see the erotic attachment between Catharine and Isabella. Catharine does love Isabella tenderly, but it is a parent-child relationship that exists between the two. When Isabella has to work out where her primary loyalty lies, she is working out a dilemma typically faced by young women, in fact all people, who marry: where and when do the loyalties to parents become overridden by the loyalty due to a spouse?

Pix gives Catharine the role of articulating the powerlessness of even seemingly powerful women. When Gloucester and his men break into her chambers to catch and murder Tudor, Catharine tries to stop them. Her cries underscore her true condition:

> am I not
> Daughter of France and England's Queen? have I no
> Power? where are my Guards? Alas, I had forgot
> I've None.

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(2:36)

She has neither guards nor power, and all the exalted titles she wears cannot change her status in her society. When Gloucester fatally stabs her husband, she curses first the murderer and then "curst be my Female weakness too that cou'd not save him" (2:37). At the end of the play, Catharine has nothing but her children. The audience knows that from these children will spring the great Tudor dynasty, but Catharine herself has nothing but misery to cling to.

This play was not optimistic about women's role in society, and Pix continued the negative portrayal in her next work, The False Friend; or, The Fate of Disobedience (1699). The Prologue of the play states its intention to reform the vices of the stage:

> Amongst reformers of this vicious age
> Who think it duty to refine the stage,
> A woman to contribute does intend.

And while any character who may be conceived as committing the smallest infraction against strictest honor dies at the end of the play, Pix does manage to condemn arranged marriage. All of the deaths in the play would not have happened if children were not avoiding arranged marriages. Emilius, son of the viceroy of Sardinia, secretly marries Lovisa, whose French father had arranged a marriage for her. Emilius's sister, Adellaida, marries the man of her choice, Brisac, who is going by the alias Don Lopez but who is coincidentally the brother of Lovisa. This marriage is also kept a secret because Adellaida's father has planned a marriage for her. Brother and sister turn to their good friend and foster-sister, Appamia, to help with their deceptions. All

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would be well but for the fact that Appamia secretly loves Emilius and her thwarted love turns to hate and malice.

Emilius decries the practice of arranged marriage when he tells Appamia the story of Lovisa's near fate:

> Her cruel Father was Bartering my
> Inestimable Fair: Bargain'd with a
> Neighboring Lord, for Dirt and Acres;
> Sold my Goddess like Common Nothing
> Of the Sex; that World of Beauty, for which
> My aching Heart had paid a faithful Slavery,
> Must be thrown into the sordid Arms of One
> Who Gaz'd not on her Eyes, but on the Gold!
>
> (2:6)

And while the messages relayed by the women in this play are negative, there is something positive to be found in the sheer number of roles. Unlike most tragedies, this play had an equal number of male and female roles: six of each. And they are excellent roles for showcasing the talents of the actresses who play them – full of rants and passion.

Another tacit message is that if women do not work together, disaster will follow. When Appamia distances herself from her friendship with Adellaida and treats Lovisa treacherously, she becomes a devil, in her own words, a Medusa. In fact, her Indian maid, Zelide, has more natural goodness than the evil Appamia. It is Zelide who tries to dissuade her mistress from her chosen path of evil, and her character is reminiscent of Behn's character Oronooko. We learn from Appamia that, like him, Zelide is royal:

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you said you were a

Princess Born; and that thy Swarthy Veins

Carry'd the Royal Blood of those, who heretofore,

Were Lords of Mexico!

(2:28)

And like Oronooko, Zelide is more noble than the wicked whites around her. In the end, she gives in to her mistress' demands, but she does so out of love for Appamia, not for her own gain.

For The Beau Defeated: or, the Lucky Younger Brother (1700) Pix again returns to comedy. This play also marks a shift, for Pix presents this play as the work of a man, and there is some question as to whether this is actually Pix's work. Jacob's The Poetical Register named a Mr. Barker as the author of the play, and Clark appears to question the attribution to Pix (see 209-10), but the consensus is that this is Pix's play.

It is unusual for only two reasons. First, it opens with two women, and except for a boy, almost the entire first act deals solely with women: Mrs. Rich and her maid Betty. It is not until the very end of the Act that a man joins the conversation. This, of course, allows the audience to enter the world of the play through women's eyes. What is curious is that the women are not discussing women's role in society, nor are they even discussing men. They are attacking class distinctions. The conversation is not so radical that Mrs. Rich is declaring that there shouldn't be class distinctions; she is merely upset by the fact that titled people, who in many cases are poorer than she, often treat her as their inferior. She wants to be, and believes

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she is, their equal.

The second unusual feature, though not for a Pix play, is that there are more female roles than male. There are nine females to eight men. Pix may not have been saying much about women's position in society in this play, but she was surely providing work for London's actresses.

It was a year before Pix's next play, but then she had two on the boards almost simultaneously. The tragedies The Double Distress and The Czar of Muscovy both premiered in March 1701. Neither play is feminist, but they have ties to Behn. Leamira, the princess of Persia, is attached to Cytheria, a Median princess, passionately so, yet both love men, and their attachments to men are primary. When the women are told their fates by an oracle, neither is pleased. Leamira, who is in love with her father's general Cleomedon, is told she will marry a prince of Media. She assumes this is Tygranes, the Median prince who is in love with Cytheria. She, in turn, is secretly in love with her brother, Cyraxes, and is warned by the oracle to avoid incest.

In order to avoid marrying the Median prince, Leamira badgers her friend into marrying Tygranes. Her rationale is that by Cytheria's marrying Tygranes, a man she hates, at least she will be able to avoid incest. Leamira also argues that at least one of them should have a chance at happiness. Sacrificing Cytheria's happiness to her own is not the action of a woman in love with another woman.

With The Czar of Muscovy Pix writes her first prose tragedy, returning to the subject of politics. As Thomas Brown notes, in "A Criticism of Several Modern Plays," "Here comes the Czar of Muscovy, an

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occasional Drama, for Mrs. Pix slips no occasion of Political Plays" (qtd in Clark 208). Another historical play, The Czar of Muscovy is the story of Demetrius, an imposter czar, and his overthrow by Zueski, the Lord High Steward, and the other principal lords of Moscow. At first, the lords were willing to allow Demetrius the throne, even though they suspect his claim. Even the real Demetrius's mother, Sophia, agrees to the deception in order to keep the peace. But soon Demetrius proves himself a tyrant, and steps must be taken to protect the country. And while making her political message, Pix also manages a swipe at arranged marriages.

Upon becoming czar, Demetrius takes Marina, daughter of the nobleman Manzeck, as a wife. Hungry for such a powerful son-in-law, Manzeck agrees to the marriage even though he knows that his daughter is in love with Alexander, the son of a duke. Unfortunately, Demetrius develops a violent lust for Zarrianna, the daughter of a man he has had killed, and Zueski's beloved at the wedding, which is the agent which allows the Muscovites to see Demetrius's tyranny. His first act is to attempt to exile his wife and replace her with Zarrianna. But unfortunately for him, both women have too much spirit to follow his orders blindly. In fact, when Marina disregards his orders she shows her own innate nobility and sense of worth. When he tells her that she must abandon the title of Empress, she answers,

> 'Tis not an empty Title I contend for, but will not derogate from the Honour of my Birth, to satisfie your most unjust Demands. I have a Father, who dares and will revenge my Wrongs; but would discard me from his paternal Care, shou'd

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> I, to save my Life, by my Confessions to your unjust
> Demands, betray a poor and abject
>
> Spirit, unworthy of his Daughter.
>
> (2:27)

And after a verbal sparring with Demetrius, it is Marina who first calls him a tyrant to his face: "Now, Sir, you do appear your self, a faithless Husband and a lawless Tyrant" (2:27).

And although Marina and Zarrianna would appear to be rivals for Demetrius, in reality, neither woman wants him. In fact, Marina thanks Zarrianna for taking her husband's love, for it is her "Greatest Happiness" to be dispossessed of the love of the man she hates. Marina fully expects to be executed by Demetrius's forces, but when the masked men enter the chamber she shares with Zarrianna, her courage fails her. Zarrianna immediately claims that she is Marina and dares the men to kill her. Luckily, the disguised men are Zueski and Alexander, there to save their loves.

By the end of the play the imposter Demetrius has been killed, the lovers reunited, and Zueski, the next in line for the throne, is proclaimed czar. Because Demetrius was only a commoner pretending to the throne, it was politically safe for the hero of the piece to kill him. It was not regicide, but a justly deserved death.

After her double output in the spring of 1701, Pix waited for over two years for her next play, the comedy The Different Widows (1703), a very Behnian intrigue comedy that turns sentimental in the last act. The different widows of the title are the sisters Widow Bellmont and

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Lady Gaylove. The two act as foils for each other, the Widow Bellmont being the wise mother-figure and Lady Gaylove the ridiculous woman who refuses to act her age, or even like a mother. She is so extreme, and so anxious to hide her real age, that she keeps her grown children ignorant as to their real ages and dresses them as youngsters. It is their aunt, Widow Bellmont, who saves them from their mother's tyranny and allows them to become adults.

The most interesting aspect of this play is the similarities it holds to the work of Centlivre. The character Dandle is the prototype for Mar-plot in The Busie Body. Both are rather dull wits whose attempts at both humor and assistance cause problems for the other characters. Where husbands had no suspicions, Dandle helps breed them. Where scandals were almost successfully avoided, Dandle chimes in with incriminating statements that expose all. It is he who causes the rupture in the marriage of the gullible Sir Anthony and the flirtatious Lady Loveman. Unlike Mar-plot, he is always ready for a brawl, but his threats and posturing lead to naught, usually because the other characters don't think him worth their time. And Dandle is not as sympathetic a character as Mar-plot. At the end of the play he is "punished" by being tricked into marrying Lucy, Lady Gaylove's maid, when he thought he was marrying Lady Gaylove herself. When he learns of the trick, he cries out, "Hell, Fobb'd off with a Chamber-maid, an Adjuster of Head-Dresses, a Mender of Furbeloes." Lucy's answer to this insult is

> Vermin dost murmur, thou humble Companion of Vice; thou Valet de Chambre to Iniquity, whose best quality is

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> Cowardice; for that prevents Thee from Justifying the Mischiefs thou dost, that hast liv'd on Gamesters, an under Servant to the Occupation, that never had any Reputation, but for Drinking and Lying Inimitably. (2:60)

One wonders why Lucy married him.

But Lucy's reference to gamesters points the way to the second Centlivre play evident in embryonic form in this work – her first hit, The Gamester, which would appear in 1705. The Sir James subplot of The Different Widows mirrors the Valere main plot of The Gamester. In Pix's play, Angelica is in love with Sir James, the man she has been contracted to since childhood, but because of Sir James's gambling, she is unable to marry him. Angelica and Widow Bellmont, Sir James's mother, plot together to reform him before it is too late. The reforming trick is a rather cruel one, involving marriage to a disguised Angelica, who then assumes the personality of a fallen woman, the supposed death of Sir James's best friend Valentine, disinheritance by his mother, and the very real threat of jail and ruin for Sir James.

In Centlivre's version, the fianceé Angelica works with Valere's father in order to win back the profligate. Angelica disguises herself as a fellow (male) gambler who wins a cherished picture of Angelica from Valere. When she learns of the portrait's "loss," Angelica breaks off her engagement to Valere and his father disinherits him. Heartbroken, he reforms, Angelica believes him, and the play ends happily. According to Centlivre's biographer, John Wilson Bowyer, Centlivre's source for her play was the French play Le Joueur (1696) by Jean François Regnard (60), but one must wonder if that source was filtered through Pix.

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Pix's version has a stronger female community, for it is the gamester's mother and fiancée who work together for their mutual happiness. Widow Bellmont has the happiness that comes from seeing her beloved child settled and productive, and Angelica's cooperation and masquerade allow Widow Bellmont to see her son change for the better.

Pix once again returned to tragedy with her offering of 1705, The Conquest of Spain. Like The Czar of Muscovy, this play is more political than feminist. Indeed, there are only two female characters with a cast of ten men, plus extra soldiers. The main thrust of the plot is that through the lust and tyranny of the King of Spain, the country falls to the control of the Moors. While his best general, Julianus, is away subduing the Moors and saving Spain, Rhoderique, the king, rapes Julianus's daughter, Jacinta. She escapes to the army's camp, reports to her father what has happened, sets the fall of Spain in motion, and dies in the heat of a battle, mistaken for a Spanish soldier. The message of this play seems to be that the unseating of an unjust king is acceptable, as long as the country does not suffer for it; unfortunately, Spain does, so something must be wrong. Regicide is roundly condemned, and Rhoderique does escape with his life, but only after he sincerely repents for the havoc he has wreaked.

The wise Julianus first sets the tone for the treatment the king should receive. As the army is threatening a coup and calling for Rhoderique's blood, Julianus steps in:

> Hold that impious Breath,
> What unseen Ills has headlong Rage brought on me!
> When vilest Treason to my face is uttered;

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Tho' Rhoderique has acted most ignobly,
Yet still he is a King, and we his Subjects:
I urg'd my wrongs, and meant that he shou'd know it,
By Fear and Shame to bring him to Remorse,
And guard his Royal Soul from future Crimes;
If I shou'd fail in this, which Heaven forbid,
I dare not lift my Sword against my Sovereign.

(2:40)

Even when Julianus comes face to face with the king, he is unable to kill him. But that does not mean that tempers do not flare. Julianus becomes very angry, but his belief that royalty is beyond his justice is so internalized that he is unable to act. In response to Julianus's complaints, the guilty king turns to boasting:

Are Subjects to contend with Royal Power?
What was thy House, or all thy boasted Race,
To be esteem'd in ballance with my Pleasures?
Had'st thou been Loyal, as thou wou'dst insinuate,
Thou had'st not grudged a Daughter to thy King:
That petty Sacrifice Thousands wou'd offer,
But thou, blinded with Pride and Vanity,
Thinks't it more Noble to undo thy Country,
Than to endure the smallest Injury
Mean and Unworthy.

(2:65)

Rhoderique is thus neatly able to place the blame for the loss of Spain squarely on someone else's shoulders.

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But Julianus's steadfast loyalty in the face of insult after insult finally stirs the "innate" goodness in the King's soul, and he gets on his knees and begs his general's forgiveness. Because of his true repentance, Julianus helps the King escape the conquering Moors and loses his own life in the process.

Jacinta's death comes after we are shown how she is the one who has internalized her society's ideas about raped women. Pix is not as explicit as she was in Ibrahim, but the message is still here. Jacinta feels that she is stained beyond redemption, but again we see the fiancé showing a more modern understanding of rape. When Theomantius first sees her, he tells her

> Fair suffering Saint,
> Forbid me not to gaze upon thy Beauties,
> They and thy noble Mind are still the same,
> Sublime and Chast, unsullied by the Tyrant
> That Robber, that curs'd Bane to all my Joys.
> (2:39-40)

Of course, Jacinta is not allowed to live after a rape. She is stabbed during one of the battles, and happily goes to her death. Unable to live without her, Theomantius falls on his sword and dies at her side.

Margaretta shows a bit more mettle than her unlucky friend. The secret wife of Antonio, she is also secretly loved by his friend Alvarez. Because of this secret love, Alvarez tries his hardest to cause a rupture in Antonio's and Margaretta's marriage. He first tells Margaretta that Antonio has married someone else. In her anger,

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Margaretta remembers her own nobility: "Am I not Born even as Noble as himself?" she asks. Then she asks Alvarez:

> To what obscure retreat art thou to Guide me,
> Where to Conceal his Crime and my Disgrace
> This Wretched Burthen of my teeming Womb,
> This Unborn Babe, may be in stealth brought up
> By a vile Name to my great race unknown.
>
> (2:45)

Later, when Alvaez attempts to rape her, she pulls out a knife and plans to use it.

> If thou Com'st on, that very Moment, know,
> Or in thy Cursed Bosome, or my own,
> By all that's Chast, I'll plunge this ready Dagger;
> Tho' in the deed I do a double Murder,
> And kill an unborn Innocent.
>
> (2:60)

Alvarez is able to get her off her guard through a trick, and in the ensuing struggle, he disarms her; fortunately for Margaretta, Antonio saves her at the last minute.

This is a rather long play – almost twice the length of some of Pix's comedies. It also has a number of long-winded speeches that tend to drag. In light of these speeches, it is surprising that the play ran for six nights (LS 2:93). Part of its popularity might have been the depiction of the King of Spain as a decaying profligate who actually deserved to lose his country. This was, of course, the height of the War of the Spanish Succession, which was about which non-Spaniard would

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sit on the throne of Spain. Pix's fellow English were ready to despise and mock all things Spanish. While Antonio and Margaretta are allowed to live at the end of the play, Antonio is not a Spaniard by birth, and Margaretta is willing to forfeit all her ties to Spain to be with her husband. Besides, once a woman married, she assumed the nationality of her husband.

Pix returned to comedy for what was to be her last play, Adventures in Madrid (1706). Although there is no contemporary commentary on reaction to this play, it is Pix's best. It's closest to Behn's comedies of the 70's, with free and frank language unlike any seen in Pix's earlier plays, or in the Female Wits' other plays as well. At one point, the rake Gaylove says that "Not long ago I pass'd the Night in the Arms of a melting Beauty, tho' her Father lay Coughing over Head, and her snoring Brother in the next Room" (2:2).

Again we see two sets of couples – the Restoration Gay pair, Gaylove and Laura, and the sentimental Grave couple, Bellmour and Clarinda. Assisting Laura and Clarinda in their intrigues is Lisset, whose character is a twist on the witty servant. She is a discharged servant who is as much a friend to Clarinda and Laura as class differences will allow. These three women are the strongest in Pix's canon, and of all the Female Wits' women characters, they are the closest to Behn's female characters. The three work together closely, even facing danger, forming a close-knit community that is able to prevent the members from being dominated by men.

Very briefly, Gaylove and Bellmour, two young English gentlemen visiting in Spain, intrigue with two Spanish ladies, Laura and Clarinda.

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Obstacles to their unions include Laura's pending arranged marriage to an old man and Clarinda's current marriage to the "very old cross Lord," Gomez. The gentlemen are aided in their intrigues by the Spaniard Guzman and Bellmour's servant Jo. The ladies are assisted by Lisset and Clarinda's woman Beatrice. In order to help the action, Lisset spends much of the play disguised as the eunuch Liscius. In a sub-plot, Don Phillip, Gomez's uncle, schemes with Gaylove's sister Emilia to free Phillip's sister Clarinda from Gomez's clutches.

Gomez has seemingly forced his niece to marry him, but we learn early in the action that the relationship has never been consummated – Clarinda bars her bedroom door every night, "but he is revenged on me by Day," she tells her friends (2:9). Gomez will not allow her out of the house unless he is with her. He also has control of Laura, whose brother has arranged a marriage for her with Gomez's twin brother. Gomez is the blackest villain Pix ever created in a comedy. Clarinda's first comment about him is that he is a tyrant, and for once the description is not comic hyperbole. Clarinda's half-uncle, he has sent her brother off to the Indies in order to gain the siblings' estate. We learn that Clarinda consented to marriage only at knifepoint. But Pix wasn't going to leave the arguable grounds of nonconsummation Clarinda's only escape. We learn in the very last scene that Gomez only forced his niece to pretend to be his wife; there was never any ceremony. Married or not, he plans on taking her to Mexico in order to "tyrannize at pleasure," but he has every intention of killing her if she interferes with his plans.

His other crimes include having Lisset imprisoned with the further

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intention of having her sent to the Indies as a slave. The man is truly a sadist, a fact Pix reveals in the final Act. When he learns that Lisset has escaped from prison, he is sure that she is plotting against him and imagines his revenge: "coul'd I but catch her, this Dagger shou'd Sacrifice her immediately; first I'd rip up her Face, which she loves better than her Soul;" then he'd "[t]ear her Flesh with burning Pincers red hot, ay red hot, – odso, use Fire, Water, all the Plagues Mankind or the Devil ever invented" (2:60). Pix very carefully crafted a megalomaniac for Clarinda's husband so that there would be no taint of scandal attached to her more sentimental heroine.

Indeed, of the three women, Clarinda is the most passive. Although terrorized at home, she is afraid to accept Bellmour as her lover and means of escape. As she tells him, "I have a foolish thing call'd Virtue, a greater Tyrant than my Husband; for I consent to her Dictates, which I never did to become that Monster's Wife" (2:27). Laura and Lisset are the more active women, but Clarinda is finally forced to do something to gain her freedom. In spite of her claims that she is too frightened to escape through a secret passage, she indeed does it, thus saving herself where the men Bellmour and Phillip have failed.[15] And as passive as she may appear, Clarinda is sure of her self worth; she knows that her honor is her own and not tied to a man, even the man who, for all intents and purposes, owns her. When Gomez rails that she has vilely plotted against his honor, she retorts, "If I have, it is not vile – nor is your Honour mine" (2:52).

But Laura is occasionally annoyed by her friend's less active and less realistic nature. This first happens in the first act when

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Clarinda asks Laura to help plot escape:

**Cla**: Now employ that wondrous Stock of Wit Heaven has bestowed upon you, stretch thy Invention Girl and before tomorrow set us free.

**Lau**: Can you be free[?]

**Cla**: That time shall try; let's make a busie Day, perhaps I might get Courage to tell ye Strange things e're Night begins her Sable Reign.

**Lau**: Romantick. (2:14-5)

Later, after Laura has set the plan for escape in motion, Clarinda is plagued with doubts. She starts, "Suppose the old Man –," but is interrupted by Laura's "Suppose the Sky shou'd fall"; when she tries a "Ay but," she is again interrupted by the impatient Laura, "Agen at your But's? be more resolute or I'll leave you out of the Plot and run away by my self" (2:50). In the final act, when the only escape for the women is through the secret passage, Clarinda balks and declares, "I dare not venture." Laura's blunt response is "Will ye be left behind, for I will positively go" (2:63). Pix hints that Clarinda's fears are not caused solely by maidenly modesty. Clarinda is in real fear. She drops hints that her brother has been murdered by Gomez, and it is only when she later reveals how Gomez forced her into a sham marriage at knifepoint that we realize that Clarinda lived in a state of danger of which even her closest friends were ignorant.

Unaware of the true danger that Gomez represents, Laura is much freer in her attitude. But she also has foresight and realizes what she needs to succeed in the world. Aghast at her brother's choice of a

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mate, she vows never to marry his choice. And to arrange for her escape she takes advantage of any opportunity which comes her way. When the villa next door was standing vacant, she had arranged for a passage to be made between it and Gomez's home in order to make getting in and out undetected easier. Her brother's decision that she should have access to as much money as she pleased is put to use as well. He brother rationalized that if Laura had her own money, she wouldn't be tempted by men's gifts. But with money of her own, she learned she didn't need men, and she is well aware of money's power:

> I dare affirm Mony is that Philosopher's Stone, the Grave Studying Fellows Meant, and the New, hunt in vain after – for there is no Proof against its Power; it makes the Old Young, it Conquers Towns without Soldiers, alters the Decrees of Senates, raises Towers from the Dust that touch the Skies; in fine, it is that Golden Elixir, that Spirit of Life, the Old Dons keep such a work about. (2:8)

And her money has taught her one thing: that freedom is a prize she must not lose.

She is also displays a Behnian wit when sparring with her rake Gaylove. He has met the veiled Laura on a number of occasions, and when he finally convinces her to show him her face, he declares, "So bright Aurora with her Rosy Fingers, draws the black Curtains of the ugly Night, and darts a thousand Glories round" (2:27). Her retort to this fulsome praise is the deflating, but true, "There's Heroicks now" (2:27). And her sharp tongue is not restricted to her lover. When Gomez complains that there are no eunuchs in Spain, she boldly quips,

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"We have an abundance of Old men, and that's much the same thing" (2:12).

Later in the scene Pix subtly brings Behn's most famous character into the discussion when Laura tells Gaylove, "I know you are a Rover" (2:28). The two then launch into an extended repartee which includes an extended wordplay centered on appetites:

> Gay: I confess, when my Appetite's Craving, and the Food Delicious, I hate a long Grace.
>
> Lau: Ay, but when the same Dish is serv'd up every Day, you care not a Farthing whether you sit down to Table or no.
>
> Gay: Hum, O my Conscience, we were made for one another, you understand me so well - let me Speak my very Soul to you; on such a Feast I could live a great while.
>
> Lau: A great while! I am for ever, and for aye, 'till Death us do part. (2:29)[16]

Laura enjoys sparring with Gaylove, but she knows she has good reason to doubt the sincerity of his love. She puts him to a test, disguised as an "incognita," which he of course fails. When confronted with his treachery, he has a number of excuses, but Laura remains wary. She truly fears putting herself in his hands, but she realizes that she has no choice: "I run a strange Risque - but my case is desperate" (2:58).

Lisset, the third of these supportive women, is in many ways the funniest. Clarinda's ex-servant, she spends much of the play disguised as a eunuch and seeming to cater to Gomez's whims while in reality

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helping Clarinda and Laura. Her breeches give her a freedom not possible for the other women. Indeed, at the end of the play she tells Clarinda that she has gotten such a taste of freedom that she "shall never make a good Spanish Wife nor indure to be locked up" (2:69). She also poses as a young boy and acts as an emissary between Laura and Gaylove. While carrying out her various duties, she also manages to be amused by the antics of her lover, Guzman, who believes that she is in jail and spends much of the play trying to get himself arrested so that he may be with her. He never succeeds, but she is touched by his loyalty.

Emilia, sister of Gaylove, is also a positive female character. Though hers is a small part, she is a model of restraint, chastity and solid common sense. She constantly frets over her brother's wild ways and tries to make him behave, at least while in Spain. She also seeks Gaylove's aid in Don Phillip's quest to save his sister. Although Don Phillip is her beau, she is also naturally sympathetic to the plight of the unknown woman. When Gaylove initially declines, she repeats her requests until he lends his aid.

Not only is Adventures in Madrid the most feminist of Pix's plays, in some ways it is also the most political. It is not didactic, and the politics can be defined in terms of patriotism, for Pix spends the entire play flinging insults at Spain and all things Spanish. The tone is set with the Prologue. Written at the height of British victories (the Battle of Blenheim was just two years before, and the Battle of Ramillies was won that year), the Prologue boasts about Britain's strength and compliments Marlborough:

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Good Humour sure, must reign in every Breast,
Whilst thus with Victory our Arms are blest
  Whilst -
In the Field the British Trumpets sound,
And each returning Year is with new Conquests Crown'd.
Lewis grown Old in Falshood and Design,
Where Valour fail'd, supply'd his Force with Coin.
But Our Great Chief upon the open Plain,
The Cause of Injur'd Nations does maintain;
Snatches the Guilty Laurels France has worn.

The play opens with the hero Bellmour in Spanish dress, and in the opening lines, Gaylove exclaims, "S'Death I'd assoon change the Habit of thy Sex and wear the Womens Furbelows as these Dam'd Golilia's" (2:1). The physical comedy of the formal Spanish clothing is carried throughout the scene. The hot tempers of the Spanish are commented up by both Emilia and Jo, and Gaylove notes wryly that "really the People are all mad in Spain" (2:66). Of course, Gomez is quite mad and as vile a villain as the stage could boast. And the Roman Catholic Church receives the obligatory swipe when Guzman claims that he has pimped for "two Cardinals and as many Abbots" (2:4).

England's freedom is lauded throughout the play. "Sweet England's" treatment of its ladies is lauded by English and Spanish alike, and at the end of the play, all of the couples – Gayman and Louisa, Bellmour and Clarinda, Guzman and Lisset, Don Phillip and Emilia, and Jo and Beatrice – set sail "for merry England, where there still lives Freedom, Pleasure, and Smiling Joy" (2:69). Pix ends her

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play with a call for peace to come soon. The coward Jo, who, if he had been "plagu'd with Courage" would have made a good soldier, tells the audience: "Had fighting Sparks my Mind, all Wars wou'd cease,/ And the whole World like me, grow Fat in Peace" (2:70).

The Behnian Adventures in Madrid can truly be called Pix's masterpiece, for it displays all of the characteristics of her earlier plays at peak performance. But all of her works show what an important link Pix formed between the women writers of her time, especially those who wrote for the stage. For too long she has been dismissed as "the fat and jolly Mrs. Pix." She was a proud woman, a proud Whig, and a proud Englishwoman, and this pride comes through in her writing.

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**Notes**

[1] Constance Clark is hesitant in her attribution, see Three Augustan Women Playwrights (New York: Lang, 1986) 22-23; but Kathryn Kendall argues more forcefully that Pix is indeed "Ariadne," see "Theater, Society and Women Playwrights in London from 1695 through the Queen Anne Era," Diss, U of Texas - Austin (1986): 120 ff.

[2] According to Kendall, the playwright Jane Wiseman was also tutored in stagecraft by Pix, "Theater" 121.

[3] Much has been made of Pix's daughter's death. It has been argued that Pix turned to writing to assuage her grief, and Jacqueline Pearson notes that the scars left by the child's death are evident even in Pix's writing: "the image of mother and baby as a metaphor for the most deep and passionate relationship between lovers" recurs throughout the works The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women and Women Playwrights 1642-1737 (New York: St. Martin's, 1988) 171, 280 n. 14.

[4] Juliet McLaren supposes that the reason why Pix, whose obvious forté was comedy, wrote so many tragedies, was this connection with Barry. "Barry's power gave Mary Pix an opportunity to say things about women - their characters, their lives, their morals, and their feelings - that the male playwrights of the period either did not believe or were not interested in saying" "Presumptuous Poetess, Pen-Feathered Muse: The Comedies of Mary Pix," Gender at Work: Four Women Writers of the Eighteenth Century, ed. Ann Messenger (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1990) 96. Kendall believes that the reason why the two women were linked together in misogynistic satires is the underlying belief that because of Pix's friendship with Barry, Pix and her female playwrighting friends "receive preferential treatment at Lincoln's Inn Fields, a point which was likely grounded in truth" ("Theater" 122). Barry may have been searching for vehicles through which to make her own statement about women and their lives; in Pix's plays she found what she was looking for.

[5] Clark points out that while Pix may have been modest about her own writing, she was "militantly feminist in her verses for other women writers" ("Introduction" x). Nancy Cotton Pearse claims that Pix is "not a vocal feminist" "Mary Pix, Restoration Playwright," RECTR 15 (1976): 12, and Pearson notes that when compared to Manley and Trotter, Pix is "typically less militant and more placatory" in her commendatory verses and prefaces (169). Pearson also detects an "ambivalence about being a woman writer" which very deeply colors Pix's "views on women and female characters" (173). Kendall sees the confusion as a product of Pix's subtlety.

[6] For detailed plot summaries of Pix's plays, see Clark 220-82.

[7] Kendall points out one of them when she writes that with the character of Morena, Pix makes the point that "educated women are seen

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as undesirable to lustful men, while virtuous men . . . find education attractive in a woman" ("Theater" 229).

[8] Quotations from the plays, except for The Spanish Wives, are from Steeves's facsimile edition. There is no continuous pagination in this edition, so each will be cited by the volume number followed by the page number from the individual play. Citations from The Spanish Wives will be from Rogers' edition of the play.

[9] A number of critics have pointed out the similarities between this play and Behn's The False Count. Robert Root notes that Pix is an "important disciple of Astrea," and adds that the play is close to Behn's farce style and "reminiscent of The False Count," see "Aphra Behn, Arranged Marriage, and Restoration Comedy," Women and Literature 5 (1977): 10. Robert Hume points out that while the play has a sex comedy plot design, it carefully "balks" the action and the "whole business is made as moral as possible. Compared to Mrs. Behn's somewhat similar The False Count, this is wishy-washy stuff indeed" The Development of English Drama in the Late 17th Century, (Oxford, Clarendon, 1976): 418. Clark also ties the two plays and Sir Patient Fancy together when she writes that although the plots are similar – an insanely jealous husband keeps his young wife locked up, but ends up being shamed into giving her to her young lover – Pix's play is adapted for the taste of her time. "Owing to the social mores of her time, Pix had to clean up Behn's act, so to speak" (254).

[10] Pix's using Brémond as a source is another possible link to Behn. His Hattigé may have been an influence when Behn was writing Love Letters, see Janet Todd, The Sign of Angellica, (New York, Columbia UP, 1989): 78.

[11] Root sees the play as definitely belonging to the reforming tradition: "As well as being a fine example of the exemplary mode at its most precise, the play is interesting for the ways in which it avoids any event which might detract from the purity of the lover; in spite of his marriage, he is as chaste as she on their wedding night" (10-11).

[12] McLaren sees the play's purpose as "a humorous defense of women against" a wide range of insults, such as "whoring," lewdness, dirtiness, and bad breath (89).

[13] Kendall argues that during Queen Anne's era, women playwrights displayed the sentiment that women were superior to men and cites Queen Catharine as an example: "The Queen and her female companion are practical, reasonable, and protective not only of their own families, but also of their country and of peace. Men, by contrast, are irrational, emotional, impulsive, and aggressive. They compete with each other for power, they deceive each other and attempt to deceive women, they lack discipline and self-control, and they cannot be trusted" ("Theater" 275).

[14] According to Kendall's reading of the play, Pix is telling the

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audience that Isabella made the wrong decision in attempting to flee with Gloucester, and not just because she chose love over duty. "The moral of the tale seems to be that women are wiser to focus their passions on each other than to risk life, love, and country for heterosexual attraction, which is somehow more vulgar. Women's love is not only safer and more dependable than men's, in this dramatic universe it is a little closer to the angels" ("Finding" 173).

[15] The secret passage between homes is a device which is also used in Centlivre's Mar-plot.

[16] The same metaphor is repeated in a very similar passage between Col. Britton and Isabella in Centlivre's The Wonder! See the discussion in Chap. 6 below.

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# Chapter Four

## Delarivier Manley

Delarivier Manley[1] was arguably the most famous woman writer of her time. She was a friend and collaborator of Jonathan Swift; enjoyed an on-again, off-again social and literary relationship with Sir Richard Steele; enjoyed the patronage of Robert Harley, the Duke of Devonshire, and Sir Thomas Skipworth; was important enough to be lampooned and satirized on a number of occasions; and was enough of a role model for other women to have novelist Mary Hearne write in the dedication to Manley of her novel The Lover's Week (1718): "You, Madam, may lend a portion of your Light to cast a Lustre over these pages without suffering any Dimunation . . . Should the Obscurity of my Writings be never so great, your NAME, like a Diamond in the Dark, will still be but the more eminently conspicuous" ([ii]). Hearne only produced two novels, and nothing else is known of her, but the dedication to Manley must have been rewarded, for when her two novels were bound together and sold as one volume in 1720, Hearne again chose Manley as her dedicatee.

With keen insight into her culture and society, she wrote of herself in her autobiography in the guise of a male narrator:

> If she had been a Man; she had been without Fault: But the Charter of that Sex being much more confined than ours, what is not a Crime in men is scandalous and unpardonable in Woman. (Rivella 2:743)

It was a lesson Manley had learned well in her life. Like Behn, she had the kind of life that stories are made of, and she spent much of her

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life writing those stories.

She was a prolific and powerful writer. Her known works include three little-known narratives: Letters, The Lady's Pacquet Broke Open, and The Power of Love; her four hugely popular and most famous works, The History of Rivella, and the multi-volumed Queen Zarah and the Zarazians, The New Atalantis, which is credited with a major role in the toppling of the Whig government in 1710 (Trevelyan Peace 38); and The Memoirs of Europe; four plays; six political pamphlets; and a brief turn as the editor of The Examiner. She also wrote occasional poetry, including commendatory verses for the other female playwrights of the period. Lost works include two plays she mentions in her will and a possible fifth volume of The New Atalantis. Works which have been inconclusively attributed to her include at least five narratives, two plays, and the editorship of The Female Tatler.[2] Given the anonymous nature of eighteenth century political writing, she may have been the author of much more.

She was also publicly lauded by her peers, as this commendatory poem by Mary Pix prefacing Manley's The Royal Mischief attests:

> So you, the unequal'ed wonder of the Age,
> Pride of our Sex, and Glory of the Stage,
> Have charmed our Hearts with your immortal Lays,
> Tuned us all with everlasting Praise.
> You snatch the Laurels with undisputed Right,
> And Conquer when you but begin to Fight.

Like Aphra Behn, this prolific, effective writer was almost entirely

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lost to us in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, starting as early as a few decades after her death. The mild eroticism of her writing and her non-sentimental heroes and heroines made her style out of vogue during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when literary style was becoming increasingly chaste and sentimental. Her vehement Royallist and Tory stance also alienated the Whiggish middle-class which was increasing rapidly during this same period.

By the early- to mid-twentieth century, when she was remembered at all, it was with disparagement. George Macaulay Trevelyan, the noted historian of the late Stuart period, called Manley "a woman of no character" and a "libeller" (Peace 38, 314). Winston Churchill, whose ancestors Manley pilloried in her narratives, said that her work was "the lying inventions of a prurient and filthy underworld . . . paid for by party interest and political malice" (qtd. in Delmar 107). Manley has had her defenders in this century, but much of the criticism of her and her works has been colored by centuries of sexism and expectations as to what was the proper literary sphere for women.[3]

Manley was most definitely a feminist, probably the most vocal of the later women in this study. Her works echo Behn's pleas for equality in educational opportunities, egalitarian relationships based on love and respect, and especially, losing the double standard in sexual matters. Manley wrote "warm" scenes and was roundly castigated for it by her peers. Like Behn and Trotter, she wrote to defend her writings and cited the double standard that allowed men to write even more warmly without the least censure. Indeed, Manley's scenes are erotic and warm, but they are tame when compared to some written by her male peers.

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Unfortunately it is Manley's works that have since unjustly carried the name of pornography. But Manley's "warmth" was the standard of her time for the type of political writing she was doing: "the seventeenth century was an age in which all forms of order in public and private life were seen as mutually intertwined: the implicit meaning of an event was as real as its observable consequences" (O'Neill 19). Thus public wrongdoing could be mirrored in a depiction of private wrongdoing. This order is manifested in the works which are often called Manley's scandal chronicles, a name I feel does them an injustice.

In these romans à clef, as in her chosen themes, Manley was of course a disciple of Behn, for they are direct descendants of Love Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister, so much so that Manley uses the same pseudonym for the Duke of Monmouth — Cesario. Both women used their literary talents to further the Stuart cause, and Manley must have seen Behn, with her staunch Toryism and purported Cavalier roots, as a clear role model.

## Part 1 Biography

Manley's own Cavalier roots are well documented. Many of the "facts" we have of her life come from her own writings, the autobiographical novel The Adventures of Rivella, or the History of the Author of The Atalantis, with Secret Memoirs and Characters of Several Considerable Persons, her Contemporaries and an autobiographical account in The New Atalantis, and scholars since have attempted to verify Manley's accounts of herself.[4]

For many years, Rivella was taken as truth. The account of her life in David Baker's Biographica Dramatica (1812) is mainly a

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paraphrase of both Rivella and the Delia episode in The New Atalantis. In fact, some sections of the entry are quoted verbatim from Atalantis.

One fact Manley obscured was her date of birth. According to clues left in her writing she could have been born either in 1673 or 1675. Both of these dates are highly suspect. In Rivella Manley claims that she was born on Jersey, and while there is no baptismal record to support her, there is strong circumstantial evidence. Her brother, Roger Manley, was baptized there on September 18, 1672 and her father left the island in June 1673. If she was born while her father was in Jersey, her date of birth must have been between 1667 and 1671. The year 1671 is the most likely date if one assumes that Swift was accurate in his assessment when he wrote in 1711 that Manley was "about forty, very homely, and very fat" (Journal to Stella 2:474). Another piece of evidence that Delarivier was indeed born on Jersey is her slightly unusual Christian name. She was most likely named after Lady Delarivier Cholmondeley Morgan, the wife of Sir Roger's superior on Jersey, Sir Thomas Morgan (Anderson "Biography" 265).

Whatever her date of birth, Manley was honest about her antecedents. The Manley family of Denbighshire, Wales, near Wrexham, were loyal to Charles I. Delarivier's grandfather was most likely Cornelius Manley of Erbistock.[5] Cornelius had three sons: Francis, Roger and John. Both Francis and Roger fought for the king during the Civil War and both were knighted for their efforts. But the third son, John, became a major in the parliamentary army. Scholars suspect that John's allegiance may have been swayed by his wife, Margaret Dorislaus, the daughter of a prominent Parliamentarian (Morgan Woman 36). John and

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Margaret were the parents of John Manley, the cousin who later bigamously married Delarivier. Sir Roger left his university at the age of sixteen to fight for Charles I, and was in the garrison of Denbigh when it was surrendered in 1645. Exiled to Holland in 1648, he returned to England in 1665.

Sir Roger also had literary aspirations. In June 1663 he published A True Description of the Mighty Kingdoms of Japan and Siam, written originally in Dutch by Francis Caron and Joost Schorten: and now rendred into English by Capt. Roger Manley. He later published The History of the Late Warres in Denmark (1680), Commentariorum de Rebellione Anglicana (1686), and he continued The Turkish History of Sir Paul Rycaut and Richard Knolles, covering the years 1676 through 1686. According to Delarivier, he was also the author of the first volume of the Turkish Spy, but she says that the manuscript was stolen after his death and never attributed to him (Anderson "Biography" 264).

Very little is known about Sir Roger's wife. All Delarivier has to say about her mother is that she died while Delarivier was quite young. According to Patricia Köster, Mrs. Manley was a Walloon gentlewoman ("Cautionary Tale" 107). This statement would make sense since the still unmarried Sir Roger was exiled in 1645. It may also explain Delarivier's later rapid acquisition and facility with the French language. Both her French-speaking mother and her father probably spoke French with their children, since Sir Roger apologizes for his rusty English in his 1663 translation (Köster "Cautionary Tale" 108). If this is true, Delarivier most likely had at least three years, perhaps more, of intensive French during the period when her language

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skills were being developed.

There is also some confusion as to the number of siblings Delarivier had. In Rivella she mentions her older sister, Mary Elizabeth, a younger brother, Francis, and the youngest child, her sister Cornelia. She has definitely omitted her brother Edward, who died in June 1688 and who mentions Delarivier in his will. There may have been a third brother named Roger who died young.[6] Edward died in 1688 and Francis died in 1693, two days after receiving a wound during a naval battle, so that by that year only the three Manley daughters remained.

In Rivella we are told that Delarivier was schooled at home, protected by an extremely fierce governess, but also spent three months learning French with her brother at the home of a Huguenot minister. She claims that her first love was Ensign James Carlisle, an actor/soldier stationed in her father's garrison. There is corroborating evidence for this, and as Delarivier comes off looking a little foolish at her unrequited love, that fact lends a feeling of veracity to her other self-revelations.

In 1687 Sir Roger died. According to Delarivier she was not yet fourteen, but she was most likely sixteen or older. She claims that she fell under the protection of her cousin John Manley, who took advantage of her naïveté and tricked her into a bigamous marriage. The story is told in vivid detail in The New Atalantis I (1:182-91). John Manley's reputation has suffered, for Swift called him "a beast" (Correspondence 2:10), and for obvious reasons, Delarivier doesn't treat him well in her account.

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But she did have a child with him, John Manley, born June 24, 1691. He is mentioned once in passing in Rivella, but nothing more is ever heard of him. We do not know how he was raised, whom he lived with after his parents separated, or even whether he attained his majority. In The New Atalantis, Delarivier writes that she stayed with her husband John for three years after she found out that his first wife was still alive, for she had no where else to go. But she also adds that they no longer lived as husband and wife, for she despised him for ruining her life.[7]

When Delarivier finally left John in 1694 – because he left for the country with his first wife – she moved into the residence of Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland, the notorious ex-mistress of Charles II. This is the most likely source of Manley's inside gossip about the reigns of Kings Charles and James that she later used in her narratives. She stayed with the duchess for less than a year and left after a quarrel over Manley's purported interest in one of the duchess's sons, whom she never names. After leaving the duchess, Manley journeyed to Exeter, later recorded in Letters (1696), and republished in 1725 as A Stagecoach Journey to Exeter. According to Manley, she stayed in the country for two years in order to live economically, and it is there that she wrote her first two plays: The Lost Lover and The Royal Mischief.

She was back in London by the end of 1695, for she contributed the commendatory poem to Trotter's Agnes de Castro. In 1696 she had her two plays acted: in March, the unsuccessful comedy The Lost Lover was presented at the Drury Lane; and shortly thereafter (for it was already

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in rehearsals), the tragedy The Royal Mischief was presented at the rival Lincoln's Inn Fields (Cotton 85-86).

The Royal Mischief and its author were savagely satirized in the anonymous The Female Wits, probably presented around September 1696 (Avery 1:467).[8] Of the three women satirized in this play, Manley, represented as "Marsilia, a Poetess, that admires her own works, and a great Lover of Flattery," receives the worst treatment. She is presented as vain, affected, insincere, and loose. The play being rehearsed during the action of The Female Wits is a harsh parody of The Royal Mischief. Perhaps the parody of the overblown The Royal Mischief could be justified, but the personal attack was an unwarranted but unfortunate reality women writers faced. Needham mildly writes that the "play makes fun of The Royal Mischief for its treatment of love, but its satire of female wits is on the whole general and ineffectual" ("Bath" 265). Needham is too generous, for the attacks upon Manley are quite specific and at least on the surface seem to have effected their aim, for Manley left the theater for the next ten years. Or it could be that The Female Wits did not chase Manley away from the theater at all; the explanation may be that she simply didn't have any plays ready to be presented. In many ways, this is the more satisfactory account, since later in her career even an arrest did not stop her writing.

Except a for few occasional poems little more is heard from Manley in the world of letters until 1705. There is strong evidence that she was the editor of The Nine Muses, a collection of elegies on the death of Dryden published in 1700. If not editor, she most definitely is represented as Melpomene, the tragic muse.[9]

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We know that during this period, Manley was living with John Tilly, a lawyer with a practice in the Inner Temple and Governor of Fleet Prison. In Rivella Manley refers to him as the great passion in her life, and her greatest joy would have come from marrying him when his wife died around 1701. But unfortunately, Tilly was a corrupt governor and was in and out of legal trouble. Because of the fines and large damages he was ordered to pay, he fell into debt by 1702.[10] According to Rivella, Manley urged him to leave her and marry a rich widow who would be able to save him from ruin. Tilly took her advice, and they parted. According to Rivella and some of the letters in The Lady's Pacquet Broke Open, Manley then went into the country for a year or so to avoid Tilly, economize, and mend her broken heart.

She resurfaces in London in 1705 with the publication of the first of her political narratives, the extremely successful The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians, Wherein the Amours, Intrigues, and Gallantries of the Court of Albigion, During her Reign, are Pleasantly Exposed; and as Surprising a Scene of Love and Politics Represented as Perhaps This, or any Other Age or Country, has Hitherto Produced. Supposed to be Copied from the Italian Copy, Now Lodged in the Vatican at Rome. For almost the rest of her life Manley produced work in a fairly steady stream.

After the success of the two volumes of Queen Zarah, Manley's very feminist play Almyna was produced anonymously at the Queen's Theater in Haymarket on December 16, 1706, and ran for three nights. This was followed in 1707 by the epistolary collection The Lady's Pacquet Broke Open.

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There is some question as to the next phase of Manley's writing career. There are a number of claims that she was the editor/writer of the biweekly journal The Female Tatler beginning on July 8, 1709. There are rival claims for Thomas Baker, a minor playwright, but I agree with Fidelis Morgan, editor of the collected Female Tatlers, when she argues that the "most likely attribution of authorship is to Manley and Baker working in tandem" (Female Tatler viii). The basis of this argument is a notice in The General Postscript of September 27, 1709 which says that "the Female Tatler was written by 'Scandalosissima Scoundrelia and her two natural brothers': as London's queen of scandal, Mrs. Manley is obviously intended" (Female Tatler vii).[11]

The Female Tatler ran from July 8, 1709 through March 31, 1710. The original "voice" of the journal was Mrs. Phoebe Crackenthorpe, "a lady that knows everything." Mrs. Crackenthorpe handed her editorial duties over to "a Society of Ladies" in issue No. 51, dated October 31, 1709. Proponents of the "Manley as editor" theory see this date as significant, since Manley was arrested for libel on October 29 (see below).

In the spring of 1709, the first volume of Manley's most famous work was published: Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality, of Both Sexes, From the New Atalantis, an Island in the Mediterranean, Written Originally in Italian. This anti-Whig scandal chronicle was immensely popular, and an immediate success. By July 19 the second edition was being sold, and on October 20 the second volume was published. It was quickly suppressed by the Whig government, and on October 29 the printer and publisher were arrested. Manley was named as

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the suspected author and arrested as well. She states in Rivella that she admitted authorship and took sole responsibility in order to protect her printer and publisher. She is backed up in this statement by a notation in Luttrell's Diary dated November 1, "on this day the printer and publisher of the New Atalantis were examined touching the author, Mrs. Manley: they were discharged but she remains in custody." And on November 5, it is recorded that "Mrs. Manley, the author of The New Atalantis, is admitted to Bayl" (qtd. in Horner 9). In a section of Rivella, Manley records the questioning she received while in custody (2.850-53). The case against her was discharged on February 13, 1709/10.

Undaunted by her treatment at the hands of the Whigs, and most likely jubilant at the imminent fall of the Whig party, which occured in June 1710, Manley published the first volume of her Tory panegyric Memoirs of Europe Towards the Close of the Eighth Century, Written by Eginardus, Secretary and Favourite to Charlemagne, and Done into English by the Translator of The New Atalantis in the spring of 1710. By September 21 the second edition was being advertised in The Examiner and the second volume was announced as in the press. It was published in November 1710. These two volumes were later called volumes three and four of The New Atalantis.

It was during this period that Manley made the acquaintance of Swift. It is not clear when they actually met, but Swift's reference to Manley's Memoirs of Europe in a letter to Addison from August 22, 1710, suggests that he didn't know the author. But by January 4, 1710/11, he writes in the Journal to Stella "I dined with people that you never

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heard of, nor is it worth your while to know; an authoress and a printer" (1:154). It has long been assumed that Swift was referring to Manley and Alderman John Barber, who were living together. There is a question as to whether the two were lovers, or if Manley simply lived in Barber's house, but whatever their relationship was, the two cohabited from at least 1709 until Manley's death in 1724.

It appears that Swift had mixed feelings towards Manley. Many of his references to her in his letters and in the Journal are kind.[12] He also handed her the editorship of the Tory party journal The Examiner in 1710. One of the most ambivalent Journal comments is the remark: "She has very good principles for one of her sort: and a very great deal of good sense and invention" (2:474).[13]

Another little-quoted piece that shows Swift's ambivalence is his poem about Manley called "Corinna" published in Miscellanies, The Last Volume in 1727, but most likely written in 1711. The entire poem is full of double-sided compliments: the poem says that Apollo played midwife at Corinna's birth, and "endowed her with his Art," but Cupid and a Satyr limited her talents to love and scandal - the world would feel her "scratch and bite." He tells a story of her at age six tattling on an amorous serving-girl, displaying her talents at that young age. He seems to support Manley's version of her marriage, for he claims she married at 12: "Marries for Love, half Whore, half Wife"; but he immediately adds "Cuckolds, elopes, and runs in Debt" (26-27). The poem ends with his praising the quantity of her writing (see Poetry 1.149-50).

This relationship to Swift is of course important because of the

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literary opportunities it gave Manley, but it is also a measure of Manley's stature. While his attitude towards her may be mixed, he never condescended to her. He treated her in the same manner he used towards Addison, Steele, and the other male writers of the time. Through her contact with Swift, Manley may also have made the acquaintance of Dr. John Arbuthnot. The title page of the third John Bull pamphlet reads:

> John Bull Still in his Senses. Being the Third Part of Law is a Bottomless Pit.
>
> Printed from a Manuscript found in the Cabinet of the Famous Sir Humphrey Polesworth. And _Publish'd (as well as the three former parts) by the Author of the New Atalantis_. The Fourth Ed. London: Printed for John Morphew, near Stationers-Hall, 1712 (my italics).

The fourth part and the "Appendix" make the same claim.

In their introduction to Arbuthnot's _The History of John Bull_, Alan W. Bower and Robert A. Erickson note that Arbuthnot's style owed much to Manley's _Queen Zarah_ and _New Atalantis_, adding that perhaps this comment is "Arbuthnot's cryptic compliment" to her (lxxviii). The editors also believe that Manley the publisher was just as fictitious as Sir Humphrey Polesworth the author. The John Bull pamphlets were published in intervals from March 4 through July 31, 1712, the height of Manley's own political pamphleteering. We know she was active with Swift during this period, why not with Arbuthnot as well? Morphew was her publisher, but in the _John Bull_ first pamphlet he is not called the publisher, only the printer. Why _couldn't_ Manley be the publisher of the John Bull pamphlets? During this period "publisher" did not carry

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the same meaning as it does today. The person a book was "printed for" was the publisher in the modern sense of the word. In Manley's day, the publisher was the person who made a work public. She certainly had the connections, fame and political knowledge to make a work public.

The only commentary from the "publisher" appears in the third pamphlet, published Wednesday April 16. In it she relates her efforts to persuade Sir Humphrey to present his entire narrative in one volume, instead of in "stingy" parts. Nothing of political import is stated; it is merely a "cover" for why the entire John Bull story isn't being told at once. Why Manley's name is invoked at this point is unclear, but there is no reason, other than tradition, to believe that she was not the publisher. All the other works of this period printed by Morphew and concerning "the author of The Atalantis" are considered legitimately hers, why not this one? Of course, she never mentions it in Rivella, which was written in 1714, but that is not evidence that she was not involved in John Bull, for that autobiography does not mention any of her political journalism or pamphleteering.

Another famous literary friendship was with Richard Steele. This started in Manley's dormant period between 1697 and 1705 when Steele and Manley correspondenced while he was living on the Isle of Wight. She became "his friend and advisor. She directed him in his need . . . helped him to escape the malice of his creditors, and prevented his ruin by an alchemist" (Anderson "Prose" 170). At one point in the relationship, though, Manley asked to borrow money, and Steele refused her. The entire episode is told in Rivella. This, coupled with the fact that Steele was a staunch Whig, caused a major falling out. Steele

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is lampooned in both volumes of The New Atalantis and Memoirs of Europe, as well as in Rivella. Steele retaliated in the Whiggish Guardian with public attacks upon Manley vis-à-vis her role in The Examiner, enraging both Manley and Swift.[14] But by the last few years of her life, they seem to have reconciled.

There is not as much evidence remaining in the form of letters' references to tell us what women Manley was friendly with. If The Female Wits is to be believed, Pix, Trotter and Manley were catty antagonists, but from the evidence left in their commendatory verses it is highly unlikely that this is true, at least during the 90's. In The New Atalantis Manley makes reference to the fact that she and Trotter were once on cordial terms, but as discussed above, that relationship certainly changed over time. Mary Pix is called "lazy" in The New Atalantis, but the two appeared friendly since Pix passed on to Manley commissions she had been given for poetry (see NA I 1:362, 370). And according to Ballaster, Susanna Centlivre appears in The New Atalantis as a mantua-maker who acts as a procuress (Ballaster 99). She was also friendly with the poet Sarah Fyge Egerton, but as The New Atalantis also attests, it seems that these two also quarrelled.

In 1711, The Lady's Pacquet Broke Open was reissued as Court Intrigues in a Collection of Original Letters from the Island of the New Atalantis & c. most likely to allow the publisher to exploit the New Atalantis name. From 1711 through 1714 Manley concentrated on writing political pamphlets, six being definitely attributed to her, which are described in detail below.

In 1714 she learned that Charles Gildon would be writing an

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unauthorized biography of her entitled The Adventures of Rivella to be published by the notorious Edmund Curll. Manley offered to write her own version for Curll under the same title, which had already been advertised, so Curll brought the two authors together for a secret meeting. Gildon stepped down and Manley produced her autobiography (Morgan Woman 154).

For the remaining ten years of her life, her literary output slowed considerably. We know from Swift's Journal that she suffered from ill health. As early as January 1712, Barber was "afraid she cannot live long" (2:474). The Tories lost whatever power they had had with the death of Queen Anne on August 1, 1714, and the Hanoverian succession. While she writes in Rivella that she had by this time decided that "Politics is not the Business of a Woman" (2:854), her change in subject matter most likely had more to do with the change in government than a change in her ideas.

Like Behn before her, Manley was poorly rewarded for her party loyalty. In 1711 she was petitioning Lord Peterborough for either a pension or a reward for service to the Tories, which included her arrest and prosecution. Swift writes that he seconded her pleas; and he "hopes they will do something for the poor woman" (Journal 1:306). The only money that there is a record of her receiving is a £50 honorarium from Robert Harley, Lord Oxford, in 1714. Private patronage might have increased that sum considerably, but there is no record of the type of gifts she received. The chief political reward of public office was closed to her due to her sex. "Swift may have been thinking of her when he obtained the patent of King's printer for Benjamin Tooke and John

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Barber," but it appears that all she ever received from the patent was £20 (Needham "Tory Defender" 284).[15]

Her final works were the basically non-political and successful tragedy Lucius, The First Christian King of Britain, which was produced at the Drury Lane on May 11, 1717, and The Power of Love in Seven Novels published in 1720.

Delarivier Manley died July 11, 1724 at Barber's house. She was between the ages of 53 and 57. She was buried in the middle aisle of St. Bennet's Church, Paul's Wharf, under a white marble stone inscribed:

> Here lyeth the body of Mrs. Delarivier Manley, Daughter of Sr Roger Manley Knight. Who suitable to her birth & Education was acquainted with several parts of knowledge, And with the most polite writers both in the French and English tongue. This accomplishment, together with a great stock of natural wit, made her conversation Agreeable to all who knew her and her writings to be universally read with pleasure. She dyed July 11 Anno Dom 1724 (Morgan Woman 156).

Whatever Manley was, her legend was certainly larger than life. Like Catharine Trotter's pious reputation, Manley's indecent one molded the way her works were received for almost three centuries. And as important her biography is in studying and understanding Manley's works, future generations of critics ought to transcend moral proselytizing and the double standard and concentrate on what the woman wrote.

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## Part 2 Works

Due to the variety and volume of Manley's works, I shall be treating them generically. Although her first known publication was an epistolary novella, she quickly recalled it and always maintained that it had been an unauthorized publication (Morgan Woman 70). The first major work that she wished presented to the public was a play; therefore, this study will start with her plays, move on to her narratives, and conclude with her political writing.

### Drama

Manley's fame does not rest on her playwrighting skills. She wrote only four plays, and none enjoyed any great success. It is unusual then that a proportionately large amount of criticism has been written about her plays. Ironically, this is probably due to the satire of her work in The Female Wits and Animadversions on Mr. Congreve's Late Answer to Mr. Collier. While not unreadable, her plays are not her best writing.

What strikes a modern reader is the strong feminism in Manley's plays. This is evident in her first, the unsuccessful The Lost Lover; or, The Jealous Husband.[10] Purportedly a comedy, the play lacks the essential element of humor needed for success on stage. While packed with many standard Restoration "types" – the "old, vain, conceited lady," the "affected poetess," the country buffoon, the fop, and the rake – the play also has a very disturbing cast-mistress, Belira. While contemporary audiences had definite expectations for this character, and her "redeemed" lover Wilmore, as well, Manley does not allow her characters to live up to them, and this contributed to the play's

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failure. Belira makes the audience very uncomfortable by the psychological realism in her character. Her actions are based on striking out in pain, not the sheer evil and malice found in the stereotypical cast-mistress. Manley used stereotypes for three of her main female characters – Lady Young-Love, the older woman, Marina, her virtuous ingenue daughter, and Orinda, the poetess – in order to emphasize the uniqueness of Belira. The audience develops an uncomfortable amount of sympathy for her, which traditionally it should not have.

Wilmore (perhaps an unconscious echo of Behn's Rover) loves Marina, but cannot afford to marry her. Belira, Wilmore's cast-off mistress and a confidante of Marina's mother Lady Young-Love, perceives his love and arranges for Marina to be sent to the country. She also incites Lady Young-Love into gaining a marriage proposal from Wilmore. At the same time Belira contrives for Lady Young-Love to arrange a marriage between Marina and Wilmore's father, the country bumpkin Sir Rustick Good-Heart.

This last marriage allows the virtuous but witty Marina to launch a number of attacks on the practice of arranged marriage. In a passage that echoes Florinda's speech in Behn's <u>The Rover</u>, Marina tells her false friend Belira:

> What with twelve thousand Pound, 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 [Sir Rustick]. (7)

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There is also a Behnian subplot attacking arranged marriage involving two minor characters, Olivia and Smyrna. Before her marriage, Olivia was in love with the hero's best friend and the play's rake, Wildman, but poverty prompts her father to force her to marry the wealthy "cit" Smyrna. Wildman spends a few scenes tempting her to cuckold her husband, but since she is a virtuous woman, he fails. As he comments, "No, I'm at length convinced, Olivia's Virtue should be rather Cherished than seduced" (33-4). In spite of the sentimentalized outcome as opposed to the true Restoration-era cuckolding, Manley is still able to make a convincing attack on the practice of forced marriage.
Of course, since this is advertised as a comedy, the play ends with the hero and heroine marrying, Lady Young-Love being gulled into a marriage with the play's fop, and Sir Rustick storming off into the country but not before he has been tricked into securing his son's income. Unfortunately, the audience is left unsatisfied. After seeing how Wilmore has treated Belira, although it is standard treatment for many of the cast-mistresses in plays of this period, the audience is not satisfied with his being rewarded with the "prize" bride Marina.

Two scenes in particular cause this dissatisfaction; both are confrontations between Wilmore and Belira. The first occurs in Act Four. Belira has just interrupted a tryst between Wilmore and Marina during which he has announced his intention of forsaking her mother and marrying her, and Marina has run off, leaving the two ex-lovers to face each other. Belira tells Wilmore that he is wanted in the house where Lady Young-Love, at Belira's instigation, has decided to have the wedding that evening instead of in the morning. I quote the scene at

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length here, since it is very important for building sympathy for Belira.

**Wil**: Belira, have you loved me?

**Bel**: Has not my ruin told you?

**Wil**: Then do you love me?

**Bel**: Yes to see you happy — but the mask is off, and thou canst cheat no more, and I no more believe.

**Wil**: You never loved me, and now abhor me.

**Bel**: You reproach me with what I wou'd be; do not, do not rouze the Woman in me, I wou'd be Calm to Night and see you Married.

**Wil**: Rather see me buried.

**Bel**: Perhaps so — Cou'd the remembrance of my wrongs but sleep with thee; I wou'd not Envy them a quiet Grave.

**Wil**: Farewell, we part forever, I'll leave the Town this Minute.

**Bel**: At least Sir, if you will not marry yourself, but unkindly leave your bride thus in the longing moment; do your Father the honour to grace his Marriage.

**Wil**: What have I done, that you shou'd wish me wretched?

**Bel**: What hast thou left undone to make me such?

**Wil**: Your reputation still stands fair, and unless your own indiscretion betrays you the secret shall be such, with me forever.

**Bel**: But thy heart, Traytor, thy perjur'd heart; tell me, how shall I get it back?

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**Wil:** Never this way, I assure you.

**Bel:** 'Tis given for gone then – go – Live as Wretch'd as I can make you, I'll think no more upon you.

* * *

**Wil:** You are peevish, Belira, does your love make you jealous?

**Bel:** I have none, the moor has taught me better; no longer doubting, away at once with Love and Jealousie.

**Wil:** Then 'tis Spice [sic] disturbs you; In what have I deserved it?

**Bel:** Look in thy false perfidious heart, and take my answer thence.

**Wil:** That speaks of nothing you can quarrel with.

**Bel:** Then I will stay and argue with thee, how often hast thou told, thou could'st for ever Love me?

**Wil:** I told you that I cou'd, not that I wou'd.

**Bel:** Poor Caviller, those who can jest with Oaths, can play with words. (26-7)

After cruelly toying with Belira and mocking her pain, Wilmore turns to melodrama and offers her his sword with which to kill him: "Thy malice can supply thy want of use, despight can furnish the strength, and too often thou has found the way to my unhappy heart to miss it now" (27). Belira scorns his offer for the pathetic posturing it is and laughs at his foolishness: "Ha, ha, ha! In love to dying. By all that's good, turn'd Hero; Your mistress, Sir, is much oblig'd – Keep your sword, it may be a Fortune better worth than all your Fathers lands; there's wars

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abroad, you may employ in it, twill keep your wife from wanting here at Home" (27).

It is then that Wilmore turns nasty and exposes himself for the rotter he is. He begins to project upon Belira the sins he is guilty of in their relationship. The scene also exposes the double standard in which a woman is condemned for premarital sex, but a man is lauded.

> **Wil:** Am I indeed your scorn, proud, fantastick woman; thy liking was foul Lust; not Love; that Gentle Name brings Happiness, but thou – Let me not think upon Thee for fear it force my Tongue to something worse, than shou'd be said of Ladies; I've served, it seems, as long as you cou'd like, and now you chose another.
>
> **Bel:** Wou'd it were come to that, I wou'd exchange thee for the last of Men and think the bargain cheap, wou'd part with all that goodly form, for honest Ugliness, and think it fairer; thy Youth for Age and Doat upon his Dotage – so in return I found but Truth, mark well that word, that word has charms thou never knewest, and which outweigh thine.
>
> **Wil:** Belira, thou hast power to read my soul; thy Magick Spells are irresistible. How hast thou found this failing in my Vertue, which I not knowing of, my wants cou'd never miss till now?
>
> **Bel:** Thank my wit – Nature's gift. (27-8)

The exchange goes on with Wilmore asking one night to think over whether he will leave Marina and Lady Young-Love to return to Belira. She

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doesn't trust him, with good reason, and tells him that if he even speaks to Marina, she will make sure Marina is immediately married to Sir Rustick.

When Belira exits with the remark that she has had little joy this evening, we learn just how insincere Wilmore is in this scathing, overt statment of the double standard: "Less thou hast left behind, O the curse of Lewdness! What Woman's fair after we find her fault? What Lady Innocent, when no longer chaste? Or who so vain to hope for Honour, or for Pity from that Soul who wants it for herself?" (28). Of course, this exchange could be seen as typical of the times, but too much stage time has been spent giving Belira's side of the story and showing Wilmore's treachery for auditors not to sympathize with Belira.

Just in case the audience may have lingering doubts as to Wilmore's damage to Belira and her excellent motivation for her plotting, Manley follows this scene with the couple's confrontation the next day in Act V. Wilmore tells Belira that he has decided to marry Marina and asks, in the name of the love Belira has for him, to help him accomplish his goal. He claims that he will always be her friend and keep her honor safe. In anger, Belira refuses and threatens to do all she can to bring ruin on him. She tells him that in his unhappy wanderings he should "think on an unhappy wretch, whose only fault is desperate love of you" (36). He chides her for her foolish heart, and perhaps gives the audience a foreshadowing of what might be poor Marina's fate when he advises her:

> Be wise, Belira! We live not now in those Romantick constant days, where their first Mistress was their last. I

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> lik'd you once, and still esteem you, but vows that are made in Love, are Writ in sand: it's impossible to recall a Lover's Heart, when once tis made a Present to another; shou'd it return, 'twould sooner Love a third. (36)

Belira underscores this foreshadowing when she curses Wilmore and takes her leave of him:

> Love her as long as you are used to love a woman, and then let want of Wealth and Liberty persue you; Be poorly Wretched and Wretched Poor; and may you hate the cause as bad as I do, curse for her sake, the very name of woman; yet think on me and sigh for such a friend – But may no Friend be found; till scorned at home thou seekest abroad, some Wretched Death unknown. (36)

It is true that when Belira runs off stage her next attempt is to murder Marina with a sword, but the attack is foiled and Wilmore's last words of her are words of pity and something close to remorse: "My pity is due to an unhappy woman, who never had been such if she had not known me" (37).

Thus, the comedy ends like something close to a tragedy. Indeed the plot is so humorless and patched together that I wonder if the original audience followed it well enough to get involved in Belira's story by the fourth act. But to underscore the play's feminism, the preface to the printed version shows Manley at her ironic best.

In it she claims to not be surprised that the play has failed, since she had so little theatrical experience and only worked on it for less than a week in order to while away time in the country. She seems

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to be making the typical "womanly excuses" for her lack of talent and for the play's many faults, but then she starts on an attack on women's lack of education that sounds like an echo of Behn:

> I am now convinc'd writing for the stage is no way proper for a Woman, to whom all advantages but meer Nature, are refused; and if we happen to have a genius for Poetry, it presently shoots to a fond desire of Imitation . . . Had I confin'd my Sense, as before, to some short song of Phillis, a Tender Billet, and the freedom of agreeable Conversation, I had still preserved the Character of a Witty Woman. (sig. A2v)

She also takes umbrage at the critics who attacked her verses prefacing Trotter's Agnes de Castro: "some of my Witty Criticks made a jest of my proving so favourable an Enemy, but let me tell them, this was not design'd a Consequence of that Challenge . . . After all, I think my Treatment much severer than I deserved; I am satisfied the bare Name of being a Woman's Play damn'd it beyond its own want of Merit" (sig. A2v).

The prologue of the play, which was spoken by the actor who played Wildman, also took up a militant stance. It calls Manley, who had been open about her authorship from the start, the "fair Warrior" who "gives her first attack." She also anticipates the charges that had dogged Behn's career – that if the play succeeds, some will say:

> Some private Lover helps her on her way,
> As Female Wit were barren like the Moon,
> That borrows all her influence from the Sun.

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This was a rather bold first volley for a neophyte writer. But it doesn't seem to have created any immediate backlash for Manley's second play, for in spite of the later attacks, The Royal Mischief ran for a quite respectable six nights. Presented shortly after The Lost Lover, The Royal Mischief treats the same themes in a straight-forward tragic style. But as with her first play, Manley puts a feminist spin on her plot and characters.

Since its opening, the play has earned comments for its extravagant, and imaginative, violence. Indeed, the play is probably most famous for the execution of Osman, the Chief Vizier. He is shot from a cannon, after which his wife goes mad, gathers up the smoking fragments of his body and attempts to burn herself to death on his remains. Fortunately this all takes place off stage and the audience hears of it second hand. Like most tragedies, this one ends in abundant death: of the three female characters, two die and one attempts suicide; of the five male characters, four die.

The last lines of the play go to the only living main character, the Prince of Libardian, whose wife, Homais, is seen as the cause of all the destruction. As he tells his auditors:

> Oh horror, horror, horror!
> What mischief two fair guilty eyes have wrought,
> Let lovers all look here, and shun the dotage.
>
> (47)

In Homais, Manley has created a villainess like Belira, towards whom the audience is uncomfortably sympathetic.

Homais is a young and beautiful woman who has been forced to marry

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the elderly and covetous Prince of Libardian. He keeps her locked away with only her women and her eunuch Acmat for company. She has fallen in love with the picture of the Prince's nephew, Levan Dadian, and when the two finally meet, they fall desperately in love. Just prior to the opening of the play, Levan has been forced to marry the princess Bassima for political reasons. She, in turn, is in love with the Chief Vizier, Osman, who is in an arranged marriage with the prince's sister, Selima, who loves her husband very much. Unfortunately, he returns Bassima's love, although he had previously been in love with Homais, who rebuffed him. Osman's younger brother, Ismael, an officer in the army, was Homais's first lover and while still interested in her, he is more interested in advancement.

The play's three female characters have been forced into unwanted marriages. Bassima, the most likely candidate for the title of traditional heroine, loves someone other than her husband but still remains chaste. Because of this she is given the best lines attacking forced marriage. In Act III she tells Osman that his kindness to her

> Makes marriage an uneasy bondage,
> And the embraces of my lord a loathsome
> Penance.
>
> (24)

And then in Act V, as she dies a lingering death by poison, courtesy of Homais, she apologizes to Levan for not loving him, but assures him that it is not her fault:

> Love has, like fate, its 'pointed hour,
> And irresistible their force.

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> But made a wretched victim to the state,
>
> With all this languishment about me,
>
> My royal father gave me into your arms.
>
> (44)

On the other hand, Homais, the villainess of the piece, has the most strikingly feminist statements. When she is about to die from a stab wound inflicted by her husband, she mocks his jealousy when she says:

> Thou dotard, impotent in all but mischief,
>
> How coulds't thou hope, at such an age, to keep
>
> A handsome Wife?
>
> (45)

But earlier in the play we hear her tell of her struggles against her "native modesty." We also enter the play through Homais's eyes. In the opening scene she is lamenting her sad fate to Acmet, who while technically male is a eunuch. This juxaposition emphasizes situation. Although a fiery and powerful woman, she is only allowed the limited status of the "unmale". In her opening diatribe, though, she tells Acmat that she has changed from the young girl she had been; she has come into her own. "For 'tis by degrees our sex grow bold" (4). And grow bold she does. She not only plans to have her husband given a sleeping draught so that she may meet her lover, she goes on to plan Bassima's death, plot her husband's, and plan a military coup. By so doing, she will be able to live in peace and prosperity with her beloved Levant. But in light of the Prince's harsh treatment of her, her acts lose some of their wickedness.

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Manley does not totally excuse Homais's behavior. In fact, when she is plotting the details of the coup with her ex-lover Ismael in Act IV, she seems very much like a female Wilmore. Ismael would have them be lovers once again – he evens suggests that she think of Levan so that she will enjoy the intercourse more – but she rebuffs him. Ismael is more ambitious than Belira had been, so he goes along with Homais's verdict, but he does echo Belira's arguments that just as his charms for Homais have faded, so too will Levan's in time. And here we have the female character swearing that <u>this</u> is true love and shall never fade. One has to wonder at Manley's irony. In both plays she seems to be saying that there is no such thing as everlasting love for either sex. At least she never allows her audience to be comfortable with the idea.

The most obvious attack on the hypocrisy of the double standard centers on the Levan-Bassima marriage. Just after he has left what the audience assumes was a sexual encounter with Homais, he learns that his unloved wife loves another man. His reaction is hypocritical to the extreme. He immediately assumes that she is guilty, and has his "fawning council" pass judgment against her. And a terrible penalty it is. She is to have her eyes put out and her nose, lips and hands cut off. She is then to be sent back to her father's kingdom to live in infamy. Levan later remits the "inhuman" sentence and commutes it to eternal banishment. Even after she explains her prior love to him, Levan claims "rivalled love there's none should calmly bear." The irony of his comment is two-fold. First, he has never loved his wife; and second, his love for Homais makes him a rival to his uncle.

Just before Bassima dies of poison she tells her husband that she

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never was physically unfaithful to him, nor was she even tempted to be. At her passing he comments:

> How calm she went. Should she be innocent,
> Eternal grief and sorrow would surround me.
> Nor could the globe afford my fellow wretch.
> O Heavens, what state is mine, that I must hope
> My wife was false?
>
> (45)

But he immediately forgets Bassima and turns to his illicit joys with Homais.

The published play goes further in attacking the double standard. Manley was attacked for the "warmth" of the play, but she countered that the same members of the audience "sit attentively and unconcerned" at equally passionate moments in men's plays. She echoes Behn when she adds that "when the Ladies have given themselves the trouble of reading and comparing" her play "with others, they'll find the prejudice against our sex."

The commendatory verses by Trotter and Pix prefacing the play also take a militant stance against sexism and the double standard. Echoing Manley's themes for Agnes de Castro, Trotter writes:

> 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.

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* * *

The Men o'ercome, will quit the Fields

Where they have lost their Hearts, the Lawrel yield.

And Pix keeps the militant stance while comparing Manley to their mutual literary foremothers. She writes in part:

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 the Laurels with undisputed Right,

And Conquer when you but begin to Fight.

* * *

Like Sappho Charming, like Afra Eloquent,

Like Chast Orinda, sweetly innocent.

In her next play, appearing more than ten years after her debut in the theater, Manley created a totally different type of woman, the title character Almyna, an anagram of her own name. Opening December 16, 1706, at the Queen's Theater in the Haymarket, <u>Almyna; or, The Arabian Vow</u> was presented as the anonymous work of a man. Of course by this time Manley was a best-selling Tory author, and critics have speculated with ample reason that Manley chose to present the play anonymously for fear of a Whig faction's hissing it down. This idea is supported by the following lines in the play's epilogue: "Unknown, unfriended, as our Poet is,/ No Factions form's to save him from your hiss."

Factionalism aside, the play survived only three nights. In the

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published play's preface this is attributed to poor timing in its presentation (it appeared too close to Christmas and opposite a hugely successful opera at Drury Lane), the illness of Robert Wilks, who played Abdalla, and the retirement of Anne Bracegirdle, who played Zoradia, shortly after the third night. There were plans to revive the show after Wilks's illness was over, but Bracegirdle's retirement effectively quashed them.

The play is about the Sultan Almanzor, who hates women because he found that his beloved wife was unfaithful to him. As a result, he decided that the Koran was correct: women have no immortal souls, therefore, he had his adulterous queen put to death. Now he marries virgins and has them executed the next morning so that they will never prove unfaithful. His Grand Vizier, who is responsible for the executions, is getting more and more depressed with each execution, mainly because he has two daughters of marriageable age, Almyna and Zoradia, and he sympathizes with the brides' parents.

Because of his increasing age, the Sultan has named his brother Abdalla his heir. Abdalla loves Almyna and has received the Sultan's permission to marry her, but he had previously secretly contracted himself to her sister Zoradia, who is languishing to death due to Abdalla's treachery. When the Grand Vizier learns of Abdalla's secret promises to his other daughter, he vows revenge. Almyna, though, longs for glory, and coincidentally loves the Sultan, so, to thwart Abdalla and gain her own ends, she asks her father to allow her to marry the Sultan. Her arguments win her father over and her beauty wins the Sultan, who vows that as much as he loves her, he will still have her

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executed the next morning. After much arguing, and a show of true bravery, Almyna saves her own life. In the printed version of the play Abdalla is fatally wounded in the last act and in turn he accidentally stabs Zoradia, who dies in her sister's arms. But in the preface we learn that the stage version was changed in deference to "the kind wishes of the Town" and in it Zoradia and Abdalla lived and Zoradia gets her man.

The play is extremely feminist in tone.[17] In Almyna, Manley created a tragic heroine who has exactly the same attributes as a hero. Almyna claims that "Glory" and "Fame" are her motivations, and she doesn't mean "Fame" in the female sense of sexual reputation. She wants her name to live forever. She wants a greater destiny than that which is available to most women. As she tells her father in the third act:

> But I to Glory have resigned my life,
> That Spiritual Pride of Noble Hearts!
> * * *
> Glory the strongest passion of great minds
> Which none but souls enlarg'd can entertain
> * * *
> What raptures must those Happy Spirits feel
> Whose great Renown from God-like Deeds performed,
> Sounds thro' the Spacious Globe? Those who condemn
> Even Death for Glory, have made a nation Bless'd.
> Oh what wou'd I not do! for such a Triumph?
> Sure our Great Prophet has enlarged my Soul;
> I speak from him inspired, it must be so:

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I feel the Sacred Glowings in my Bosom,
And am Devoted all, to Death, or Empire!
(27-8)

Almyna has been well prepared for her chosen path. We are told in the beginning of the play that she has

Join'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.
(10)

In other words, she's one of the best educated women in the world, and she doesn't want all that effort wasted. As she tells her uncle, he taught her that

Death, with Honour shou'd be sought,
Rather than Life with Indolence or Pleasure!
Lead me out of that Track of other Ladies,
Whom idle Education often make,
An useless burden to Creation!
Where Vanity and Folly, bear the Sway
And leaves no Wish for any Deeds of Glory.
(29)

Here Manley is clearly saying that not only do women have the ability to be educated, they also have the same capacity as men to function for the good of society once they have attained that education. Not only is she agreeing with Behn's arguments of forty years earlier, she is taking them to the next logical step. Almyna's goal is to marry the Sultan and

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bring an end to all the killing he has been responsible for. It is ruining his otherwise great reputation and destroying her country.

And lest there be any doubt that Almyna longs for the same immortality as a male for her deeds, she tells her father:

> When by great actions we resign our Breaths,
> Tis not to dye, but more Immortality to Live?
> Our dayes should not by Length, be numbered o're,
> But by the Heroick Deeds, we have Performed!
> How shall my name to after ages flourish,
> If I succeed in this exalted purpose?
> How will the noble Ardor be recorded,
> That called me forth to save my country's ruin?
> Or if I dye, my Memory shall live!
> To after Ages live, and live with Glory!
>
> (28)

Throughout the play Almyna sees herself as larger than life. After she has won the Sultan's love, she is not like "vulgar maids" who are swayed by their "vulgar passions" into calling dissimulation "modesty." For Almyna, "My pride of life shall be to own my flame."

Probably the best known scene in the play is the one in which Almyna argues with the Sultan that it would be right for him to break his vow to kill all his brides the next morning. During the course of her argument she reasons that the crime of breaking an impious vow is much less than fulfilling its evil; that since women are born through the same process as men, they are sure to share the blessing of an immortal soul; that if she is correct, the Prophet will join with all

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the slaughtered queens and prevent the Sultan's entrance into Paradise. She goes on to list, in traditional fashion, women who have proved by their courage and goodness that they have souls: Semiramis, queen of nations; Judith; the Roman women – Virginia, Lucretia, Portia, and "thousands more;" Cleopatra; and even her own sister Zoradia who must have a soul to suffer as much as she does over Abdalla's perjury.

For all his amazement and love, the Sultan is not truly convinced, so he determines that Almyna must die in the morning. But he vows that she will be the last to die, since he will mourn her the rest of his days. She, in turn, becomes almost a Christ-figure as she faces her death. She tells the Sultan that since she gave up the opportunity to be queen when she refused to marry Abdalla, no one can say that she is just doing what she is doing for earthly benefits. She tells him that she is set on her course, so that:

> That with my life, thy cruel vow might end,
> To save thy precious soul, so near to ruin.
> And in my blood, to wash the stains away
> Restore thee to thyself, and to thy glory
> It would be more than living with another.
>
> (47)

And in the last scene she tells her father not to be sad, for she is "the ransom for so many lives." Later, feeling her growing stature as a true hero, she tells him to stop his sorrowing, for he's only losing a daughter, but she's giving up everything: "Let none presume to weigh their little woes/ When my superior griefs are in the balance" (62).

By her courage facing death and her intelligence, the Sultan is

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finally convinced that women have souls; he stays her execution at the last moment. An educated woman saves the country and becomes a true hero is every sense of the word.

Unlike Manley's previous plays, this includes a hint of Tory politics in the plot. In an elaborate ceremony (which was later removed from production at the request of the play's dedicatee the Countess of Sandwich, daughter of Aphra Behn's friend, the Earl of Rochester), the childless anointed king names his brother as his rightful heir – shades of Charles and James, or perhaps Anne and her half-brother James? Later in the play, the two brothers engage in a sword fight over the right to Almyna. Abdalla puts up his sword and tells the Sultan, on a Tory note, that even though he wanted to kill his brother, he couldn't because,

> But twas the prejudice of education
> Custom even amidst my rage prevailed
> Bred to an Awe, I held his person sacred.
>
> (47)

Manley's final play was Lucius, the First Christian King of Britain, which premiered at Drury Lane May 17, 1717. For this production, Manley once again published under her name. The Tories had been out of favor since Anne's death in 1714, and while still notorious, she was no longer a threat to the Whigs. According to The London Stage the play ran for three nights in its initial run and was revived in 1720 (2:450-1).

The play is dedicated to Manley's old friend and sometime opponent Richard Steele, who by this time was manager of the Drury Lane Theater.[18] In 1720 he had the play revived and reprinted as a benefit

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to atone for his "impertinence" for writing "something like satire in return to the Liberties that ingenious Lady took with him in certain of her Writings"[19] It seems that the battle between these two friends was finally settled, and in her dedication Manley writes that her purpose in dedicating the play to him was to "do an Act of Justice, and to End a former Misunderstanding." She then asks that "the very Memory of disagreeable Things" be "forgotten for ever."

Lucius, a pseudo-historical "tragedy" with a happy ending, is a very difficult play to follow. The title charcter, Lucius, the pagan Prince of Britain, is in love with Rosalinda, the Christian Queen of Albany and Aquitaine. The two are being separated by two rival loves apiece. Rosalinda is also loved by Lucius's father, King Vortimer, the cruel usurper of the British crown, and Arminius, the Prince of Albany. Lucius is loved by Emmelin, the Princess of Gallia, Vortimer's choice for his son, and Albany's sister Alenia, who spends most of the play in disguise as the page Sylvius. Her true sex is only revealed minutes before she dies.

After Lucius converts to Christianity, he and Rosalinda are secretly married. After many plot twists, attempted rapes, double dealing and the deaths of Arminius and Alenia/Sylvius, Vortimer captures the two and sentences them to death for heresy. He cruelly orders that Rosalinda be raped by her executioner. (Of course, he plans to disguise himself and fulfill the role.) Lucius escapes his cell and goes to save his wife. He kills the masked executioner, Vortimer, before he can rape Rosalinda. Just before the executioner dies, he reveals his true identity, and Lucius realizes he has committed patricide. But in the

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final moments of the play the Prince of Cambria arrives and hails Lucius as the revenger of his father's death. It seems that Vortimer had actually killed Lucius's real father, the true king of Britain, and taken Lucius's mother, who had just given birth to her son, as a wife. The child was hidden, Vortimer left to maraud, the queen died of grief, and when Vortimer returned, he was told that Lucius was his child, a fact he accepted. So with Vortimer now dead Lucius assumes his rightful throne, and lives happily with his wife. Emmelin gives up her claim to him and becomes a votary of Diana.[20]

After the feminism of Manley's first three plays, this one falls short. Rosalinda is a queen "doubly Crown'd/ By Birth and Marriage," and she takes her duties quite seriously. She is well educated, Lucius's equal in every way, but she never takes action. She is repeatedly saved from rapes by Lucius, and she she is very passive, deferring to "Fate" without trying to change it.

The epilogue, which was not written by Manley but by Matthew Prior, has the most blatantly feminist language of the entire work. It was spoken by Mrs. Horton who, according to the dramatis personae, played Emmelin:

> By our full Pow'r of Beauty, we think fit,
> To damn this Salique Law impos'd on Wit.
> We'll try the Empire you so long have boasted;
> * * *
> Approve what One of us presents to Night,
> Or every mortal Woman here shall write.
> * * *

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Female Third-Days, shall come so thick upon you
As long as we have Eyes, or Hands, or Breath,
We'll Look or Write or Talk you to Death.

Manley's only comment to or about women comes in the play's preface, where she writes "I cannot suffer this play to pass into the World without expressing my Gratitude to the Ladies, who in such a distinguishing Manner, graced and supported it."

In case the audience might be expecting political matter or scandal from the infamous Mrs. Manley, the play's prologue "by a young gentleman" announces its intentions as apolitical:

Dare English Tragedy plead Hopes of Grace?
No Party favour'd, no Designs in view,
To make Old-Times, club Faction with the New.
No double soft Entenders to excite,
No Politicks to please the Wise to Night.

Kendall makes the argument that Lucius "has strong Whig overtones" because it pits a virtuous young prince against an overbearing tyrant of a king ("Theater" 145), but what Kendall misses is that the tyrannical king was a usurper and the true son of the natural king regains his rightful throne. In fact, while the play may appear Whiggish, in the end the true Tory or Jacobite message comes through. And while the play was dedicated to a Whig, Steele wasn't the first Whig Manley had ever named as a patron: she dedicated The Royal Mischief to the Duke of Devonshire, a Whig, but also a well-known patron of the arts. And Steele had been a friend for around twenty years. During the Whig ascendancy of the Hanover reign, Manley obviously thought the time for

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battling old friends should end.

## Prose Fiction

The reading public, critics and scholars have traditionally denigrated Manley's prose fiction as either soft pornography, scandal chronicles, or partisan political satire. Yet Swift was writing the latter in books now considered classics of literature like Gulliver's Travels, and no one would think of labelling that novel a "mere political satire." And if he didn't write pornography, his scatological descriptions of women in both his poetry and prose are even more degrading and disgusting than much pornography. In fact, the two writers aren't as different as Swift would probably have liked to think.[21] If one reads further into Manley, or perhaps less deeply – if one ignores the novels as political or personal scandal – one finds that she will stand up to serious criticism, especially in The New Atalantis. She uses recurring motifs, her "warmth" is usually employed in an ironic or negative manner, and what is probably most important, Manley spends much time exploring her characters' psyches, both heroes and villains alike.

Reading Manley's novels as scandal chronicles alone limits our understanding of her writing. Like any good satire, they can be read at a number of levels, and for too long we have only looked at the one level. Needham writes that Manley's main motivation is "political rather than feminist zeal" ("Wife" 267), but in some cases it was both. Not all of Manley's political satires are "good reads" today. The two volumes of The New Atalantis and perhaps Adventures of Rivella are the only ones with much to offer a modern reader. Queen Zarah is much

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closer in style to Manley's political pamphlets, discussed below, and in many ways it does not belong in the same category as her other books. And the two volumes of Memoirs of Europe show ample evidence that they were the products of a rushed author anxious to meet a deadline. But New Atalantis and Rivella offer much to a reader, and both were partly motivated by feminist zeal.

But when dealing with Manley's writing, one must admit that the political satire comprises a very important aspect of her works. To her contemporaries, she was powerful Tory writer, who attacked her Whig enemies with scandalous tales, which, in many cases, were uncomfortably close to the truth. The questioning that Manley underwent after her arrest for libel also underscores the veracity of much of what she was writing. For the Whigs to want to know who her "inside source" was, there had to be more than a grain of truth in her stories.[22]

Manley was of course a product of her time: the great age of English satire. This is the period when Swift, Pope, Addison, Steele and Arbuthnot were flourishing, and satire was their style of choice. Manley joined them, with more popular success than any of her contemporaries. Her victims were the Whigs, and sex was the weapon, a choice she has been roundly condemned for in the past three centuries.

Politics and feminism cannot be separated when dealing with Manley's works. Manley's sex did not matter when she was writing, yet at the same time she was making a stand for women writers. Behn wrote political satire in her plays and novellas, and was roundly castigated for it. So was Manley, but because of her substantial success, perhaps she made writing slightly easier for other women if only by attracting

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"enemy fire" towards herself. Susannah Centlivre, a Whig, also used politics in her plays, but she was never as vilified as Manley was.

Manley's first political satire is The Secret History of Queen Zarah, which appeared in two volumes in 1705. It was enormously popular: several impressions sold out immediately, and seven editions were published by 1736 (Needham "Bath" 268). It was translated into French in 1708, and a second French edition was released in 1711, this time with a "key" to the characters. There is some question as to whether or not is Manley's own work, but it is considered close enough to her other novels in style and content to remain in her bibliography.[23] It was first attributed to her on the title page of the 1711 reprint as "By Way of Appendix to the New Atlantis [sic]." Written in a less florid style than her later novels, Queen Zarah is written in a style similar to her later political pamphlets. Manley does not mention Queen Zarah in Adventures of Rivella, but neither does she mention her political pamphlets. I believe that Manley did write Queen Zarah, but viewed it as pure politics – a sort of extended political pamphlet – as opposed to her more literary aims with The New Atalantis.

The preface to Queen Zarah is a critical statement about fiction.[24] In it, Manley discusses the difference between the romance and "histories," the novel, and calls for more realistic fiction. In 1984 John L. Sutton argued conclusively that contrary to popular belief the preface was not Manley's original work, but a "literal translation of an essay . . . contained in a French 'courtesy book' published in 1702 – the abbé Morvan de Bellegarde's Lettres curieuses de littérature et de morals, which in turn is a paraphrase of the second part of the

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Sueir du Plaisir's Sentimens sur les lettres et sur l'histoire published in 1683" (167). Sutton shows that Manley's translation is exact enough to allow us to identify the particular edition she must have used (169). If Manley was not the originator of the ideas in the preface, which it seems clear she wasn't, it does mean that she was reading, and translating, moderately complex theoretical ideas from the French. This provides an even stronger link to Behn, who had proved her intellectual capabilities with her own translations twenty years earlier.

Queen Zarah is the allegorical tale of the kingdom of Albigion (transparently Albion, England). Starting during the reign of Rolando (Charles II), it basically follows the machinations of Zarah (Sarah Churchill, the Duchess of Marlborough) to gain status and power through her relationship with the Princess, and later Queen, Albania (Anne). It shows Zarah's role in the downfall of King Albanio (James II), and how she plotted with others – Volpone (Godolphin), and Solano (Sunderland) especially – to secure power for herself and her husband Hippolito (John Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough). While the novel attacks all the Whigs, Sarah is the recipient of the harshest treatment. We are told that "Fortune had cut out [Zarah] purely for the Service of her own Interest, without any Regard to the strict Rules of Honour or Virtue" (1:40).[25] In fact, at one point Albania tells Zarah that Hippolito should have more honor. Zarah retorts "if you depend upon Honour, I hope you never expect to succeed to the Crown of Albigion" (1:65).

While not ignored in this satire, John Churchill fares much better than his wife and some of the other Whigs. But this mildness is most likely due to his overwhelming victory at Blenheim in August of 1704.

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He was still riding a huge crest of popularity, and Manley had to tread carefully. In fact, she even goes so far as to praise his victory, even though she was personally antagonistic towards the man. By the publication of The New Atalantis four years later, Marlborough's star was beginning to dim, and as a result, he comes in for much harsher treatment in the next work.

The New Atalantis is much nearer a true novel than either of Queen Zarah's volumes, and of all Manley's novels, it is the best. While critics have argued that it is merely a collection of tales and novellas linked by a narrator, it is more than that. It does have a unified theme, which is the treachery of the powerful, and usually corrupt, against the powerless. As Ballaster points out, the novel is centered around the Charlot/Duke story "to or from which all subsequent stories in the novel correspond or diverge" (Seductive 132). For example, prior to the Duke's story we see the stories of the two brothers Hernando Volpone and Mosco and their treacherous seduction of women in their power. This makes it much more than a scandal chronicle: it is also an overt feminist statement with very strong ties to the work of Behn.

Many critics have pointed out the fact that the goddess Astrea, the figure of justice who presides over the tales in The New Atalantis, is a definite link to "Astrea" Behn.[26] But for a literate and staunch Tory the name Astrea would have further connotations – Dryden's Astrea Redux, his panegyric on the return of Charles II and the restoration of the monarchy. Manley might have been thinking of more in Dryden than Astrea Redux, though. In her dedication to Volume Two, she quotes him:

> 'Tis an action of virtue to make examples of vicious men.

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> They may and ought to be upbraided with their crimes and follies: both for their own amendment, if they are not yet incorrigible, and for the terror of others, to hinder them from falling into those enormities which they see are so severely punished in the persons of others. (1:527-28)

In fact, Manley had this passage in mind much earlier and was thinking of it when she began writing The New Atalantis. If Manley was linking Dryden and Behn, invoking Behn as a mentor, she was also moving Behn into the realm of greatness occupied by Dryden. And early in the novel we learn that we will hear of the worst of crimes. Astrea tells her companion, the storytelling Intelligence, that she must leave no details of her story out, for in order to make a proper judgment Astrea must hear all. But no one can "be polluted but by our own, not the Crimes of others. They stain not nor reflect back upon us, but in our approbation of them" (1:301).

The New Atalantis was an immensely popular and influential book in its day. Trevelyan calls it "the publication that did the most harm" to the Whig Ministry in 1705 (Peace 38). Albeit satirically, Pope uses it as a measure for literary immortality in The Rape of the Lock: "For long as Atalantis shall be read" is synonymous with the timelessness of "While fish in streams, or birds delight in air." As late as 1762 there was a "line of works proclaiming in their titles their descent from a famous original" (Anderson "Biography" 267).

A political satire and a scandal chronicle to be sure, but the narrative has a definite theme - power corrupting, often underscored by examples of powerful men taking advantage of powerless women. In the

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second volume this emphasis is slightly modified to show hypocrisy being a tool of power and evidence of corruption. All of the seemingly unrelated narratives and vignettes work together to paint a broad picture of those in power running amok, glutted with their own excesses and destroying the powerless for fun or profit. This is a broad theme which allows Manley room to make commentary on a number of social ills that are the direct result of abuses of power.

One of the topics she chooses to attack is one both she and Behn addressed in plays - forced marriage. And Manley goes further than merely attacking parents who force their children into marriages for financial or political reasons. She underscores its horror by showing the ultimate evil in forced marriages: bigamy. Three instances of it occur in the novel, including Manley's own story, which coincidentally was the only instance in the novel in which the young woman was not first convinced that bigamy was a "natural" state.

Most of these forced marriages turn out to be loveless as well. Virtue tells her daughter Astrea that children of these all-too-common loveless marriages are lacking something in their make-up. They are "void of generous Fire, of that Sparkling Genius, the product of noble free-born love," and that is why there are so few heroes left in the world (1:276). Later there is an outright attack on the system of arranged marriage: "But Parents think their Children can never be unhappy, if they do but take care of their Interest, which is the true reason we so seldom see People of Condition fortunate in their Marriages" (1:387).

The narrator Intelligence spends a long time telling the sad tale

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of Monsieur and Madame St. Amant (Edward and Cary Coke). The moral of their tale is that people should be in love with one another before they marry or the scene is set for disaster. In the case of the St. Amants, their parents had arranged their marriage while the two were still children. They were raised knowing that they would be married, married while still quite young, and managed a peaceful and contented life together. But then Madame falls violently in love with the Baron de Mezeray (Sir Edmund Bacon). She is a virtuous woman who refuses to give in to her deeper passions. People believe the worst, of course, and her husband soon hears the rumors. She swears to her husband on his deathbed that she had never satisfied her passion for the Baron, and she also makes the promise that she will never marry him. In this way people will not be able to credit the rumor. Her husband soon dies an unhappy man, and she is so broken hearted that she will never be able to live in happiness with the man she loves that she soon follows her husband to the grave. Due to the unfortunate machinations of greedy parents, three lives were destroyed. Manley implies that if people were allowed to marry for love in the first place, situations like this would not arise.

The sexual double standard is also vigorously attacked. Astrea herself enters the fray by attacking men "who _Arbitrarily_ decide, that Woman was only created (with all her _Beauty_, _Softness_, _Passions_ and compleat _Tenderness_) to adorn the _Husband's_ Reign, perfect his _Happiness_ and propagate the Kind" (1:590). In a number of cases we are told of instances of young women being educated in virtue by the very men who then use that education to destroy the women. This education is

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"revealed as socially inept, even dangerous for girls. By suppressing sexual expression, it merely delays and heightens it" (Todd "Life" 49). Men, on the other hand, are taught that it is their right to express and satisfy their sexual needs.

The men themselves even gloat over the trickery men use to take advantage of the double standard. In the story of the Baroness Somes (Annabella Howard) and her treacherous common-law husband the Prince of Sira (the Duke of Shrewsbury), we again see a woman ruined by being tricked into unsanctified intercourse, and the male not only escaping censure but going on to enjoy financial reward. Her neighbor, the Count (who is unidentified), who hopes to take advantage of the Baroness's situation, asks: "I wonder there are still found women that confide in our false Oaths and Promises" (1:416).

In case readers don't figure out that there is a double standard operating throughout the novel, Astrea spells it out quite clearly:

> Men may regain their Reputation, tho' after a Complication of Vices, Cowardice, Robbery, Adultery, Bribery, and Murder, but a Woman once departed from the Road of Virtue, is made incapable of return. Sorrow and Scorn overtake her, and, as I said before, the World suffers her to perish loath'd, and unlamented. (1:355-56)

And of course, it doesn't matter if the woman got on that road by her own free will or the manipulation of another.

Harrison Steeves has written that while Behn and Manley wrote fiction "more or less in the interest of their sex, no one would think of calling their fictions serious examinations of the social

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environment," (204) but I disagree. Along with the by this time "traditional" women's issues of forced marriage and the sexual double standard, Manley also made pointed observations about the lack of suffrage for women and the problems for women inherent in androcentric health care. In the guise of attacking the double standard Manley writes:

> That that violent <u>inborn</u> desire of pleasing so natural to Ladies is the pest of Virtue, they would by the Charms of their Beauty, and their sweet and insinuating way of Conversation, assume that Native Empire over Mankind, which seems to be politically deny'd them, because the way to Authority and Glory is stopp'd up: Hence it is that, with their acquir'd Arts and languishing Charms, they risque their Virtue to gain a little contemptible Dominion over a Heart that at the same time it surrenders it self a Slave; refuses to bestow esteem upon the Victor. (1:327)

If men were to allow women power in society, the women wouldn't have to waste their talents intriguing in petty love affairs, but unfortunately, that is the only power available to women.

Then there is a brief attack on the medical profession in the middle of the story of Madame St. Amant. Manley's description of Madam's "vapours" and the doctor's diagnosis and treatment is comment on what women are to expect at the hands of doctors. The doctor's method of diagnosis is to tell a joke. If a woman doesn't laugh at a man's joke there must be something wrong with her. It can't be that the joke was bad; she must be mentally ill (see 1:381-83).

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Not confining herself to women's issues in her social commentary, she also addressed economic debates that were raging in her day. At one point Intelligence interjects into her narrative an "editorial comment":

> Did Mankind confine themselves only to what was necessary, reasonable, or proper, there would indeed be no occasion for most part of the great expense they are at . . . . since, in the equal distribution of Creation, every Country is sufficient to itself, for sustaining Life with Temperance, tho' not with Luxury. (1:361)

Here Manley is giving a traditional Tory view of the "Luxury" issue which was being debated in the literature of both political satire and economics. The Tory satirists were represented in works like Swift's _Gulliver's Travels_ and the Whigs in Bernard Mandeville's _The Fable of the Bees_. The Whig viewpoint was that luxuries were the life's blood of a nation's economy because they stimulated trade. Manley is siding with the economic reactionaries who sneered at trade and paper money.

The British Navy also comes under Manley's consideration. For nine pages Astrea and Virtue discuss the ills to which the Navy has fallen prey. This is not pornography, and it is a very pointed and practical discussion on how to improve the situation. Here are nine pages of skillfully done criticism. Manley always stays in character as she offers practical solutions to the corruption and vice which were then rampant in the navy (see 1:282-90). For instance, she claims that "_Bacchus_ and _Venus_ (in their most criminal rites)" are the only deities worshipped by those in the Navy (1:287). She then goes on to attack the officers; they drink, gamble, and "omit no opportunity of defrauding the

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Seaman, that labors for a sorry Subsistance; they adulterate even their Pulse and Water, deputing damag'd in the place of good" (1:288). Some of her solutions would be to employ "faithful" commissioners to inspect the provisions; tax cards, dice, wine and strong liquors; and make it a capital offense to take a bribe in the service of one's country (see 1:289 ff).

Much of the recent feminist criticism of Manley and The New Atalantis has focused on another theme found in Behn – lesbianism. In the second volume of the novel is a description of a lesbian cabal (see 1:590 ff). It is an interesting section, but I wonder if the disproportionate amount of criticism it receives distorts its importance to the novel as a whole. The Cabal is a relatively short section in a work filled with stories of men's treacheries to women. Comprised of women of leisure, it meets in "a little Lodging about twelve Furlongs from Angela [London], in a place obscure and pleasant" with good wine, and a "tolerable" garden (1:578). There, the women meet, talk, visit, and "fortify themselves in the Precepts of Virtue and Chastity against all their detestable undermining Arts" (1:578). While the women of the cabal do exchange "innocent pleasures," some of the women fall prey to the same ills that attack heterosexual unions – jealousy and financial control of one partner by another. Perhaps Manley was giving a Utopian vision, and she certainly doesn't heartily condemn lesbian sex, but I see the cabal more as a vent for the anger women feel at being trapped in a patriarchal system than as a celebration of lesbian sexuality. A world without men would be a Utopia not because of the sex, but because of the absence of the men. But I don't believe that Manley was trying

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to recreate a Golden Age of lesbianism as the only form, or even ideal form, of sexual expression, especially since the cabal is troubled by ego problems and jealousy. Elsewhere in her writings she is very enthusiastic in her endorsements of heterosexuality and heterosexual marriage, as long as the union is based on love and not financial interest.

Finally, Manley, like Behn, experimented with the narrative form. In fact Manley was even more experimental (Todd Sign 86). Throughout The New Atalantis Manley changes her narrative voice and style to underscore her points. The story of the anonymous young country gentlewoman who is forsaken by a soldier and murders her own illegitimate child is told in a very straight-forward, unembellished manner by an old neighborhood woman. This presentation underscores the bleak fates faced by these young country girls who are tricked by soldiers passing through their towns.[27] We learn the murder was discovered and the young gentlewoman hanged. The old woman's only comment is that the gentlewoman "died very Penitent" (1:425). On the other hand, when attacking the luxurious Whigs in positions of high power, Manley's language becomes more colorful and overblown.

After the successful Atalantis volumes and the fall of the Whig government, Manley produced the two volumes of Memoirs of Europe in 1710. This panegyric to Robert Harley and Lord Peterborough served the Tory cause as successfully as her earlier works. Again, this was a purported translation of a Renaissance manuscript, but this time it was advertised as being by "the author of the Atalantis." Manley obviously saw her writing as a labor of love, for she wrote to Harley: "I

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willingly devote my ease and interest 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 the heads of that party who have misled thousands" (qtd. in Köster "Introduction" xv-xvi).

The two volumes were produced with remarkable speed. Volume One was published in the spring of 1710, and Volume Two followed in November of the same year. In all, the two volumes fill over 730 quarto pages. Manley comments on her haste in the preface to the second volume. She writes:

> The Incouragement my Courteous Readers have given _Eginardus_, in less than six Months to take off so large an Impression, and suffering Him to come to a Second Edition, has tempted me to make a Translation of the Second Volume.
>
> * * *
>
> The Town being so barren of Diversion, nothing new of that kind appear'd since _Eginardus_: Neither _Novel_, _Memoirs_, _Comedy_, or _Tragedy_, tempted me to bring on this Second Volume sooner by some months than I design'd. I hope it may not please the less for its sudden Appearance: When we had Writers that entertain'd from the _Theatre_ twice a Year, it was not thought too often. (2:383, 385)

Unfortunately, the rush that Manley must have been in to produce the volumes so quickly is evident in their construction. The structure of the _Memoirs_ is close enough to that of _The New Atalantis_ for the two _Memoirs_ volumes to later be called _New Atalantis_ Three and Four, but

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there are enough differences between them so that the two collections stand alone. The allegorical figures of Atalantis are replaced by actual people who have coincidentally met somewhere in eastern Europe and pass the time by sharing gossip. Almost all of the gossip is about real historic figures who stand in for Manley's contemporaries.[28] Sometimes the resulting relationships become quite confusing as they force Manley to change the sex of some of her characters. For instance, Sarah Churchill is represented as the Empress Irene, mother of the young King Constantine, who in turn is Queen Anne. Swift noticed the confusion and some of the hackneyed prose and commented on it in a letter to Addison:

> I read your character in Mrs. Manly'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 them out by handfulls and strewed them on her Paper, where about once in five hundred times they happen to be right. (Correspondence 1:170-71)

Swift could recognize the portrait of his friend, but notes that the writing is not the best. And apparently not all of the portraits are easy to recognize, for when Manley sent a copy of the novel to Harley, she offered to explain anything he doesn't understand (see Köster "Introduction" xvi).

The first volume of the Memoirs is facetiously dedicated to Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq., Steele's pen name in The Tatler. This dedication may contain the novel's most overtly feminist statement. She writes: "Tho' your Worship, in the TATLER of November the Tenth, has been pleased to

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call a Patron the Filthiest Creature in the Street, &c. yet I cannot but observe, in innumerable Instances, you are so delighted with such Addresses, as even to make 'em to yourself." She then goes on to recount the attacks made on her and the Atalantis in The Tatler, and Steele's denial of their authorship. She writes that since Steele has denied authorship he

> could never be guilty of so barbarous a Breach, since he could not commit the Treacherous! the Basest! the most Abject thing upon Earth! so contrary to his Assurances! It must be you, Sir, to whom my Thanks are due; making me a Person of such Consideration, as to be worthy your important War. A weak unlearned Woman's Writings, to employ so great a Pen! Heavens! how valuable am I? How fond of that Immortality, even of Infamy, that you have promised! I am ravish'd at the Thoughts of living a thousand Years hence in your indelible Lines, tho' to give Offense . . .
> you even strain a Point to oblige me, as to the Fate of my Atalantis, calling that present State, Oblivion, which was Suppression. I doubt your Worship must be forced to make may as bold Attempts, else in my frail Woman's Life there will be little of the Heroick Ills worth recording. (2:2)

The tone of the entire piece drips with irony. She writes that she is astonished at the stature her attack in The Tatler will give her, but she is actually laughing at it as if it were really quite beneath her notice. By treating Bickerstaff/Steele in an irreverent manner she deflates him and places herself in the position of power. And since by

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this time everyone knew who the author of the Atalantis was, she signed the dedication with the initials "D. M."

The second volume was more seriously dedicated to "Louisa of Savoy, Countess of Angoulism," Manley's code name for Abigail Masham, the Tory who replaced Sarah Churchill as Queen Anne's favorite. In the dedication Manley tells how Louisa has replaced the Duchess of Beaujou as the king's favorite, and with Louisa's coming "we breath'd a new Air, from the sweet Odour of solid Virtue! sound Religion! unfeigned Piety! unaffected Generosity! affectionate Reverence to the Throne!" (2:207). This is opposed to the opposite qualities in the despised Duchess of Beaujou. Manley tells of Beajou's persecution and reproach of the new favorite, and Louisa's meekness during her ordeals. But the "Attempt of impotent Malice, flies like Clouds before the Morning-Sun of Vertue!" Manley claims, rather hyperbolically, that Louisa is the "Darling of the People" and offers the work as an entertainment in which "the Deformity of Vice expos'd, to heighten the Beauty and Shine of Vertue!" (2:207)

Her next novel, the autobiographical Adventures of Rivella, while also rushed, shows more literary qualities. We know that this fiction was rushed because Manley was working against the deadline Curll had set for Gildon's version of the biography (see above). According to Curll, Manley sent "the greatest Part of the Manuscript" to him "about a week" after she agreed to write it (qtd. Köster "Introduction" xx). Manley obviously used pieces of writing she had on hand, for sections of Rivella are almost identical to letters in The Lady's Pacquet Broke Open. Manley uses a male persona to tell her story. The device is that Sir Charles Lovemore, an old flame of Rivella's, is telling her life

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story to the young Chevalier D'Aumont. The Chevalier supposedly wrote the story down immediately after hearing it, and then returned to his native France. It was found in his effects when he died 3shortly afterwards and published in France. The English version is purportedly a translation of the French.

In the guise of Lovemore, Manley paints a flattering portrait of herself, but she does attempt some level of honesty. She says, in a direct echoe of Aphra Behn's own self analysis: "She loves Truth, and has too often given her self the Liberty to Speak, as well as write it" (2:750). In the introduction Sir Charles calls her a woman "who is no longer young, and was never a Beauty" (2:741). And he begins the tale proper with the statement that there

> are so many Things Praise, and yet Blame-worthy, in Rivella's conduct, that as her Friend, I know not well how with a good Grace, to repeat, or as yours, conceal, because you expect from me an Impartial History. Her Vertues are her own, her Vices occasion'd by her Misfortunes. (2:743)

But then there is the immediate attack on the double standard mentioned at the beginning of this chapter – that if she had been a male, she would have been without fault. Manley self-consciously adds "as she herself has very well observ'd in divers Places, throughout her own Writings" (2:743-44).

Throughout the novel we get the impression of a woman aware of herself and her unique place in her society. She is quite successfully treading on traditionally male territory, but she is usually castigated for it, and not rewarded as her male peers are. As a result, Manley

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makes contradictory statements in her writing. She seems to go along with the platitude that love is the proper subject for women to write about. Indeed, she rightfully boasts of her talent for it. "I have not known any of the Moderns in that point come up to your famous Author of the Atalantis," she writes in the introduction to Rivella. "She has carried the Passion farther than could be readily conceiv'd." She then goes on to list some of her more notorious Atalantis scenes and concludes that they "must warm the coldest Reader." But, we learn, there is a reason for the warmth; it is not just gratuitous eroticism. It "raises high Ideas of the Dignity of Human Kind, and informs us that we have in our Composition, wherewith to taste sublime and transporting Joys" (2:740). Yes, Manley may be writing in the "womanly sphere" of love, but she is not just telling love stories to entertain readers. She states a higher purpose.

Manley does reveal her pride in her political writing when she discusses her arrest for the Atalantis: "She was proud of having more Courage than had any of our [male] Sex, and of throwing the first Stone, which might give a Hint for other Persons of more capacity to examine the defects of some Men" who had attempted to destroy the nation for their own greed and aggrandizement (2:845). But after telling the story of her arrest and interrogation, we are told by Lovemore that she "now Agrees with me, that Politics is not the Business of a Woman; especially of one that can so well delight and entertain her readers with more gentle, pleasing themes, and accordingly set herself again to write a tragedy for the stage" (2:854). This must be Manley at her ironic best, for as a contemporary reader would know, after Atalantis there was no

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tragedy staged (that would not come until 1717), but two more lengthy volumes of political writing were published. And what fewer people might have known, that between her arrest and Rivella Manley wrote at least six purely political pamphlets. So her statement to "Sir Charles" was just another example of her standard platitudes to quiet the censuring men. The only event that stopped Manley's political writing was the death of Queen Anne, and even Lucius, her last "tragedy for the stage", had a subtle political message.

The last of Manley's works to be published in her lifetime was The Power of Love: In Seven Novels (1720), which is basically a modernization of seven stories from Painter's Palace of Pleasure. She also published two volumes of epistolary narratives, The Lady's Pacquet Broke Open and Stage Coach Journey to Exeter. The latter had been published as early as 1696, but Manley recalled it as a pirated edition and it suppressed until after she died. Robert Adams Day calls this work one of the "liveliest pieces of fictional writing before Fielding" (Told 158). He notes that the volume "profited from brevity, but more from being based on [Manley's] actual correspondence of the summer of 1694. When she revised the letters and inserted three short novels, she retained her lively style and vivid brief descriptions of persons and sights encountered on the road" (Told 156).

The Lady's Pacquet first appeared in 1707, and has been given a thorough treatment by Day. He describes the forty-one letters in the two part collection as three first person scandal chronicles; two sequences of "elementary attempts at epistolary love stories"; and the rest as Manley's own letters between herself and Sarah Fyge Egerton, the

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Duke of Devonshire, her sister Cornelia, and Richard Steele (Told 65). And he adds that some of the stories "are really excellent short stories called letters" (154).

I have only been able to look at letter 33 from the 1711 version which was reprinted in 1969 as part of Natascha Würzbach's collection The Novel in Letters: Epistolary Fiction in the Early English Novel 1678-1740. Morgan includes the same story as a chapter in her "autobiography" of Manley. There is no way to check the facts since the characters in the letter are given stock names like "Mr. Worthy," but the beginning of the letter is discussing Tilly's remarriage, Manley's "noble sacrifice" to love, and her subsequent flight into the country to mend her broken heart which are also discussed in Rivella.

As in Rivella, we see a basically honest picture of the author. She lets us see the narrator's ego: "But sure Cloridon does better know how to value so unprecedented a Sacrifice. I gave up all my Happiness to his Interest, and by Permission saw him three Weeks he after married" (41); but we see her poking fun at herself as well. When discussing her new beau she ironically writes that he "liked my Company, or my Library, or both" (44).

She also takes aim at one of her constant themes: the injustice of the double standard that says that a woman must never be the aggressor in a relationship. In an anguish of love she writes

> What Laws? What Manners? What Customs have our Sex? How must we be Tantaliz'd? How Tortur'd? Why was it not permitted to search his Heart? Why not to ask him, if yet he knew whether there was a Deity call'd Love? Our

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> perpetual Opportunities, our long Converse, might have well excus'd it; but Modesty over-rul'd even Curiosity and Vanity: I was forced to suffer in Uncertainty and Silence. (45)

And because of her determination to abide by that double standard, the poor narrator waits an entire year for the man to get the courage to speak up!

## Political Writing

Manley's first documented foray into political journalism is her editorship of the Tory <u>Examiner</u>, beginning in June 1711, which is documented in Swift's <u>Journal to Stella</u>:

> I have sent to Leigh the set of Examiners, the first thirteen were written by several hands, some good, some bad; the next three and thirty were all by one hand, that makes forty-six; then that author, whoever he was, laid it down on purpose to confound guessers; and the last six were written by a woman. (2:402)

Therefore, Manley edited numbers 47 through 52, a rather brief tenure, perhaps due to the prorogation of Parliament and Manley's serious illness in the winter of 1711.[29] During her editorship Manley wrote essays that dealt with subjects such as "faults of the Whigs, a speech of the Queen to Parliament, the 'art of shifting sides,' and the recent change in the ministry" (Needham "Tory Defender" 273).

Through Swift, Manley also become involved in the raging pamphlet war during the height of the Tory-Whig struggles for power during Queen

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Anne's final years. Trevelyan discusses the power and importance of party pamphleteers during these final Stuart years: "The appearance of any important pamphlet was a great event, talked of and heralded for weeks before; and the place where the politicians met to read and discuss it was the 'coffee-house', the centre of the vigorous politico-literary civilization of the day" (England 486). He adds that these political writers were "as gifted as any who ever struggled for power in Athens, Rome, or Paris. Literary genius was then valued at its proper worth, but only because it consented to come down into the forum and hire itself out as a servant to political power" (486).

We definitely know of six pamphlets that Manley wrote, and as time passes more may be attributed to her. Of the three original pamphlets held by the New York Public Library's Research Branch, two are attributed to Swift in the card catalogue, and while the third is tentatively ascribed to Manley in the catalogue, someone has pencilled "By Jonathan Swift" on the title page of 3the pamphlet. The problem with attribution comes from the fact that political pamphlets had to be published anonymously. Trevelyan explains that "[g]overnment prosecutions for libel, and proceedings in either House of Parliament, made it necessary for even Swift and Steele to publish anonymously, and small fry had no quarter" (England 486). While Manley's certainly had the protection of the Tories by this juncture, her work still had to be anonymous, and is indistinguishable from that of her contemporaries.

Because of this textual similarity with the male writers, critics have argued that Manley's political writing of 1710-1714 was not feminist in tone. I agree; it was not. But as with the works of Behn

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and Trotter, the act is more important than the context. Manley was doing what no woman had done as consistently before and doing it with no regard to sex. As such, the act itself was "feminist."

All six of Manley's pamphlets were published by John Morphew, the publisher of her novels. In fact, the first pamphlet carries on its back an advertisement for a new edition of the fourth volume of _The New Atalantis_ plus volumes one through three.

That first pamphlet was _A True Narrative of What Pass'd at the Examination of the Marquis de Guiscard_, published in 1711. In March of 1710/11 Guiscard, a French refugee, was arrested for treasonously plotting against England, and during his questioning seriously stabbed Harley. Swift discusses Manley's pamphlet in the _Journal to Stella_ on April 16, 1711:

> I forgot to tell you that yesterday was sent to me _A Narrative_ printed, with all the circumstances of Mr. Harley's stabbing. I had no time to do it myself; so I sent my hints to the author of the _Atalantis_, and she has cook'd it into a six-penny pamphlet, in her own style, only the first page is left as I was beginning it . . . It is worth your reading, for the circumstances are all true. (1:244-45)

The pamphlet itself is a straightforward telling of Guiscard's history, his arrest, the stabbing, and its aftermath. The prose is very matter-of-fact until the point of the stabbing. Manley uses all of her creative power and psychological insight to build the suspense: Guiscard's sudden determination to do as much harm as he possibly could;

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his decision to assassinate Harley first and then attack St. John, and perhaps even the queen, who was not even present at the questioning; and then the actual stabbing. Of course, all of this section was created by Manley, but it is effective. When Guiscard is caught after stabbing Harley, he

> rag'd, he struggled, he overthrew several of 'em, with the Strength of one desperate, or Frantick, till at last they got him down, by pulling him backwards by the Cravat. Like a Lyon taken in the Toils, he foam'd, he grin'd, his Countenance seem'd dispoiled of the Aspect of anything Human; his Eyes gleam'd Fire, Despair, and Fury. (22-23)

After the description of the near-fatal stabbing, she returns to her more basic style, except for a brief passage praising Harley:

> His Actions have their Foundations on solid Judgment, prop'd by a most extensive Genius, unlimited Foresight, and immoveable Prudence . . . . Posterity shall boast of HARLEY as a Prodigy, in whom the Spring is pure as the Stream; not troubled by Ingratitude or Avarice, nor its Beauty deformed by the Feature of any Vice. (36)

And while she does manage a few swipes at the Whigs, she ends the pamphlet with a call for unity in order to save the nation, something she could afford to do since the Tories were in power:

> the World beholds the Hatred and Aversion amongst us, as Lunacy in our Blood, incurable but by letting forth; they foresee and long for a Civil War, to reduce us to Misery and Reason, they flatter themselves, that our Dissensions tend

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> that way, and Prophesy they can have no End but with our Ruin.
>
> 'Tis ourselves only can disappoint the Hopes of our Enemies and extricate ourselves (43).

Manley's second pamphlet also appeared in 1711, A Learned Comment upon Dr. Hare's . . . Sermon. Dr. Francis Hare, Chaplain-General to the Queen's Forces and the author of three Whig tracts on the War of Spanish Succession and the hazards of a premature peace, had preached his sermon before the Duke of Marlborough shortly after the duke's victory at Bouchain. The Tory position was that peace must be effected as soon as possible, and many party writers believed that the Whigs – Marlborough in particular – were prolonging the war in their own pecuniary interests. The Whigs countered that a premature peace was dangerous to England's national security.

A "learned" response is what Manley offers Hare. According to Swift, it is her own, but he sent the printer "hints" to give her (Journal 2:402). She counters Hare's argument point by point in the traditional manner of presenting a passage from his sermon followed by her commentary on the reasons for his inaccuracy, poor judgment or misinterpreting of reality. She punctuates the whole with flashes of typical Manley irony. At one point she writes: "Whatever the Doctor may be for a Preacher, he has prov'd but an indifferent Prophet" (268).

In order to move ahead with their peace plans, the Tory leaders wanted to replace the Whig general Marlborough with a Tory general. The leaders felt Marlborough was prolonging the war in his own pecuniary interests. But Marlborough's military victories, especially his most

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recent at Bouchain, made him a popular hero. To replace him at that juncture would cause unrest throughout the country. Harley and company knew that Marlborough's reputation had to be blackened first, and the job of destroying the war hero went to the party journalists. Manley was one of those assigned to this task, and by the end of 1711 the Tories had achieved their goal vis-á-vis Marlborough.

Her contribution was The Duke of M----h's Vindication. Swift writes of it, "Got a set of Examiners, and five pamphlets, which I have either written, or contributed to, except the best, which is the Vindication of the Duke of Marlborough; and is entirely of the author of the Atalantis" (Journal 2:390-91). This is Manley at her ironic best; the pamphlet mocks Marlborough in the form of a defense.

An example of Manley's pointed message can be seen in the following example:

> How seasonably did he [the Duke] decline King James's Service, when the Papists and Dissenters were united in Interests to destroy the Church? King James to whom the D. of M-- was ingaged by the highest Gratitude; he had saved his Life in the Gloucester Frigat, and Honour'd his Grace's Family so as to mingle his own Royal Blood with it. Did not the D. of M-- forgo the Interests of his Sister and her Children, his Nephews and Nieces, that he was so fond of before, for the Good of his own Country, and the Security of the Protestant Religion? (9)

This may seem mild to modern readers, but for staunch Tories, Marlborough's desertion of James was betrayal and could be only for

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self-interest.

Her attack is clearer for modern readers in the following passage in which she tweaks Marlborough for living in the new, beautiful, "stately" Blenheim while the queen is

> contented to take up her Residences in an old patch'd up Palace, during the Burthen of a heavy War, without once desiring to rebuild Whitehall, 'till by the Blessing of Peace her Subjects shall be capacitated to undergo the necessary Taxes. (15)

This pamphlet stirred up the Whigs enough for them to publish an answer the following year: The Duke of M---h's Vindication in Answer to a Pamphlet falsely so called.

The full title of Manley's next pamphlet practically gives its entire history: A True Relation of the Several Facts and Circumstances of the Intended Riot and Tumult on Queen Elizabeth's Birth-day (1711). As the title relates, there was no riot. The Tories were convinced that the Whigs would take advantage of the traditional parade and effigy burning held in honor of Queen Elizabeth's birthday by staging a riot and demonstration in support of Marlborough. In order to prevent the suspected riot, the Tories prevented the parade and seized the effigies, much to the chagrin of many Londoners. Most likely written to soothe the ruffled Londoners, the pamphlet basically describes what could have happened and discusses Whig intentions to prolong the war in order to line their pockets and regain power. Manley is unsparing in her attack:

> Truly, I think the Malice of that Party is Immortal, since not to be satiated with twenty three Years Plunder, the

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> Blood of so many Wretches, nor the immense Debt with which they have burthened us. Through the unexampled goodness of the Q—, and the lenity of the other Parts of the Legislature, they are suffered to sit down unmolested, to bask and revel in that Wealth they have so unjustly acquired; yet they pursue their Principles with unwearied Industry, club their Wit, Money, Politicks, towards restoring their Party to that power from Whence they are fallen; which since they find so difficult, they take care, by all methods, to disturb and vilify those who are in possession of it. (13-14)

In 1713 Abel Boyer attributed to Manley that year's The Honour and Prerogative of the Queen's Majesty Vindicated . . . in a letter from a Country Whig to Mr. Steele. The pamphlet is definitely the work of a Tory, no matter what the title claims, and the ironic stance is similar to that in the Duke of M--h's Vindication. The pamphlet is in the form of a letter from a "country Whig" taking Steele to task for being disloyal to the queen. In it, the author especially attacks The Guardian of August 7, 1713 for "bullying" Her Majesty.

Manley displays some of her mock irony in this pamphlet when she writes "Nor, Sir, could all the Party-writers of the Town enflame us, but we began to look upon them with the just Contempt which Incendiaries deserve" (8). Steele promptly answered this attack with his A Letter from an English Tory to his friend in Town. Chiefly occasioned by the several reflections on Mr. Steele's Guardian of August the seventh.

Manley's final pamphlet, which appeared on February 4, 1713/14,

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again tells its purpose in its title: A Modest Enquiry into the Reasons of the Joy Expressed by a Certain Sett of People, upon the Spreading of a Report of Her Majesty's Death. According to Herbert Davis, editor of Swift's Complete Prose, "we may assume that Swift contented himself with suggesting heads for the discourse, and did not write any of it" (8:xvi).

The pamphlet begins with in a question and answer format, wherein a foreigner is asking a Londoner the reasons for the joy at the queen's death. In a rather straightforward way, it is discovered that Anne was neither a tyrant, nor a bad ruler; in fact, she is compared favorably with the great Queen Elizabeth. The reasons for the Whiggish joy are then listed: "A Prospect of a new foreign war; a fair chance to a Civil war; the expectation of the monopoly of the Government; the hopes of having the Tories all hanged; and their consciousness that they ought to be so themselves" (195-96).

## CONCLUSION

Of all the women in this study, Manley is probably the one most often linked to Behn, and in many ways she is the daughter most like her literary mother. Like Behn she enjoyed literary fame and a reputation as a wit. Unfortunately she also shared Behn's notoriety, ill-health, and poverty. Posterity can't do anything about the two latter problems, but perhaps as we study Manley's works and assign her the more respectfable place in literary history which she deserves, something can be done about the former.

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## Notes

[1] Since the nineteenth century Manley has been mistakenly identified as Mary Delariviere Manley. But as Patricia Köster points out in her excellent essay "Delariviere Manley and the DNB: A Cautionary Tale About Following Black Sheep, with a Challenge to Catalogers," Eighteenth Century Life 3 (1977): 106-11, in every printed signature, and in the few manuscript letters, Manley consistently uses Delarivier or a variant of it. That is also how she is referred to in wills – hers and her father's and brother's. Köster suggests modernizing the spelling to Delariviere, but I agree with Fidelis Morgan's suggestion to use Manley's own spelling – Delarivier. (See Morgan, A Woman of No Character: An Autobiography of Mrs. Manley, London: Faber, 1986, 14-15.) I will only be using the Christian name Mary to refer to Delarivier when directly quoting.

[2] Novels attributed to Manley include Love Upon a Tick (Day Told 217), Vertue Rewarded, The Adventures of the Helvetian Hero (Köster "Introduction" ix), The Rival Mother and The Unhappy Lovers (Anderson "Prose Fiction" 237). The play is The Court Legacy.

[3] For an enlightening exploration of the effects of sexism on a woman writer's critical reputation, using Manley as an exemplar, see Delores Palomo, "A Woman Writer and the Scholars: A Review of Mary Manley's Reputation," Women and Literature 6.1 (Spring 1978): 36-46. While making a valid point about the sexism inherent in making an author's reputation, it also serves as an excellent bibliographic essay on Manley criticism.

[4] For biographical information on Manley see Paul Bunyan Anderson, "Mary de la Riviére Manley: A Cavalier's Daughter on Grub Street," Ph.D. diss., Harvard, 1931, and "Mistress Delariviere Manley's Biography," MP 33 (1936): 261-78. Also, Morgan, A Woman of No Character, which is a life of Mrs. Manley created out of Manley's own writings interspersed with Morgan's own research. While not strictly a scholarly work and marred by errors, it is quite interesting.

[5] Ballaster gives Sir Richard Manley, Comptroller for the Household of Prince Henry ("Introduction" vi), but Cornelius seems more likely, especially in light of the name of Delarivier's younger sister, Cornelia.

[6] Morgan argues for Roger who "must have been the eldest boy (assuming the customary naming of the first son after the father)" (Woman 37). She assumes that this child was dead by 1680, since Mrs. Manley and he were not mentioned when the family was stationed in Portsmouth in February of that year (Woman 37).

[7] Much as Delarivier says she hates her cousin, Morgan postulates that the two kept in contact throughout their lives. In Rivella, Delarivier does talk about an episode during which the two worked together, (see 2:808 ff) but Morgan adds a number of other parallels.

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John Manley and John Tilly (a later lover of Delarivier's) were attorneys for opposites sides in a famous law case; as a member of Parliament, John was on the committee to draw up an address on Guiscard's attempt on Harley's life, an event Delarivier wrote about; and John had "hinted" in Parliament that Marlborough was not the patriot he appeared to be, a theme in Delarivier's writing. Morgan concludes that the Whig government might have believed that John Manley was Delarivier's "inside source" for The New Atalantis (Morgan Woman 102-03, 152).

[8] For a discussion of the possible performance dates of The Female Wits see Constance Clark, Three Augustan Women Playwrights (New York, Lang, 1986) 289-90.

[9] Kendall discusses an undated letter from Lady Sarah Piers to Catharine Trotter which "reveals Piers' fear" that her poem for the collection may disappoint Manley. Kendall points out that this "supports the belief that Manley was in fact the editor of the volume" ("Theater" 124).

[10] According to Morgan, Tilly was ordered to pay £1000 to Thomas Richardson on March 2, 1702. But as early as 1697 he was fined "£500 down on due bond and £20 costs" (102). For fuller details see Morgan 101-03.

[11] For arguments for Manley as editor of The Female Wits see Morgan's introduction to The Female Tatler, and Paul Bunyan Anderson "The History and Authorship of Mrs. Crakenthorpe's Female Tatler," MP 28 (1929): 354-60. For essays supporting Baker's authorship, see Walter Graham, "Thomas Baker, Mrs. Manley, and The Female Tatler," MP 34 (1936-37): 267-72, and John Harrington Smith, "Thomas Baker and The Female Tatler," MP 49 (1951-52): 182-88. I found Graham and Smith's arguments more convincing, but there is much to support Morgan's assumption that Manley had a hand in the journal.

[12] She is the "only pamphleteer besides Arbuthnot whom Swift praises to Stella" (Köster "Humanism" 49).

[13] This has been taken to refer to her low character, but Palomo has interpreted Swift's comment as likely meaning that "she belonged to the Grub Street tribe: he found her more principled and competent than the usual hack writer" (39).

[14] For Steele's comments see The Guardian, ed. John Calhoun Stephens (Lexington, UP of Kentucky, 1982) nos. 53 & 63.

[15] In spite of the huge success of her novels, she couldn't have been making much money. Robert Adams Day explains the payment system for writers: while a play would earn from £50 to £100 plus the third night profits, and a long poem up to ten guineas (with a guinea worth 21 shillings, or £1 1s), a fictional work must have received between one and ten guineas, and closer to the lower end. There is nothing but

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anecdotal evidence as to what writers were paid before 1740, but Mary Davys said in 1700 she received three guineas for The Lady's Tale (Told 79-80). To give these figures some perspective, in 1711 an Oxfordshire schoolmaster was paid £25 per annum, while a schoolmistress received £10 10s. (Smith Reason's 210 n 19). Dr. Johnson calculated that a very frugal existence in London would cost £30 per annum per person.

[16] For detailed plot summaries of Manley's plays, see Clark's Three Augustan Playwrights, 150-79.

[17] Pearson calls it "the most explicitly feminist play for the commercial theater in the period" (195).

[18] According to Morgan, he had bought the play for £600 and contributed the prologue to the printed version as well, but I find that figure rather high for a play, especially by a playwright with Manley's poor record of stage success. I have not found any other corroboration for that figure.

[19] Steele, The Theater 26 [Mar 29 1720] qtd. in Clark 178.

[20] Pearson calls the play "a Trotterian tragedy of moral indecision," (192) and indeed the play echoes the plot devices of both The Unhappy Penitent (a jealous male rival ruins a woman's reputation through false letters) and Revolution of Sweden (a woman dressed as a man resolves one of the plot's entanglements).

[21] "A preliminary computer study reveals that under all the exclamation points the style of Mrs. Manley has some quantitative resemblance (o tempora) to that of Swift" (Köster "Introduction" xxii, xxviii n 26). And again, as "distinctive as Mrs. Manley seems when we read her scandals, she uses the same grammatical patterns as her greater rivals in the long satiric novel" (Köster "Words" 301). While grammar marks do not make literary masterpieces, the fact that two of Manley's political pamphlets were for many years attributed to Swift does say something about the similarities between their styles.

[22] "Extant records tend rather to support than to overthrow what Mrs. Manley says" (Köster "Introduction" xvii).

[23] For a detailed discussion of the attribution, see Patricia Köster's introduction to Manley's novels, x-xi.

[24] The preface appears in Eighteenth-Century British Novelists on the Novel, ed. George L. Barnett (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968) 22-27 and Prefaces to Fiction, intro Benjamin Boyce (Los Angeles: Augustan Reprint Society, 1952).

[25] References to the novels come from The Novels of Mary Delarivier Manley, ed. Patricia Köster, 2 vols. (Gainseville, FL, Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1971). Citations will consist of the volume number followed by the page number.

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[26] Critics have had much to say about Manley's choice of names. Delmar writes that the choice of Astrea "shows a marked deference" to Behn, for it seems that she's "used as an iconic mediator" between the earth and female authors (108). Ballaster says that Manley "reincarnates" Astrea "in order to authorize her own position of female satirist" (Seductive 114).

[27] This can also be the Tory Manley expressing that party's distrust of soldiers at this late date in the War of the Spanish Succession.

[28] Manley shows a good grasp of Byzantine history in this novel, for she uses parallel situations to illustrate the events of contemporary England, but she also admitted to some help. Köster cites Volume Four of Echard's Roman History (1704) and Anderson believes that she "drew heavily upon Bernard Connor's The History of Poland, in Several Letters to Persons of Quality (1698) for continental worthies, incidents, and local color" ("Introduction xxvii n 15; "Prose" 186).

[29] See Needham, "Tory Defender" 272.

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# Chapter Five

## Susanna Centlivre

Susanna Centlivre[1] was one of the leading comic dramatists of her day, and, like Behn, led a life which inspired legends. Or to be more technically accurate, her "life" is mostly legend. Well known to theater-goers and readers of her time, like the female wits she was often compared to Aphra Behn. The Female Tatler "rejoiced to see the inimitable Mrs. Behn so nearly revived" in her (140), and Biographia Dramatica reported that she may "justly" be "placed next to her predecessor in glory, the great Mrs. Behn" (100). As Behn had been in the seventeenth century, Centlivre was a person of some importance in the literary life of the early eighteenth century.[2] And because of Centlivre's reticence about her early life, legends supply her biography.

She wrote nineteen plays, three of which were extremely popular well into the nineteenth century: in the eighteenth century alone, The Wonder! had 232 verifiable London performances; A Bold Stoke for a Wife had 236, and The Busie Body had 475![3] She has even enjoyed major stage revivals in the twentieth century. In June 1954 A Bold Stroke for a Wife was produced at Questor's Theatre, Ealing, and in August of that year The Wonder! was revived at the Theatre Royal, Bristol, and filmed for British television. And as recently as 1993 The Artifice was revived at The Orange Tree Theatre, London, and The Basset-Table enjoyed a run, its first revival since its premiere in 1705, at the New End Theatre, Hampstead.[4]

Centlivre is definitely heir to Astrea's "vacant throne," for in

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terms of number of performances through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Centlivre even outpaces Behn. Her The Busy Body, A Bold Stroke for a Wife, and The Wonder! are the three most frequently performed plays written by a woman during that period. Behn follows in positions four and five with The Rover and The Emperor of the Moon, then Centlivre takes sixth place with The Gamester (Stanton 333). But while she was an extremely successful playwright, and the sheer number of her plays is high, her output in other genres was quite small. While there are over a dozen extant poems, and a number of letters in three contemporary collections, it seems that Centlivre never wrote prose such as Behn's narratives or translations. And of course, Behn's output of poetry fills over 360 pages in its modern edition. Centlivre is the closest heir in terms of stage success and output, but unlike Trotter and Manley, and to some extent Pix, it seems this "daughter of Behn" concentrated her creative energies on one genre.

During her own time Centlivre's literary reputation was mixed. There were those who, because of her sex, disliked her work and attacked it on that basis. There were others who attacked her on party principles. Centlivre was a staunch Whig and like Behn, allowed her political views to shine through in her writing. Even today, when an author's party affiliation and sex are no longer an issue when judging the literary merits of a work (one would like to think), one finds a mixed reaction to her works.[5]

Centlivre herself stated that the goal of comedy is to make audiences laugh, but she also included subtle lessons in her plays. According to conventional wisdom, she wrote only two exemplary comedies:

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the successful The Gamester, and its companion piece, the less popularly acclaimed The Basset-Table. These are the overtly exemplary plays, but Centlivre was an expert at writing covert lessons. For when one looks at all of her plays, one realizes that sixteen of the nineteen attacked forced marriage (or in two instances forced marriage to Christ, or the nunnery) or the institution of marriage as practiced by many of her contemporaries. And of the three remaining plays, The Perjur'd Husband is a domestic tragedy in which a man plans to commit bigamy; The Gamester is an attempt to reform card players; and Mar-plot is a sequel to The Busie Body, and the principal characters avoided forced marriages in the original. But unlike the (un)lucky Hellena who dies before the start of the sequel of Behn's The Rover, Isabinda lives long enough after her marriage for her husband's love to cool, so part of the play involves his intriguing with another and her winning him back.

In this covert message Centlivre is a direct descendant of Behn. Granted, forced marriage with parental tyranny over children was a stock stage situation, but Centlivre uses it in almost 85% of her plays. This may be because of her own feminism, but it also could be because parental tyranny serves as an excellent metaphor for governmental tyranny, or the power of the absolute monarch, something that to the Whig Centlivre was an anathema. In many cases her plays are also overtly political, teaching the lesson that a Tory government will always fail but that Whig liberty is the true English way. As with Behn, politics and feminism were tightly interwoven for Centlivre, and Whig principles of individual freedom, which will be discussed more fully below, seem a less schizophrenic match for feminism than Behn and

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Manley's Tory traditionalism.

Politics aside, she was obviously aware of her famous foremother. Centlivre's first foray into publishing was in the form of collections of letters exchanged with up and coming literary lights. The pen name she adopted for a number of these exchanges was "Astraea," the name traditionally associated with Behn. As we saw in the introduction, Centlivre was occasionally linked with Behn and Manley for her "lewdness," but most modern critics see her as milder in varying degrees.[6]

**Part 1 Biography**

In one way, Centlivre was very different from her model: she left very little in the way of biographical material, and the facts about her early years are so sketchy that it seems practically fruitless to attempt to reconstruct her life before her appearance in London around 1700.[6] There are five early biographies that later writers have drawn on, and each has some claim to veracity. The first is Giles Jacob's account in The Poetical Register (1719). As Jacob's authors usually had a hand in these sketches, and since this is the only biography which appeared in Centlivre's lifetime, it is often given much credit. Its account of her early life reads in part:

> This Gentlewoman, now living, is Daughter of one Mr. Freeman, late of Holbeach, in Lincolnshire, who married a Daughter of Mr. Marham, a Gentleman of good Estate at Lynn Regis, in the County of Norfolk. There was formerly an Estate in the Family of her Father; but he being a Dissenter, and a zealous Parliamentarian, was so very much persecuted at the Restoration, that he was necessitated to

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> fly into Ireland, and his Estate was confiscated: Nor was the Family of her Mother free from the Severities of those Times, they being likewise Parliamentarians. Her Education was in the Country; and her Father dying when she was but three Years of Age; and her Mother not living till she was twelve, what Improvements she has made, have been meerly by her own Industry and Application. She was married before the Age of Fifteen to a Nephew of Sir Stephen Fox. This Gentleman living with her but a Year, she afterwards married Mr. Carrol, an Officer in the Army: And survived him likewise, in the space of a Year and half. She is since married to Mr. Joseph Cent Livre, Yeoman to the Mouth to his present Majesty. She was inclin'd to Poetry when very Young, having compos'd a Song before she was Seven Years old. (31-2)

Since this account mentions Holbeach, many have taken it as her place of birth. Unfortunately, there are no extant birth records which satisfactorily apply to Susanna. Other sources list her birthplace as Ireland, more specifically Dublin.

The second account was Abel Boyer's obituary in The Political State of Great Britain in December 1723. Boyer knew Centlivre when she first came to London – he published the collections of letters she contributed to at the beginning of her career. Boyer's account contributes the information that her "Father's Name, if I mistake not, was Rawkins, her first Husband's, Carol. From a mean Parentage, and Education . . . she had at last so improved her natural Genius, by

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Reading and good Conversation, as to attempt to write for the Stage" (qtd in Sutherland "Progress" 169).

John Mottley is credited with writing the third account in <u>A List of All the Dramatic Authors</u> which was appended to Thomas Whincop's <u>Scanderberg</u> (1747). Mottley claims to have helped Centlivre with <u>A Bold Stroke for a Wife</u>, and it is most likely that he knew her. He, though, reverses the order of her parents' deaths.

Another account by someone who probably knew Centlivre was William Rufus Chetwood's <u>The British Theatre</u>, published in Dublin in 1750. Chetwood had been a prompter at the Drury-Lane during Centlivre's heyday, as well as a bookseller and an author himself. His is the first biography to list an age for Centlivre; according to him she was fifty-six when she died. The final, and least authenticated account, was the brief "Life," really more of a biographical sketch, which prefaced the 1760 edition of her works. Supposedly written by a woman who knew Centlivre, it claims that Centlivre was forty-five when she died. Therefore, the termini for Centlivre's date of birth are 1667 and 1678. I would tend to agree with a later date, since it seems hard to imagine a woman of Centlivre's talents waiting until she was thirty-three to arrive in the capital.

The battling names of Freeman and Rawkins need to be sorted out as well. Rawkins is not just a name which appears out of nowhere. Her name on the marriage license for Joseph's and Susanna's wedding reads: "Susannah Caroll als Rawkins" (Bowyer 92). Sutherland argues that she may have been the illegitimate child of Freeman, and Rawkins the "mean" family to whom she was farmed out to be raised (169). The

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Freeman/Holbeach connection is important as well, though, since Susanna returned to the area a number of times after she married Centlivre. The consensus is that she had family in the area. Based on a letter to Susanna from Farquhar dated August 6, 1700, John H. Mackenzie argues that Rawkins was yet another husband:

> We are got over all Reserves now, and allow one another freedom of Speech: I'll therefore frankly confess that since you acknowledge you've a Husband, and have had sometime, you appear more a mistress to me then ever you did. (387)

Since in 1700 Centlivre was publishing under the name Carroll, the name of the young soldier who died supposedly in a duel less than eighteenth months after their marriage, many critics have taken "Farquhar's husband" as a literary fiction Susanna created to either force some distance between herself and the amorous Farquhar, or a device she used to heighten the suspense of their literary chase.

Whatever the young woman's birth name, place and date were, and whatever her antecedents, she arrived in London publishing under Carroll's name. Some have also argued that Susanna had a son by Carroll because of a court case involving a minor child, but Mackenzie argues against this, and I tend to agree. Because Joseph Centlivre's will mentions his children, we know that she was step-mother to his children, but no where is there evidence of a child of her own.[8]

The biographies, and legend, also mention a brief stay at Cambridge – in male dress and as the lover of the student Anthony Hammond, future MP and minor poet – and a stint as a strolling actress

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specializing in breeches parts. It is said that it is as an actress that she caught the eye of Joseph Centlivre, while playing Alexander the Great at Windsor during a brief return to the boards after her literary career had begun (Sutherland "Progress" 172).

Centlivre's life begins to be documentable in 1700. She first appears in print in March of that year in Abel Boyer's Familiar and Courtly Letters. Her first play, the tragi-comedy The Perjur'd Husband, was performed at the Drury Lane in the fall and published in October. On the cover of the play the author was listed as S. Carroll, but the dedication was signed Susanna Carroll.[9]

It is also argued that Centlivre contributed to that year's The Nine Muses, the elegies for Dryden, as "Mrs. D.E." (Bowyer 32-33), but that has never been proved. It is unlikely that she would sign herself as "Mrs. D.E." since she was already starting to create a name for herself as "Mrs. S.C.," but there seems to be a feeling that since all the other leading female poets contributed, including her friends Mary Pix and Sarah Fyge Egerton, she must have contributed as well. This argument is totally illogical, but it is certain that she contributed to the elegies collected in Musarum Lacrymae for a later poet laureate, her friend Nicholas Rowe. Her contribution, "A Pastoral to the Honoured Memory of Mr. Rowe" was included in the 1733 edition of Rowe's miscellaneous works.

In 1701 and 1702, Centlivre returned to epistolary collections with her inclusion in Familiar and Courtly Letters, Vol. II, and Letters of Wit, Politics, and Morality.[10] In the summer of 1702, her second play, The Beau's Duel, was produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields, and this

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was also published under her name. Her third play, The Stolen Heiress, which opened on December 31st of that year at the same theater, was the first to attempt to hide her sex. Her play of 1703, Love's Contrivance, produced at the Drury Lane June 4, went one step further. It was published with the preface signed "R.M." This play has some importance for Centlivre scholars, since its preface is where she gives her very pragmatic view on current dramatic critical theory. She pays lip service to Aristotle, but follows the dictates of Collier:

> The Criticks cavil most about Decorums, and crie up Aristotle's Rules as the most essential part of the Play; I own they are in the right of it, yet I dare venture a Wager they'll never persuade the Town to be of their Opinion, which relishes nothing so well as Humour lightly tost up with Wit, and drest with Modesty and Air. And I believe Mr. Rich will own, he got more by the Trip to Jubilee, with all its Irregularities, than by the most Uniform piece the Stage cou'd boast of e're since. I do not say this by way of condemning the Unity of Time, Place, and Action; quite contrary, for I think them the greatest Beauties of a Dramatick Poem; but since the other way of writing pleases full as well, and gives the Poet a larger Scope of Fancy, and with less Trouble, Care, and Pains, serves his and the Players End, why shou'd a man torture, and wrack his Brain for what will be of no Advantage to him . . . . The following Poem I think has nothing can disoblige the nicest Ear; and tho' I did not observe the Rules of Drama, I took

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> peculiar Care to dress my Thoughts in such Modest Stile, that it might not give Offense to any. (sig. A3)

Her first popular success, The Gamester, opened in Lincoln's Inn Fields in January 1704/5, and enjoyed an initial run of thirteen nights (Baker 99) This was followed by the similarly-themed The Basset-Table at the rival Drury Lane in November, advertised as "By the author of The Gamester." Unfortunately, Centlivre was unable to duplicate The Gamester's success, and The Basset-Table had a run of only four nights.

Her next play, Love at a Venture, never reached the London boards. It made its debut in Bath in 1706, acted by the Duke of Grafton's Men. (This troupe is the one in which Susanna was supposed to have been acting with when she met Joseph.) The play was published in London as "By the Author of The Gamester." Later that year The Platonick Lady was produced at the Queen's Theatre, advertised as written by the author of The Gamester and Love's Contrivance. It ran for a modest four nights.

On April 23, 1707 Susanna married the widower Joseph Centlivre of the parish of St. James, Westminster, at St. Bene't Church. Joseph was slightingly called a cook by Alexander Pope, his wife's enemy, but his true title was Yeoman of the Mouth to Queen Anne, a position he had also held under King William and continued to hold under King George.[11] Bateson calls Joseph a Huguenot refugee (62), and his name is most definitely French, but I haven't seen him called a refugee anywhere else. One must wonder, in light of Susanna's constant hatred for the French, how these two worked out their differences if Joseph was a French refugee, Huguenot or no.

Centlivre's next play did not appear for two years, but it was

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worth the wait. Her most popular play, The Busie Body, was first produced at the Drury Lane on May 12, 1709. Centlivre finally returned to publishing under her own name, perhaps prompted by the play's great success and the notice it received in The Tatler. All of her subsequent plays were published bearing her name. Seven months later The Man's Bewitched opened at the Queen's Theatre to a disappointing three-night run.

It was during 1709 that Centlivre was involved, if only against her wishes, with The Female Tatler. Number 69, dated December 12-14, was devoted to the tale of a visit by Centlivre to the society of ladies who purportedly wrote the paper. During the course of the visit, the women discussed The Man's Bewitched, which had opened that day, and then went on to a notorious bit of backstage gossiping, attributed to Centlivre, which angered the actors in the company so much that, according to Centlivre's version of the tale, they precipitously ended her play's run. The bit that so angered the actors was Centlivre's relation to the society that "'twas much easier to write a play than to get it represented, that their [the actors'] factions and divisions were so great they seldom continued in the same mind two hours together. They treated her (though a woman) in the masculine gender, as they do all authors, with wrangling and confusion." Then after relating more of Centlivre's complaints, the anonymous author concludes that Centlivre "has condescension to pass over the affronts of a set of people who have it not in their natures to be grateful to their supporters" (140-41). Centlivre attempted to clear herself in the preface to the published version of The Man's Betwitch'd by categorically denying that she had

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anything to do with the piece. As she so succinctly put it, "Tho' Vanity is said to be the darling Vice of Womankind; yet nothing but an Idiot would express themselves so openly." She gives two reasons why neither she nor any of her friends could be responsible for the piece; first, it was too grossly flattering an account of herself; and second, anyone would immediately realize the damage it would do to her professionally by alienating those responsible for presenting her plays. She adds that she had always been treated well by those associated with the theatre, until the publication of the fatal paper.

This incident has caused some critics to argue that Centlivre was a member of the "society of ladies" which constituted the editorial board of The Female Tatler.[12] As discussed in chapter four, Manley and Baker are the two leading contenders for editorship, with Baker having the slightly better argument. Whether or not she was editor, there is good evidence that Manley was at least associated with the journal. By the winter of 1709 Manley had already published Queen Zarah and the two volumes of The New Atalantis, the second of which purportedly attacked Centlivre (Ballaster 99). There was no way that these two virulent party women of opposing parties would be working together by this time. Indeed, this "attack" on Centlivre points to Manley, or at least to a Tory's influence.

In March of the following year, the one-act farce A Bickerstaff's Burying ran for three nights at Drury Lane, and in December Marplot, the sequel to The Busie Body, enjoyed a six-night run at the same theater. On January 19, 1712/3 The Perplexed Lovers opened at the Drury Lane for a scant three nights, which many believed was due to party politics.

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The epilogue was perceived as overenthusiastic support of Marlborough (discussed below).

Centlivre's publication for 1713 consisted of a poem, The Masquerade, published on September 3. In April 1714 her next big hit, The Wonder!, was staged. Queen Anne died on August 1 of that year, and the staunch Whig Centlivre celebrated with the publication of three poems: "A Poem Humbly Presented to His Most Sacred Majesty," "To Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales," and "An Epistle to Mrs. Wallup," a lady-in-waiting to the new Queen.

In June 1715 Centlivre published two unacted farces: The Gotham Election and A Wife Well Managed. They were denied licenses by the Lord Chamberlain for their political content, but Centlivre believed that they should be printed so that people could judge for themselves whether the plays were unfair. The next year, the political tragedy, The Cruel Gift was acted at the Drury Lane for a successful six-night run in December. For 1716, Centlivre's output was again limited to poetry: "Upon the Bells ringing at St. Martin's in the Fields, on St. George's Day 1706, Being the Anniversary of Queen Anne's Coronation," "Ode to Hygeia," and "The Patriots."

In 1717 Centlivre's only publication was the poem Epistle to the King of Sweden in March, but in January she was satirized as "Phoebe Clinket" in John Gay, John Arbuthnot, and Pope's Three Hours After Marriage, which was staged at the Drury Lane and enjoyed a "moderately successful" seven-night run (Steensma 94). While it has long been argued that Clinket was actually an attack on the Countess of Winchilsea, I am more convinced of the counter-argument that she is

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meant to be Centlivre.[10] Besides the fact that the countess was a friend of Pope's and "apparently was not bothered by the play" (Steensma 95), this was not Pope's first attack on Centlivre. In 1716 he had attacked her in two pamphlets: Revenge by Poison on the Body of Mr. Edmund Curll and its sequel The Most Deplorable Condition of Mr. Edmund Curll (Bateson 63). This earlier attack was in retaliation for an anti-Catholic pamphlet, The Catholic Poet, which Pope believed Centlivre had written, but according to Curll, she was not the author (Bowyer 193). Pope would later attack her as a dull poet in Book 2 of The Dunciad.[13] Arbuthnot, one of the important Tory writers of the earlier pamphlet wars, would have been just as happy to attack a vocal Whig as would the Tory playwright Gay.

Phoebe, who lives with her uncle, a physician, has her maid carry a writing desk on her back so that a poetic thought is never lost. In the stage directions, we are told that her head dress is stained with ink and pens are stuck in her hair (Gay 214). According to her uncle, "the poor Girl has a Procidence of the Pineal Gland, which has occasioned a Rupture in her Understanding. I took her into my House to regulate my Oeconomy; but instead of Puddings, she makes Pastorals; or when she should be raising Paste, is raising some Ghost in a new Tragedy" (1.1.62-66).[12] The ghost reference very likely refers to The Man's Bewitched, which contains a famous ghost scene, and as mentioned above, was a notorious play for Centlivre.

Phoebe has difficulty getting her plays staged, and we see a scene of her play being cut to shreds by the acting company. This is too much for her to bear and she cries out "I'm butcher'd, I'm massacred. For

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Mercy's sake! murder, murder! ah! [faints" (1.1.547-49). This scandal in his home so enrages her uncle that he throws all of her papers into the fire. She is devastated:

> **Clinket**: Ah! I am an undone woman.
>
> **Plotwell**: Has he burnt any Bank-Bills, or a new Mechlen Head-Dress?
>
> **Clinket**: My Works! my Works!
>
> **1st Player**: Has he destroy'd the Writings of an Estate, or your Billet-Doux?
>
> **Clinket**: A Pindarick Ode! five Similes! and half an Epilogue!
>
> **2nd Player**: Has he thrown a new Fan, or your Pearl Necklace into the Flames?
>
> **Clinket**: Worse, worse! The tag of the Acts of a new Comedy! a Prologue sent by a Person of Quality! three Copies of recommendatory Verses! and two Greek Mottos! (1.1.561-73)

This passage is illuminating, for it shows what the male authors think are appropriate items for women to despair at the loss of: money, jewels, clothes. That a woman would despair the loss of her intellectual property is so beyond their ken that the mere idea is ridiculous. Of course, Clinket is a ridiculous character as drawn by these three males, but as with the characters in The Female Wits, the male satire of writing women says more about the men who write it than the women they satirize. Would this scene be ridiculous if a male's intellectual property had been destroyed? Of course, there had been

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male buffoons and poetasters attacked on stage, but to the contemporary audience, the fact that Clinket was a woman added to the fun.

In 1718 A Bold Stroke for a Wife began a successful six-day run at Lincoln's Inn Fields. This play has been called Centlivre's masterpiece, and indeed, it is an excellent example of both humors comedy and intrigue comedy. The following year Centlivre was seriously ill and published nothing. By July 1720 she had recovered enough to publish "A Woman's Case," a humorous poem to Charles Joye, Deputy-Governor of the South Sea Company, asking for shares as a reward for service to the Whigs. The poem is the most overtly autobiographical piece she left behind, and in it she gives glimpses of what Joseph Centlivre thought of his political playwright wife's actions:

> This made Spouse stare like any Spectre,
> And as he was my Head – to hector.
> Madam, said he, with surly Air,
> You've manag'd finely this Affair;
> Pox take your Schemes, your Wit, your Plays,
> I'm bound to curse 'em all my Days:
> If out, I'm by your Scribbling turn'd,
> I wish your Plays and you were burn'd.
> * * *
> But oh! my Spouse who understands
> Nought to be good, but Bills and Bonds,
> The ready Cash, or fruitful Lands,
> Begins new Quarrels ev'ry Day,
> And frights my dear-lov'd Muse away:

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Nor Day, nor Night I know no Ease,
Accosted still with Words like these.
Deuce take your scribling Vein, quoth he,
What did it ever get for me?
Two Years you take a Play to Write,
And I scarce get my Coffee by't.
* * *
But from your boasted Friends I see
Small Benefit accrues to me:
I hold my Place indeed, 'tis true;
But I well hoped to Rise by You.

(qtd in Bowyer 227-29)

Of course Centlivre may have been exaggerating, since the entire poem has a humorous tone, but one must wonder what Joseph made of his wife and her sometimes dangerous politics.

Centlivre most probably wrote a series of five religious tracts for The Weekly Journal during September and October. These cover subjects such as the true church; religion and liberty; penance and holydays; and the High Church and the hypocrisy of its priests, subjects which certainly drew her attention in her plays (Bowyer 231-32). The tracts are signed "S.C.", and presented as a man's, but Anderson identifies them as Centlivre's ("Innocence" 375 n 32). In 1722 her final play, The Artifice opened at the Drury Lane on October 2 for a disappointing three-night run.

Centlivre died December 1, 1723, and is buried at St. Paul's, Covent Garden.

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During her lifetime, Centlivre was a friend of many of the Whig writers: George Farquhar was an early friend, as was Nicholas Rowe, and Richard Steele was a friend and patron who praised her plays in his influential journal The Tatler. As was noted in the earlier chapter on Pix, these two playwrights were also close.

We know that Centlivre was at least acquainted with the other two "Female Wits," but she eventually fell out with Manley over politics and by 1709 Trotter had removed herself from the literary scene. Sarah Fyge Egerton was also an acquaintance, and Centlivre contributed complimentary verses for a volume of Egerton's work. The poem places Centlivre firmly in the feminist camp:

> Thou Champion of our Sex go on and Show,
> Ambitious Man what Womankind can do:
> In vain they boast of large Scholastick Rules,
> Their Skill in Arts and Labour in the Schools.
> What various Tongues and Languages acquir'd,
> How fam'd for Policy, for Wit admir'd,
> Their solid Judgment in Philosophy,
> The Metaphysicks, Truths, and Poetry,
> Since here they'll find themselves outdone by thee.
>
> (qtd in Bowyer 67)

She also had close friendships with Anne Oldfield and Robert Wilks, who acted in most of her plays and originated the roles of some of her best characters, including Violante and Don Felix in The Wonder! and Lady Reveller and Sir James Courtly in The Basset-Table. It is Oldfield who lent Centlivre Fontanelle's Plurality of Worlds, a book

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which Centlivre had used in the creation of one of her most striking characters, the scientist Valeria (Bowyer 149-50).

Centlivre also did well from her dedicatees in gifts of money and goods. No doubt due to her loyalty to the Hanoverian line, she received gifts from both George I and the Prince of Wales, later George II (Frushell "Introduction" xcvi). The royal family also requested a number of command performances of her plays: the Prince of Wales commanded _The Wonder!_ on December 16, 1714, and _The Cruel Gift_ on May 3, 1717 (Lock _Centlivre_ 24-25), and _The Busie Body_ twice: October 22 and 23, 1717; and the king commanded a performance on December 14, 1719, and another as a benefit for Centlivre in March 17, 1720 (Bowyer 105).

Thanks to John Mottley's biography, we have a good idea of the rewards she received from dedicatees. Some examples of the monetary gifts she received include twenty guineas from James Craggs, Secretary of War under George I, the dedicatee of _The Gotham Election_; forty guineas from the Earl of Portland, the dedicatee of _Mar-plot_; and a diamond ring from Eustace Budgell, a minor poet and a cousin of Addison's, the dedicatee of _The Cruel Gift_ (Kendall "Theater" 113). She also received twenty guineas from James Craggs, Cofferer to the Prince of Wales and an MP, dedicatee of _A Wife Well Manag'd_ (Frushell "Introduction" cxii-cxiii n 129).

An interesting footnote to Centlivre's dedications is that this feminist and pioneering playwright never dedicated a work to a woman, the only female playwright of the period not to do so. One wonders: was it because men traditionally controlled the purse strings and were therefore in a better position to reward a writer with funds? Or was

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there a deeper, more alarming reason stemming from guilt for attempting the male prerogative and a need for approval from representatives of the sex? I believe it was the former. The ever-practical Centlivre knew on which side the bread was buttered. Her aim was to make money, as evidenced by the pride she took in the gifts she received, and she was shrewd enough to ensure the best return for her efforts.

As for the more traditional and more reliable sources of income, F. P. Lock hazards some "guesstimates" for Centlivre's play proceeds. His figures are "£10 from publication, £10 from the dedicatee [a figure we have already seen is erroneous], and £40 from each benefit night. In 1698 Colley Cibber made about £114, £64, and £23 from each of his three benefit performances of Woman's Wit . . . It is not likely that Centlivre's receipts were on this scale before The Wonder, if at all" (Centlivre 136 n 21). The results from benefit nights varied greatly, but from The Gamester on Centlivre could be pretty well assured of at least a third night, and she always made something on publication rights. In contrast, occasionally a dedicatee would fail to respond in the expected manner.

## Part 2 The Works

Through the past three hundred years, Centlivre has had a varied reputation for her skill as a playwright. Baker's Biographia Dramatica explains the reason:

> it is no very easy thing to estimate her [Centlivre's] rank. It must be allowed, that her plays do not abound with wit, and that the language of them is sometimes even poor, enervate, incorrect, and puerile; but then her plots are

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> busy and well conducted, and her characters in general natural and well marked. But as plot and character are undoubtedly the body and soul of comedy; and language and wit, at best, the clothing and external ornament; it is certainly less excusable to show a deficiency in the former than in the latter. And the success of some of Mrs. Centlivre's plays plainly evinces, that the first will strike the minds of an audience more powerfully than the last (99).

The author then goes on to compare the success of The Busie Body, which is full of stage business, but "which all the players had decried before its appearance," with the failure of Congreve's The Way of the World, "which perhaps contains more true intrinsic wit, and unexceptionable accuracy of language, than any dramatic piece ever written" (99). This seems to have been the problem for Centlivre's literary reputation throughout her plays' critical histories, and this is a fair analysis of her works: it's the paradox which has plagued her reputation. What makes her a valuable stage writer are the items least valued by those in the field of literature; and what is valued by students of literature is what is lacking in her plays. Fortunately, literatary scholars are beginning to delve further into Centlivre's works, and in some cases are applying new standards.

Many critics have pointed out that in Centlivre, whose works operate almost as a barometer of public taste for the stage, we see a movement towards the sentimental. She obviously heeded Collier's call for reform, as did any playwright who expected to succeed on the

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eighteenth-century stage, so like her early mentor Pix, another proponent of reform, she was able manipulate her intrigues so that the participants are free from guilt.

Centlivre's interest in the institution of marriage was far from traditional. While Centlivre follows Behn in showing happy marriages to be those between intellectual equals who, between the two, have a comfortable income, in several cases, minor characters who are self-supporting women often choose not to marry. Lucy in The Perjur'd Husband, Mrs. Plotwell in The Beau's Duel, Mrs. Alpiew in The Basset-Table, Scentwell in The Busie Body, Flora in The Wonder, and Patch in Love at a Venture all reject offered marriage or remain unmarried by choice. More interesting is that most of these are servants. Of the preceding list all but Mrs. Plotwell are lady's maids. Lucy is an anomaly since she has been able to earn herself an independent living through her schemes, but for the rest, it is intriguing that Centlivre would have her serving women prefer a life in service to a hearth and home of their own. This choice on the women's parts reflects the realities of marriage during this period. As a lady's maid, unless she got fired, a woman was assured of a safe and comfortable home, free from the vagaries of male behavior and the rigors of childbirth, the latter a real threat to women's health during this period.[16] The plotting servants are important devices in intrigue plays, and a number of excellent characters were created during this period, but Centlivre's stand out: they are shrewd, self-reliant, and usually self-protective, though willing to hazard dangers for their mistress's, or master's, well-being. It says something rather negative about marriage,

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therefore, when these intelligent and self-serving characters refuse honorable offers of marriage.

But once her characters were married, Centlivre gave fewer options for escape than had Behn. There were no easy divorces or technicalities to free an unhappy woman. It is only the daughters who are allowed to escape arbitrary paternal power.

Before moving on to the plays and poetry, I would like to briefly discuss her early epistolary work.[17] In 1700, she published her letters about her journey to Exon. In a mildly satiric voice, Centlivre describes her rustic travel companions: "a drunken Cornish justice of the peace, a sleeping barrister, an impertinent attorney's clerk, a tailor who had trusted his clients too far, and an arrogant valet to a man who had been elected to Parliament but whose election had been disputed" (Bowyer 18).

But what is interesting about Centlivre's letters are the brief insights they give into her psyche. Of course, when she decided to have the letters published, they were no doubt planned and polished to the last detail, but her feminism, and occasionally her exasperation with the entire male sex, is allowed to show through.

In the collection of 1700 Centlivre is teased by her male correspondent for being in love with a poet instead of a rich man. She answers him:

> Cou'd I value a Man upon his Fortune, I shou'd condescend to Converse with a _Fool_ . . . my Conversation with the _Sons_ of the _Muses_ is purely for my Diversion . . . You propose a little _Mony_, and a _little Wit_; but I scorn to be beholding

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> to any Man for the former, and the latter I have already, without the Arrogance of <u>Riches</u>, and the ill Manners of <u>Vanity</u>. (qtd in Bowyer 16-17)

In a letter in the Astraea/Celadon exhange (her choice of pseudonym is an obvious reference to Behn) to a man who plans to woo her, she echoes Behn's identification with the masculine when she warns that she will not use false flattery and enjoins him to do the same, for "I am not so much of a Woman as to love to be flatter'd" (qtd in Bowyer 20). Several letters later Astraea has discovered that Celadon has a mistress named Chloe. Her letter to him following the discovery is an emphatic statement of her disgust with him and all men:

> Your whole Sex is scarcely worth the trouble I have given myself about you . . . . I had the curiosity to see if a man of sence could be guilty of the same errors the common stamp of Men are; and now I am convinced that there's no more difference in the honour of Mankind, relating to our Sex, than there is between the King and the Beggar in the Grave. (qtd in Bowyer 20)

Then in a plot twist worthy of Behn, Chloe learns of Astraea and offers to resign Celadon to her rival. Astraea faults Celadon, but is attracted by Chloe, and the two women arrange a meeting. However, the women never meet, for Chloe leaves the City, and the correspondence drifts in another direction. One can only wonder what would have happened had Chloe not left London.

Centlivre's foray into prose fiction didn't last long, for her first play was staged in 1700, shortly after this collection appeared.

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Except for the letters published the following year and a small amount of political writing later in her career, most of her writing energies were focused on her plays and poetry. It didn't take very long for Centlivre's Whig values to make themselves evident. As the listing in Biographia Dramatica notes, Whiggism "breathes even in many of her dramatic pieces" (99). Centlivre never stated outright that she was a Whig; she preferred to term herself a "patriot." In fact, she is not above earning a laugh at the expense of her party. In The Gamester, the title character, Valere, bemoans the fact that his father will "rail as heartily against Gaming as the Whigs against Plays" (1.6).[18] The closest she ever came to declaring her party in print was in the preface to The Perplex'd Lovers at the late date of 1712.[19] She could not have chosen a more professionally dangerous time to side with the Whigs – at the height of Tory power and in the aftermath of their campaign to bring down Marlborough – and in her choice she proves her loyalty. At first she claims not to know the difference between Whigs and Tories, but continues:

> if the Desire to see my Country secur'd from the Romish Yoke, and flourish by a Firm, Lasting Honourable Peace, to the Glory of the best of Queens, who deservedly holds the Ballance of all Europe, be a Whig, then I am one, else not.

Centlivre attempted to avoid openly engaging in party politics by begging the question. On the subjects of religion and politics, Centlivre appeals to readers through patriotism, which to her was anything the Whig party stood for and the Tory pary opposed. While she avoided calling herself a Whig, Tories, Roman Catholics, the French, and

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Dissenters were often the butt of her comedy. Once the War of the Spanish Succession began, and especially when the Tories began to call for its early end, pacifists joined the list.

While we have already looked at the Whig tendencies in the works of Trotter and Pix, Centlivre is much more overt in her politics, and Whig values play a much more important role in her plays than in their works, so perhaps a brief discussion of the Whig party and its theory is in order at this juncture. As H.T. Dickinson explains in his essay "Whiggism in the Eighteenth Century," Whigs never "laid down a precise rule of conduct for all politicians at all times," but Whiggism was a "fairly coherent body of attitudes, prejudices and principles." Fortunately for our purposes here, Whigs were very coherent and well organized during Queen Anne's reign (29). To reduce it to basic terms, Whigs supported the right to life, liberty, and property, but in a limited sense (see 31 ff). They by no means supported universal suffrage, and the ideal of one man-one vote was anathema as well.

> The Whigs regarded both absolute monarchy and a democratic republic as inimical to that political and social order which they believed was natural and best suited to England . . . Whiggism was opposed to all the fundamental tenets of the Tory theory of order: namely absolute monarchy, divine right, indefeasible hereditary succession, non-resistance and passive obedience. Whigs recognized the need for an absolute and irresistible authority in the state, but they refused to confer such authority on a single magistrate.
> 
> * * *

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> . . . since the monarch existed for the benefit of his subjects and not vice-versa, and since all governments were man-made and not specifically ordained by God, no ruler could claim his title by divine right. Rulers could govern only with the consent of the people. (30)

Because they valued liberty, most Whigs were tolerant of the Protestant Dissenters, but because it was generally believed that Roman Catholics supported a Stuart restoration, they were fair game for political and personal attacks, as is amply illustrated in Centlivre's works.

Dickinson also notes that it "became a commonly expressed Whig maxim that power always follows property" and that property did not always mean land, but moveable goods as well (33). This maxim makes one wonder about the attraction Whiggism had for Centlivre in light of the pride she took in the goods her writings earned her. Conversely, the pride in her possessions could also have been an outward manifestation of her Whig principles. We are told that she came from a Parliamentarian family, thereby being prone to Whiggism, but there is nothing concrete which supports that story. This fact may have been created by Centlivre herself or merely extrapolated by others based on her vehement political views. Or it simply could be true. If it were, it was certainly no good to her in the London of 1700. But the acquisition of personal power would have a very definite attraction for this feminist writer. We know that no matter what her station at birth, she was born to be powerless in the eyes of the world. And surely, when she arrived in London she was devoid of traditional power: a female,

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most likely an orphan, rather poorly educated, and by all indications financially poor as well. But she chose to enter the most public of arenas in the literary world, and she did not allow early disappointments to stop her. She kept on going until she gained a substantial measure of power in the theater world in terms of getting her work produced, and from 1709 on, when she finally was able to publish under her own name, she was a playwright to be reckoned with. For Centlivre, the wealth she was so proud of was more than just a measure of her worldly worth. It was a tangible symbol of an intangible.

As with Behn's poetry, a perusal of some of Centlivre's titles proclaim her Whig stance: "A Poem Humbly Presented to His Most Sacred Majesty George, King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland. Upon His Ascension to the Throne;" "To Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales"; "Invocation to Juno Lucina for the Safe Delivery of Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales"; and "These Verses were Writ on King George's Birth-Day . . . And Sent to the Ringers while the Bells were ringing at Holbeach in Lincolnshire."

And like Behn, Centlivre allowed herself to express her political beliefs in her poetry. The second stanza of "These Verses were writ on King George's Birth-Day" is a bit more scatological than one would expect from verses written in honor of such an occasion:

Believe me, Lads, the High-Church Zeal
Is like the Jack-Daws noisy Peal,
  When perch'd up high on Steeple,
Who never to the Church did good,

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But only soil and dawb the Wood,

An sh-t upon the Steeple.

(qtd in Frushell "Introduction" cxiv n 139)

In the published version of her politically troubled play The Perplexed Lovers (1712), discussed below, Centlivre included the laudatory poem "To His Illustrious Highness Prince Eugene of Savoy" praising the allied leader's role in the War of the Spanish Succession. At a time when to support the war was to support the ousted Whigs, and to praise the disgraced Marlborough was a political misstep, Centlivre had the fortitude to write:

Eugene and Marlbrô, Names to Europe dear,

True Heroes born, and Brothers of the War,

Their innate Worth immortal Life shall give,

And make their Fame in spight of Envy, Live,

* * *

Haste Britons, haste, your choicest Youth prepare

To meet, and entertain this God of War;

From him, and Marlbrô, let your Soldiers take

Such bright Examples as true Heroes make.

* * *

And ANNA's Court appear'd, to welcome Great Eugene.

Foremost in Worth, did Graceful Marlbrô stand,

Whose Wondrous Conduct sav'd the British Land,

And Europe's Ballance fix'd in ANNA's Hand.

(2:57-8)

Like her literary foremother, Centlivre was prone to hyperbole

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when writing of her beloved royal family. In her "Epistle to Mrs. Wallop, Now in the Train of her Highness the Princess of Wales," she gives this overblown account of George's ultimate arrival in London:

> Madam, what *Muse* can speak, what *Pen* display
> *Britannia's* Pomp upon that happy *Day*,
> When Royal *George* our *City* dain'd to Grace,
> And from impending Slav'ry *freed* her Race?
> His grateful Subjects round his Chariot hung,
> Long live the *King* was heard from ev'ry Tongue;
> Transporting Raptures all their Senses employ,
> And Babes unborn, by Instinct leap'd for Joy;
> Ev'n those whom Death stood ready to release,
> Blest *the* Deliverer, and dy'd in Peace.
>
> (qtd in Frushell "Introduction" xlviii)

Towards the end of her life, in the poem "A Woman's Case," Centlivre wryly remembers the domestic problems her outspoken Whiggishness caused:

> To GEORGE of *Wales* I Dedicated,
> Tho' then at Court I knew him Hated.
> *Steele* was then in Reputation
> With all true Lovers of my Nation:
> Yet spight of *Steele's* Advice I did it;
> Nay tho' my Husband's Place forbid it;
> For he these Forty Years had been
> The Servant to a King or Queen:
> Nor will I here the Truth dissemble;

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This Action made his Post to Tremble;
And he had surely been turn'd out
Had not good Fortune wheel'd about.

(qtd in Bowyer 153)

In general, Centlivre's Whiggism often took subtle forms and affected many aspects of her writing. Centlivre's romantic hero of choice is often a soldier, not the more conventional upper-class wit. A soldier-hero was a fine choice in the earlier part of Centlivre's career. When England joined the War of the Spanish Succession in 1702 there was a wave of patriotic fervor, but within two years this began to wane in some of the population. From the winter of 1704-05 on, "enthusiasm for them [Marlborough and Godolphin] and for the war increasingly implies Whiggism" (Loftis 39).

Her first play is apolitical, but by her second, The Beau's Duel (1702), she began to allow herself Whiggish notes cloaked in a traditional form: a daughter overthrows her tyrannical father to marry the man she loves – who in this case happens to be a colonel. Later that year she continues this theme in The Stol'n Heiress. This time, two tyrannical fathers are over overthrown, the brothers Gravello and Larich. And even more pointedly, unjust law is exposed, as are the tyrannical tendencies of Count Pirro, a nephew to the Governor who plans to use his position to further his personal goals, namely, marriage to an heiress. In this play, Centlivre uses pointed language to underscore the fathers' treacheries. Gravello says of his daughter: "Ha! not relish it! [the marriage he has arranged for her] has she any other Tast but mine, or shall she dare to wish ought that may contradict my purpose

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-" he is then cut off by the thought that perhaps his daughter does have an independent thought. This makes him so angry that he can barely contain himself (1:3). Later, when discussing their daughters' arranged marriages with his brother Larich, he says: "We'll not consult the Women, but force them to their Happiness" (1:13). Gravello knows that his daughter does not want the marriage he has arranged, but he is content to force his will upon her, as he feels it is his right.

The forced marriage theme and metaphor is continued through Centlivre's next play Love's Contrivance. This time the suitor with the father's approval is Sir Toby Doubtful, an old knight. Early in the play we learn that Sir Toby has lived in Rome, France, and Holland, so we may infer that he is Catholic and probably a Tory, further reasons why our young heroine should not marry him. The play also contains examples of how Centlivre used the political situation as simile in some of the witty exchanges usually between the second couple. The leads' accomplices, Belliza and Octavio, are sparring about love. He declares an undying devotion on first sight by saying she will be the one to govern him from now on, but the wise Belliza retorts:

> Bell: But like true Englishmen, you are never pleas'd long with one Government.
>
> Oct: Not if they affect arbitrary Sway; Liberty of Conscience, you know, Madam. (1:17)

But these early plays tend to be more feminist than Whiggish in tenor. Of course, most of them treat the overthrowing of parental tyranny, Centlivre's constant metaphor for kingly authority, but they are not as overt as the works which appeared after the Tories' loss of

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power. In fact, between The Gamester and Queen Anne's death in 1714, Centlivre saves her political commentary for prefaces and her choices for dedications. The insults towards Roman Catholics and the French continue as well, but they are also a symptom of her xenophobia.

The preface of The Perplex'd Lovers tells us of the political and professional hot water Centlivre found herself in for the play's epilogue, which contained a complimentary allusion to Marlborough, then at the ebb-tide of his career. She explains that on the first night of the play it went on without an epilogue, since she couldn't get the one she had written licensed in time. By the next day a rumor had begun to circulate that it was "a notorious whiggish Epilogue." The woman who was supposed to speak it was warned off and informed that parties were being formed against the play. Centlivre expresses her surprise and claims that the sinking of her play was not as painful as the idea that "there cou'd be People of this Nation so ungrateful as not to allow a single Compliment to a Man that has done such Wonders for it." She continues:

> I am not prompted by any private Sinister End, having never been oblig'd to the Duke of Marlborough, otherways than I shar'd in common with my Country; as I am an English Woman, I think my self oblig'd to acknowledge my Obligation to his Grace for the many Glorious Conquests he has attain'd, and the many Hazards he has run, to establish us a Nation free from the Insults of a Foreign Power. (sig. A4)

If she wasn't already in trouble with Tory audiences because of the rumored Whiggishness of the epilogue, this preface should have clinched

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her fate. To the printed edition she added the epilogue in question, which does indeed praise Marlborough, but not by name, as well as the allied leader, Prince Eugene of Savoy, who was in England at the time. To underscore her intentions, the edition also included the laudatory poem, "To his Illustrious Highness Prince Eugene of Savoy," discussed above.

This political battle seems to have whetted Centlivre's appetite for more, or perhaps she was feeling obstinately Whiggish, for nothing that she wrote between this play and The Cruel Gift in 1716 is untouched by politics. But perhaps the hostile audience reaction to the play temporarily scared her off the stage, for her only publication in 1713 was her poem The Masquerade. But her action in 1714 proved that she couldn't have been very scared, for with the publication of The Wonder! in May of that year she made the boldest political statement of her career.

During the early months of 1714, the childless Queen Anne's imminent death was creating a political uproar. The queen herself was uneasy about passing her throne to her Hanoverian cousins, but she absolutely refused even to consider her Roman Catholic, French-bred half-brother James as her heir. None of the electoral family had even been in England, and it was known that Anne didn't want them there, although the future George II held an English peerage as the Duke of Cambridge, and as such was entitled to sit in the House of Lords. As Lock explains

> On April 12, 1714, Schütz – the Hanoverian envoy in London – requested a writ to call the Duke of Cambridge to the House

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> of Lords. The writ was issued after a stormy cabinet session, but it was made clear that the queen did not want the duke to come to England. Possibly the request for the writ was a tactical error, but support for the 'Cambridge writ' soon became a touchstone for commitment to the Protestant succession. (Centlivre 24)

Centlivre not only supported the writ, she dedicated The Wonder! to the Duke of Cambridge, thus publicly stating her political position. She writes:

> This Dedication, which I always intended to Address to your HIGHNESS, and which I was in hopes might have Congratulated you upon your being in England, must now wait for your Arrival. I am sure I speak the Sense of every honest Briton, when I say that we expect it with the utmost Impatience.
>
> * * *
>
> If it is possible there shou'd be a Sett of Men among us who can wish to see their Country become a Province of France, it is, I think, pretty evident that your Residence in Great-Britain will soon put an end to such Impious Expectations.
>
> * * *
>
> . . . our Religion, our Laws, and Civil Rites can [not] be in Danger under a Prince, who from his Conversation with our Nobility, and his Presence at their most important Debates, will have a perfect Insight into all the Parts of our Constitution.

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> Britain shall from henceforward claim your HIGHNESS intirely as her own, and endeavor by the most convincing Proofs of her Love and Respect, to make you forget the Court of your Illustrious Father. (sig. A4-A4v)

And as a final demonstration of her loyalty she points out to the duke that "tho' I am, perhaps, the most unworthy, I have at least one Advantage, that I am the first who have shewn my Respect in this Manner, and sued for your Protection."

Centlivre herself told us in "The Woman's Case" how daring this dedication was – her husband feared for his position at Court. Even the staunch Whig Steele advised her not to dedicate the play to the future Prince of Wales. While this dedication antagonized the Tories, and perhaps even annoyed the queen and those around her, it ingratiated Centlivre with the Hanoverians, who later rewarded her with gifts and calls for command performances of her plays.[20]

After Anne's death on August 1, Centlivre rounded out her literary output for the year with two laudatory poems celebrating the Hanoverian succession. Then in the years 1715 and 1716, perhaps basking in the glow of the Hanoverian succession and the failure of the Jacobite uprising in 1715, Centlivre wrote her three most overtly political plays: The Gotham Election, A Wife Well-Managed, and The Cruel Gift.

In fact, A Gotham Election and A Wife Well-Managed were deemed so politically volatile by the Master of the Revels that Centlivre could not get them licensed. Both were farces; the first dealt with the subject of crooked elections and corrupt politicians, and the second was a mean-spirited attack on Roman Catholics and, more slightly, Tories.

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Together, the plays were dedicated to James Craggs, cofferer to the Prince of Wales and a member of the House of Commons. In the dedication she once again relies on the epithet "patriot," and reminds her readers of her early loyalty to the Hanovers when she calls herself "a woman who has no other Merit but her good Inclinations, and perpetual Wishes for the Prosperity of the present Government. These were Principles, which, you know, she was not ashamed of owning even when it was almost Criminal" to pay respect to the House of Hanover. She begs Craggs's indulgence towards her plays, and hopes "it is not an unpardonable Sin with every Body to wish well to the Liberties and Religion of one's Country."

She also, rather ingenuously, claims that her works are not "party matter," since she believes both sides will agree "that there are unreasonable Heats and Extravagances, belonging to each of 'em, which deserved to be expos'd, laug'd at, and exploded by all true lovers of their Country." And as for any offense given by her treatment of Catholic priests, she is unrepentant. As she writes in her defense, "Good God! To what sort of People are we chang'd? Are those worthy Gentlemen (the Emissaries of our most avow'd and irreconcilable Enemy) to be treated with so much Tenderness? Is not the very Profession Treason in any Subject of Great Britain? Have our Neighbors in France treated the Clergy of the Reformed Religion with the same Regard?"

In the preface to The Gotham Election she explains why she had decided to publish: a "Thousand scandalous Stories" were circulating about the play's purported contents after she couldn't get it licensed, and she had become "the subject of every Coffee-House in Town."

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Although her friends tried to clear her name, the rumour got around that the play was actually a "most impudent notorious libel upon her Late Majesty . . . its so far from being a Satyr upon her, that there is not one personal Reflection design'd thro' the whole Piece." In order to set the record straight, she had the play printed.

She further claims that she attempted to make the play as true to life as possible, which is why she stuck laurel sprigs in the hats of the Tories, to signify their political victories. She uses this piece of information to launch an attack on the Tories, especially the Jacobites, who had just been defeated by the success of the Protestant succession:

> I should have thought a sprig of Rosemary had been the properer Emblem of the then approaching Funeral of our Church and State, since the _Chevalier's_ Friends were endeavoring to bury our Religion, and Liberty, under Tyranny and Popish Superstition. . . .
> The Lawrel was ever held the Emblem of Joy, and Reward of Vertue . . . but have _Englishmen_ Reason to rejoyce in those Measures, that pav'd the Way for a _French_ Government, and a _Popish_ King? (sig. A4)

Whatever Centlivre's denial, the play is virulently anti-Tory, anti-French, and anti-Catholic. The metaphor of the tyrannical father as tyrannical king is used quite explicitly. One part of the farce involves the Jacobite Lord Mayor of Gotham's plan to force his Whig daughter Lucy into a convent in France so that he may have access to the bulk of her £5000 inheritance. He plans to use £1000 to settle her and

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the remainder to buy a title for his son. He is plotted against by an agent for the Whig Sir Roger Trusty, Friendly, who plans to marry Lucy. It is implied that Friendly's goal is to gain her fortune since "a sudden Thought" comes into his head when he learns of the £5000 (3:26), and perhaps this is Centlivre's sop to impartiality, since this is the only fault allowed to a Whig.

In the guise of an emissary from France, Friendly meets the Mayor. They discuss Lucy's fate, which her father believes she'll resign herself to once she discusses matters with a priest, and Friendly wryly observes, "Oh let de Priest get her once, and begar he vill make her — something I warrant you" (3:49).

The parent/king metaphor is further underscored in a later exchange between the Tory Alderman Credulous and the Whig Sir Roger.

> Ald: Ay, ay, Sir Roger, we Fathers know what's good for our Children, better than they do themselves; they have nought to do but submit to our Pleasures; Passive-Obedience is as absolutely necessary in our Wives and Children, as in Subjects to the Monarch; is not your Opinion the same, Sir Roger?
>
> Sir Rog: Yes, whilst Husbands, Fathers and Monarchs exact nothing from us, contrary to our Religion and Laws; But pray Mr. Alderman, How came you so passive? I remember you wore other Principles in Eighty Eight; — this is not Natural, Alderman.
>
> Ald: Eighty Eight! that's a long time ago! I know some Men that have worn out twenty Setts of Principles since

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> Eighty Eight, both Men of the Robe and Men of the Gown. (3:56)

The farce also follows the Parliamentary campaign of Tickup, a Tory, who is being supported by the libidinous Lady Worthy, wife of the Whig candidate Sir John Worthy, who has promised to spend her entire personal fortune to get Tickup elected as an act of spite against her husband. In one very funny scene we see Tickup making a local carpenter exorbitant promises in order to assure his vote. After promising to elevate members of Mallet's family and assorted friends into the Lord Steward, an admiral, Lord Treasurer, a colonel, Groom of the Stole, and Maids of Honour to the King and Queen, among other things, he observes: "if it were in my Power to keep my word what a prodigious Company this Fellow has provided for! - but thanks to Policy, a Man is not always oblig'd to keep his word" (3:45-46).

Later in the action, in a scene between Tickup, a cobbler, and a miller, Tickup is humiliated during a very funny piece of stage action by being covered with flour and mud and made to demean himself in order to secure votes. The cobbler adds insult to injury by informing him that he in fact, won't vote for him, for "you that are a fine bred Gentleman, here d'ye see; - yet can stoop so low, as to kiss, and Humour such a dusty Fellow as I am, purely to buy my Vote. - I don't know, d'ye see, but for a good round Sum you might be prevail'd upon to sell my Country" (3:54-55).

When, near the end of the play, Friendly tells Lucy he has saved her from her father's designs, she shudders at the thought of a nunnery, and Friendly adds: "Ay, where Swarms of Nuns and Priests, daily curse

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your Country, By Bell, Book, and Candle, where you must have been taught to pray for its Destruction too" (3:69). Of course here, through the bell, book and candle of Catholic rites, Catholicism is linked to witchcraft, and by extension Satanism, through the popular catch-phrase relating to the Black Mass: "bell, book and candle".

Later in the scene Lucy tells Friendly that on that day she has become of age, and she will choose him as her guardian if he can furnish

> unquestionable Proofs of your being an honest Man, – that you have always been a Lover of your Country, – a true Asserter of her Laws and Privileges, and that you'll spend every Shilling of my Portion in Defense of Liberty and Property against Perkin and the Pope. (3:69-70)

The play ends on a happy note, for Friendly has indeed furnished the proper proofs and married Lucy. The Tories' plotting has been foiled and a Whig victory is assured. Lucy speaks for Centlivre when she says to her new husband, "a moderate Man, from a true innate Principle of Virtue, scorns to betray even his Enemies, much less his Country or his Faith" (3:71).

A Wife Well-Managed was finally staged at the Haymarket Theatre in March 1724 as an afterpiece to Rowe's Jane Shore, nine years after it was published and three months after Centlivre's death. In this short farce, Lady Pizalto is in love with her confessor, Father Bernardo. Her husband discovers her passion and manages to beat his wife soundly while disguised as the priest. He then sends the priest to his wife, who retaliates by beating him. The main point of the play is anti-Papist mockery with a swipe at the Cavaliers as well, for according to Don

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Pizalto, a man who knows how to intrigue with women is "a true Cavalier" (3:9).

In the preface to The Gotham Election, Centlivre defends the Roman Catholic satire in A Wife Well-Managed when she writes: "here I can't omit taking notice how much the Popish faction encreased under the traitorous Management of the late Ministry, and we see by their daily Insults, that 'tis at the hazard of Life or Interest, at least, that we dare vindicate our Religion, and Liberty."

For her next play, The Cruel Gift, she returned to tragedy. While not pleasing to modern readers, contemporary audiences approved, since the play reached a sixth night, and as noted above, the Prince of Wales commanded a performance. With this play Centlivre followed her friend Pix's lead by delving into the Decameron, choosing the first tale of the fourth day. Dryden had also translated this tale in his Fables, Ancient and Modern (1700). Centlivre of course alters the tale to suit her needs. In Boccaccio's version the lover is murdered and the princess poisons herself. But in Centlivre's version, they both live. The changes Centlivre made heighten both the Whig message and the feminism of the play. Indeed, here we can see how Centlivre connected Whig theory and feminism using the character of the Princess Leonora to make the connection in her audience's minds.

According to the prologue, which was written by George Sewell, the play was written in 1715, but because of the political situation in the country at the time (most likely the Jacobite Rebellion), the "prudent Mother" decided to hold back the presentation until the "Madness of the Age" was "Spent in an Impotent Successless Rage." Further in the

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prologue we are again reminded of Centlivre's patriotism: "she wears her Country, in her Breast,/ And is as firmly Loyal, as the best." An oblique reference to the Jacobite rebellion is made in the first act of the play when Learchus, the second male lead, declares:

> But he who would enslave his native Land,
> Give up the reverend rights of Law and Justice,
> To the detested Lust of boundless Tyranny,
> Pollute our Altars, change our holy Worship,
> Deserves the Curses of both Heaven and Earth,
> And, from Society of Human kind,
> To be cast forth among the Beasts of Prey,
> A Monster far more savage.
>
> (3:3)

The play is dedicated to Eustace Budgell, a friend, minor writer, Whig. Centlivre recalls his eminent service to the king, country and legal constitution, and writes that all she desires is his good opinion. (In fact, she got quite a bit more – a diamond ring to be exact.) She continues to give a hint to the themes the play will touch on: "the two most implacable Powers that can be let loose upon Mankind, Tyranny and Popery."

The story is a tale of torn loyalties, and the tyrannical king of Lombardy is the root of all the problems. Leonora is torn between her duty to her father the king and her love for her secret husband, the non-royal Lorenzo. He, in turn, is torn between his warring loyalties between king and wife. As part of the subplot, Lorenzo's sister Antimora is in love with her family's sworn enemy Learchus, but Lorenzo

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wants her to marry his friend and lieutenant Cardono. Antenor, the Prime Minister and father of Learchus, complicates matters with his plots to destroy Lorenzo and keep his own family in royal favor.

The action of the tragedy begins when Antenor discovers the forbidden marriage and reports it to the king. Although Lorenzo is a brave general who has saved the kingdom on several occasions, the king turns on him for setting his sights too high. (This treatment at the hands of the king and his prime minister has vague echoes of Marlborough's treatment at the hands of Anne, Harley and the Tories.) The king has Lorenzo arrested and condemned to death, but because he is loved by the people a revolt breaks out, in which Antimora and Cardono are involved. This is crushed, the principal rebels are arrested, and an incensed king orders that after his execution Lorenzo's heart be ripped out and sent to the princess in a goblet. Antimora and Cardono are also sentenced to death.

It appears that the king's cruel commands have been followed, and when he realizes that his daughter's threatened suicide will leave the country without an heir and Lorenzo's execution without a general to defend itself during the wars which will surely follow his own death, he begins to repent. When he learns that Lorenzo is really his cousin and the son of the King of Milan, his sorrow is complete. A tragic ending is avoided when Learchus, who has been ordered to carry out the cruel sentence, recognizes tyranny when he sees it and tricks the king. He allows Lorenzo to live and substitutes the fatally-injured Cardono's heart. In the end the two couples are reunited and tyranny is suppressed.

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The hopefully reformed king is given the play's final speech. Speaking of Antenor, he first blames the disasters which have just occurred on the prime minister and then adds:

> But oh! be warn'd by his unhappy Fate,
> What Dangers on the doubling Statesman wait!
> Had he preferr'd his King's and Country's Good,
> This publick Vengeance had not sought his Blood;
> But while the secret Paths of Guilt he treads,
> Where Lust of Power, Revenge, or Envy leads,
> While to Ambition's lawless Height he flies,
> Hated he lives, and unlamented dies.
>
> (3:65)

While the king avoids responsibility for his own actions, the prime minister carries the burden of guilt for the cruel treatment of Lorenzo; Centlivre must have been thinking of Anne, Harley, and Marlborough when she wrote this play.

It is in this very political and rather overlooked play that Centlivre created one of her more memorable characters, the Princess Leonora. She is a heroine in the mold of Trotter's Christina and Manley's Almyna. She is a bold heroine and noble as well, in the eighteenth century's masculine sense of the word. As her father is threatening to kill her husband, she first pleads for his life on her knees but then she remembers who she is. She gets to her feet, and like a number of royal ladies before her, she verbally changes her sex and calls on her innate nobility:

> Go on, go on, and satisfy your Rage;

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Try all the racks _Antenor_ can invent,
And all that Majesty incensed can form,
And so with what Constancy of Mind
I am prepar'd to meet your Indignation.
I feel my Spirits gather to my Heart,
And man it out with Courage for the Tryal.
The Ardours of my Flame, can ne'er abate,
'Tis chaste and holy as the _Vestal_ Rites;
And if you'll rip this Breast that Heaves with Love,
You'll find his Image sits triumphant there.
(3:35)

It also seems that Leonora is wiser than the great men around her. In fact, she has come to trust her own genius. Her husband, the great general, dismisses her fears when she warns of their impending danger. In Act III, when they are together for the final time before Lorenzo's arrest, Leonora urges him to leave, and he refuses. At one point, she thinks of Antenor, whom she has come to distrust, and says: "I know not why, but still my Thoughts are on him, —/ As if my Genius whisper'd me, Beware" (3:27).

After her husband's arrest it is Leonora who is a main actor in his release — there is no passive acceptance of fate for this future queen. At first she asks the gods to let her go mad, but then she comes to her senses and resolves to act: "To save my Husband I will hazard all,/ Or bravely perish with him in his Fall" (3:36). She steals her father's royal seal in order to authorize Lorenzo's transfer, bribes some guards and makes sure the others are given strong wine so that they

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sleep through the escape, buys slaves she can trust, and prepares a boat and horses for his escape. In short, she does everything but the actual fighting – something she was barred from as a woman. She also remembers that she is the heir to the throne, and that if Lorenzo does make his escape, she must remain alive and come to the throne so that she can recall him from exile.

And she is mindful that she is royal, and of the responsibilities which that royalty entails. In fact, she vows to heaven

> That if it e'er shall be my Lot to reign,
> And fill the Throne of my great Ancestors,
> Each year I'll dedicate to Heaven,
> And all the Realm shall pay its Thanks with me.
> Religion is the best Support of Power,
> And honest Men are still its best Defenders.
>
> (3:41)

Centlivre doubtless meant those last two lines to be a reference to the Church of England's support for the Hanovers, and an honest "patriot's" support of both, but because of her antipathy towards Roman Catholicism and Tories, she perhaps didn't realize that they, too, could claim the same phrase.

When Leonora realizes that her plot has failed and her husband will soon die, she prepares to commit suicide. When she hears from Learchus that Lorenzo is indeed dead, she refuses to weep, for "Tears are the Tribute which a Girl can pay;/ Too poor a Task for _Leonora's_ Eyes" (3:56).

As she enters her father's presence carrying the heart, she

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remembers who she is, for she tells her servants "Off! off, Tormentors; off, and give me Way;/ Am I a Princess, and dare you detain me?" (3:61). She scoffs at her father's repentance, doubts its sincerity as well, and rejects the crown he offers her. When she sees her husband and realizes that he is real and not a ghost, she holds him and takes the masculine role by declaring that she will be the one to protect him: "Thus will I hold thee fast within my Arms,/ From whence no Mortal Strength shall wrest thee forth" (3:63). Lorenzo is declared heir apparent to the Crown of Milan, and there is the unstated assumption that when the King dies, Leonora will rule Lombardy and the two kingdoms will be joined.

Leonora is one of Centlivre's strongest female characters, and it is no surprise that she appears in one of her most political plays. The links between feminism and Whiggism, and the value they placed on individual freedom, were strong for Centlivre. But Leonora wasn't an anomaly among Centlivre's characters. Most of her plays feature an intelligent woman fighting for her rights against a tyrannical father figure.

The feminism in Centlivre's plays is apparent as early as her first play, the tragicomedy The Perjur'd Husband, a hybrid that didn't do well on stage. It opens quite unconventionally for a Centlivre play – with two women talking. This sort of scene only occurs in one other, A Wife Well Manag'd, and in both cases a straying wife is telling her maid about her unlawful love.[21] Two of the play's women stand out. The first is Placentia, the wronged wife. It is not until the fifth act that she begins to act, but in a fourth act aside she threatens to kill her rival. Her husband, Bassino, is planning bigamously to marry

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Aurelia. To prevent this, Placentia plans to disguise herself as her own brother, confront Aurelia, and warn her off Bassino. Like Leonora, she feels that disaster is imminent, but what is called genius by Leonora is here called "sick Fancy." She fears the outcome, but asks herself, "Must I bear calmly my Bassino's loss?" (1:33). She then urges herself on:

> Sure, it can't be the fear of Death – No, for if
> I go not I must lose him, and that's more
> Than Death to me – and if I go, I can but fall,
> And Life without him is the greater Woe,
> Therefore I'll on, I'll use the softest words
> That Tongue can frame to sooth her into Pity,
> And dissuade her from this impious Marriage.
> If I succeed I am compleatly happy,
> If not, I'd rather dye than live with hate,
> But first, curst Rival, thou shalt share my Fate.
>
> (1:34)

She goes to Aurelia and pleads her "sister's" case, but to no avail; Aurelia refuses to believe her. This fans the coals of Placentia's smoldering anger, threatening the danger of a blaze, and it also stings her pride. As she reveals her sex and position, she also reveals her innate nobility:

> Pity, be gone – And in its room fell rage
> Take place, that I may dash that haughty Insolence
> That dares to treat me thus – Know, Madam,
> I am his Wife – his lawful, wedded Wife.

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With borrowed shape I came to try your Virtue,
Which I have found to be so light, that the least puff
Of wanton Love will blast it – Else my Visit
Had met a better welcome – Here with Sword in hand [draws
I'll wait his coming,
And as he enters pierce thy haughty Breast.
I know he loves Thee, and therefore 'tis brave
Revenge, to let him see thy dying Pangs;
Thy parting Sighs will rack him worse than Hell.

(1:37)

Since Aurelia is already facing death, she verbally attacks Placentia, railing at her and swearing that Bassino will prefer her over such a "common thing". This enrages the proud Placentia. She yells "Common! Proud wretch – by Heaven that word gives wings/ To my Revenge – Vile Creature, dye – [stabs her (1:37). Unfortunately, Bassino enters at this moment and stabs his disguised wife. As she dies, she forgives her husband, who then recognizes her, and she wishes that Aurelia may live so that he will be happy. Soon Alonzo, Aurelia's betrayed lover, enters and stabs Bassino and the play ends in a rather sloppy and contrived manner with the three dying and begging everyone else for forgiveness. The active Placentia of the fifth act becomes a traditionally submissive wife in her death throes.

The second strong character is much more satisfying, for she not only dupes a man, she gets away with it. This is Lucy, Lady Pizalto's maid in the comic subplot. Centlivre is known for her well-drawn "saucy servants," and Lucy is one of the more interesting because she not only

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gets to make a fool of two men, she is also rewarded at the end of the play, not with the traditional marriage, but with something even better – an independent living and a rise in social status.

Lucy assists her young mistress in her attempt to cuckold the old husband, earning rewards as she does so, while at the same time being pursued by her master. In a very audacious exchange, Pizalto offers her one hundred crowns to sleep with him. She counters that she'll part with her reputation if he'll make her fortune. Pizalto offers to marry her to his valet, but she's not interested; besides, she asks, "what good will a hundred crowns do me, when my Virginity is gone?" He raises the offer to a hundred pistoles, but she states her last figure, one thousand, "else I'll dye a Maid I'm resolved." When he tries to get her to go to bed right away she retorts "Nay, nay, no ent'ring the Premisses, till you have paid the Purchase" (1.13). Pizalto agrees to the terms and leaves the stage. It is then we learn that Lucy plans to get the money and preserve her virtue. As she says before she leaves the stage,

> For did base Men within my Power fall,
> T' avenge my injur'd Sex, I'd jilt 'em all.
> And would but Women follow my advice
> They should be glad at last to pay our Price.
> (1:13)

When Pizalto gives her the bond for a thousand pistoles in Act III, Lucy sends him to her chamber, then declares: "My end is gain'd; I have my Fortune made,/ Man has not me, But I have Man betrayed" (1:24).

In the meantime she has also managed to make a fool out of

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Ludovico, a Frenchman who is Lady Pizalto's lover. In order to sneak him into Lady Pizalto's bedroom she dresses him as herself. He is reluctant to do it, for while a woman in breeches is both empowered and erotic, a man in skirts is only the butt of ridicule, and as Ludovico later says, "I think I have lost my Manhood with my Breeches" (1:32). These two schemes come together when Pizalto, waiting for Lucy in her chamber, hears voices. He goes to the door and pulls in Ludovico, who he thinks is Lucy, but during the tussle he discovers that "she" is really a he. Pizalto immediately assumes that he has been cuckolded, but Lucy saves the day by admitting she meant to dupe Pizalto all along by sending him Ludovico as a woman.

When Lucy is disappointed in her attempt to marry the gentleman Ludovico, she is quite philosophical about his refusal. She's happy that he has left while she still has control over her fortune and doesn't have to sue for a separate maintenance.

A few years later Centlivre presented Love's Contrivance, which, while not opening with two women, does open with a father and daughter, Selfwill and Lucinda, quarreling over his tyrannical plans for her fate, an unusual opening for a Centlivre play. Even though a male is involved in the dialogue, we still are able to enter the world of the play through the woman's point of view, since Centlivre constructed the scene so that we have sympathy for her. Her father had ordered her to accept the addresses of Bellmie, whom he had accepted as a suitor for his daughter. She has obeyed her father and fallen in love. But now her father has decided that she will marry "an old city knight," Sir Toby Doubtful, since he has both a title and more money than Bellmie. After

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we see the ridiculousness and the injustice of Selfwill's plans, he leaves and Lucinda is immediately joined on stage by her cousin Belliza and an all-woman scene then follows.

These two women are vaguely reminiscent of the sisters Hellena and Florinda in Behn's The Rover. The passive woman needs to be rescued by the active, daring, female relative. Belliza is not as active as her literary predecessor, but Centlivre must have had the earlier play in mind when she wrote these scenes. And while Lucinda would give in to her father's wishes and marry against her will, her cousin chides her, "And so you lie down and take what comes; a very pretty Resolution in Extremity truly" (1:3). She then offers to act as ambassador to Bellmie and save her cousin from the dreaded Sir Toby.

Unlike Hellena, Belliza doesn't suffer from a parent's plans. She seems to be orphaned and in possession of an independent income. In fact, she is not even looking for a match. But in the process of saving her cousin and seeing that she marries the man of her dreams, Belliza finds herself a husband in Bellmie's friend, the witty Octavio.

But these two plays gave only a taste of feminism with their unusual structure. And while Centlivre's structures became more traditional, her individual characters tended to be less so. The Beau's Duel introduces the character of Mrs. Plotwell, a cast-mistress who has come into a fortune and spends her time persecuting fops, gallants and other foolish males. As she tells her ex-lover Bellmein, she exposes to view "all the Follies of your Sex, that part of them I mean, whose Vanity brought them under my lash, such whose Tiffany [a thin muslin] Natures are so easily impos'd upon, to have the commonest Drabs in Town

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topt upon them [passed off on them] for Women of Quality" (1:20). In order to do this, she passes herself off as a countess, or duchess, and so on, and finds that the men are so foolish as to believe that they are attractive to any woman, even one of a higher station.

We learn early on that Mrs. Plotwell had become Bellmein's mistress only out of financial necessity, and if she had possessed her fortune sooner, she never would have turned to that elevated form of prostitution, being a mistress. Now she "keep[s] the best Company, pay[s] and receive[s] Visits from the highest Quality, People who are better bred than to examine past Conduct" (1.19). When he hears of her reform, Bellmein observes: "I find then Reputation is never lost but in an empty Pocket; well then thou'rt grown Virtuous" (1.20). With these observations Centlivre is making a radical statement about virtue. Mrs. Plotwell is not a bad woman, or a fallen woman, really. She is actually a very good woman who helps her friends and lives a clean and decent life. While she may have strayed before it was not her fault, nor does Centlivre imply that "fault" is a word which should be used in this situation. Mrs. Plotwell's past behavior was an economic necessity for her survival. This is a very different point of view from the stereotypical one of the fallen woman as inherently bad, or greedy, or lewd.

During the course of the play Mrs. Plotwell actively helps her friend and neighbor Clarinda avoid a marriage to the odious fop Sir William Mode, who is her father's choice. At the same time, she helps Clarinda marry the man of her choice, Col. Manly, with her jointure intact. And a "role" it is. At first she pretends to be a pious Quaker

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in order to trick Clarinda's father, Careful, into a "marriage." After the "wedding" she becomes a libidinous shrew who plans to spend Careful's money, live apart from him, and cuckold him with alarming regularity. When he repents of his harsh treatment of his daughter, it is revealed that the marriage ceremony was performed by Bellmein. As she explains to Careful after the plan is revealed, she did it to bring him to his reason. And when Col. Manley offers to reward her for her service, she replies, "If I have done Good, it Rewards it self; and if Mr. Careful pleases to pardon the Frolick, I shall be over-paid" (1.54). Mrs. Plotwell gets to close the play, and she does so with a warning to women:

> beware, you happy Maids, how you listen to the deluding Tongues of Men, 'tis only they have the Power to betray you.
>
> Oh happy she, that can securely say
>
> Folly be gone, I have no mind to Play,
>
> My Fame is Clear, I have not Sinn'd to Day.
>
> (1:55)

In 1709 Centlivre wrote what was to become her most popular play, the incredibly successful The Busie Body. In the nineteenth century William Hazlitt estimated that it had been acted a thousand times, and according to Frushell, that number is probably quite accurate if one counts the provincial performances as well as the London productions ("Introduction" xxvii). The play was not only a stock piece in England and Ireland, it came to America and became a stock piece here as well. It was also one of the first plays staged in Australia, in Sydney on July 23, 1796 (Frushell "Introduction" x). It was a popular addition to

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libraries — Bowyer found "more than forty editions or separate printings between 1709 and 1884" including three American editions and a German translation, Er Mengt Sich in Alles (98-99).

The play is extremely busy, with much physical comedy — characters popping in and out, hiding, disguising themselves, giving witty asides, and the like. If any character gets singled out by critics for discussion, it is usually the title character, Marplot. (Indeed, even though he is male and therefore outside the boundaries of my stated discussion, he is very unusual for a Centlivre character and deserves treatment, so I'll be discussing him below.)

Because of all the attention given to Marplot and the stagecraft of the play, very little is ever focused on Miranda, the female lead. According to the dramatis personae, she is an heiress worth £30,000, really in love with Sir George Airy, "but pretends to be so with her Guardian Sir Francis." It seems that Sir Francis is a tight-fisted old man who has decided that it is a more fiscally sound idea to marry his ward, thus keeping control of her fortune, than to let her marry anyone else. Miranda is a highly intelligent woman who uses long-term planning and her acute psychological insights into the people around her to gain her ends.

Before the plays begins, Miranda realizes her impending fate and takes steps to prevent it. She meets Sir George as an incognita and desires to marry him, but she realizes that she must first pull off her trick in order to do so, for of course she must have Sir Francis's written permission in order to marry if she hopes to retain her £30,000. To gain that end she convinces the elderly Sir Francis that she truly is

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in love with him and that she can not abide men her own age: "they are all vicious, and seldom make good Husbands" (Stathas 1:23). In fact, she lets the rumor get around Town that they will be married. Throughout the play she kisses him and allows him to caress her while all the while making asides to the audience to assure them of her disgust.

In the method she uses to get him to sign the consent form for her to marry, she shows a keen insight into the workings of Sir Francis's ego, telling him that it is her whim that he give her the signed consent the night before the wedding. When he questions why she would need his leave if it were he she were marrying, she proves how well she knows him: "Not for your Reputation, Gardee; the malicious World will be apt to say, you trick'd me into Marriage, and so take the Merit from my Choice. Now I will have the Act my own, to let the idle fops see how much I prefer a Man loaded with Years and Wisdom" (Stathas 1:70). When she finally convinces him to sign the documents through a combination of flattery and bribery – it will be a test of his love, and since she knows he is pretending to love her, she is assured of his compliance – she makes the startling revelation that she's already put the wheels in motion:

> **Miran**: You must know, Gardee, that I am so eager to have this Business concluded, that I have employ'd my Womans Brother, who is a Lawyer in the Temple, to settle Matters just to your Liking, you are to give your Consent to my Marriage, which is to your self, you know; But Mum, you must take no notice of that.

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So then I will, that is, with your Leave, put my Writings into his Hands; then to Morrow we come slap upon them with a Wedding, that no body thought on; by which you seize me and my Estate, and I suppose make a Bonfire of your own Act and Deed.

**Sir Fran**: Nay, but Chargee, if –

**Miran**: Nay, Gardee, no Ifs – Have I refus'd three Northern Lords, two British Peers, and half a score of Knights, to have you put in your Ifs? –

**Sir Fran**: So thou hast indeed, and I will trust to thy Management. (Stathas 1:71)

Once Miranda gets the papers, she is free to make her escape and marry the man of her wishes with her all-important fortune in her hands.

She also needs to be sure of her man, Sir George. She first meets and tests him as an incognita, and though she cares for him, she is not above tricking him to meet her own ends. During one of their meetings he implores her to unveil herself, but that will not suit her needs; she must remain anonymous. In order to escape from him she seems to give in, asking that he turn around to spare her modesty. As soon as he does, she sneaks away, leaving him talking to himself and looking quite foolish. The reason she will not unmask is that just before their meeting she has spied him making a deal with her guardian. She sees him pay Sir Francis 100 guineas for ten minutes of conversation with Miranda, the woman he loves.[22] Sir George tells his incognita that he is in love and planning to marry someone else, and she does not wish to reveal that Miranda and she are in fact the same person. She is also

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angry at the thought of being sold, or, for that matter, bought. As she says in one of her asides while watching the transaction take place, "I'll fit you both" (Stathas 1:25). She takes her revenge on Sir George by consenting to the meeting but refusing to talk. This trick also furthers her deception of Sir Francis by convincing him that she really doesn't care for young men.

Later, Miranda uses her knowledge of Marplot's character and ignorance (they are both wards of Sir Francis) to use him to carry a message unknowingly to Sir George. Through Marplot's naïveté she is able to arrange the meeting in which she and Sir George declare their intentions to marry. With her usual foresight she has planned to have Sir Francis go out of town for a few days, using a bait she knows he won't be able to resist – she pretends that an old friend wishes to make Sir Francis an executor. It is her intention to secure all of her necessary papers, and perhaps Sir Francis's son's, Charles, as well. (Sir Francis has been withholding his son's inheritance.) Unfortunately Fate and Marplot step in and ruin her well-laid plans, but she is quick-thinking enough to marry Sir George immediately before anything else can go wrong.

Miranda might love him and marry him quickly, but not without some thought. As she says in a soliloquy just before she promises to marry him:

> Well, let me reason a little with my mad self. Now don't I transgress all Rules to venture upon a Man, without the Advice of the Grave and Wise; but then a rigid knavish Guardian who wou'd have marry'd me. To whom? Even to his

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> nauseous self, or no Body: Sir <u>George</u> is what I have try'd in Conversation, inquir'd into his Character, am satisfied in both. Then his Love; who wou'd have given a hundred Pound only to have seen a Woman he had not infinitely loved? So I find my liking him has furnish'd me with Arguments enough of his side. (Stathas 1:100)

She is not blindly entering into marriage. She has had the foresight to at least ask about Sir George and hear general opinion. Even after the marriage she expresses her fears to her maid:

> I have done a strange bold thing! my Fate is determin'd, and Expectation is no more. Now to avoid the Impertinence and Roguery of an old Man, I have thrown myself into the Extravagance of a young one; if he shou'd despise, slight or ill use me, there's no Remedy from a Husband, but the Grave; and that's a terrible Sanctuary to one of my Age and Constitution. (Stathas 1:113)

Miranda is realistic enough to know that she may have made a bad bargain; she is not regretting her choice, merely expressing the reality of her situation. She is not a starry-eyed romantic bride; as Hume noted, this is a bride whose view of marriage harks back to the one expressed by female characters on the nonsentimental Caroline stage (<u>Development</u> 118).

While Miranda does a good job of controlling her own fate, her friend Isabinda plays a much more passive role, allowing her maid Patch to do the plotting and planning for her. Isabinda is in love with Charles, but her father plans to wed her to a Spanish merchant. It is

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not until the fifth act that she takes an active role in her own fate, and that is merely to follow Sir George's lead, dissembling obedience to her father so that Charles's masquerade will work. But Centlivre had to make Isabinda a more traditionally passive female, for consummate professional that she was, she knew just how far from the accepted roles she could stray. One strong woman in a play was acceptable, but two would be too many. She must have remembered the failure of Trotter's Revolution of Sweden less than three years earlier (see Chap. Two). Granted, the play had more flaws than its two strong female leads, but even Congreve had warned Trotter about the women and Centlivre was certainly wiser than Congreve when it came to theatrical contrivance.

But in The Busie Body's sequel, Mar-plot, Isabinda moves to center stage. In this play, her father has died, so Charles goes to Portugal to settle some of his father-in-law's affairs, leaving his wife in London. When he arrives, he realizes that he has forgotten some important documents and must wait for Isabinda to send them. In the meantime, he has plenty of time on his hands, which of course gives him time to intrigue with other women. In fact, as the play opens he is just about to start a affair with Dona Perriera, a merchant's wife.

In the meantime, Isabinda does not trust anyone with the documents but herself, so she dresses as a man and follows her husband to Portugal. Upon arriving she learns from the bungling Marplot that Charles has as many mistresses "as he can well manage" (2:28). Of course, this piques Isabinda's interest and she decides to look into Charles's business a bit further. Still in disguise she delivers the papers to him and hears him tell his friends Colonel Ravlin and Marplot

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that his wife "'tis a Poor goodnatur'd Tit [bird]" and that he "lov'd her heartily" until he married her. But then,

> whether her Overfondness, or the easy Access every Man has to his Wife, takes the edge of my Appetite, but methinks I see her not with half that desire I us'd to, when I scal'd her Window for a Kiss, the Memory of it still is Pleasant. (2:38-9)

Then she learns of his intrigue with Dona Perriera. Even though Charles has wronged her, she still loves him. After a number of plots and counterplots, usually spoiled by Marplot, she learns that Charles is about to be killed by the jealous Don Perriera. But good Catholic that the Don is, he has called for two priests to shrive the sinners before he murders them so that they are not condemned to everlasting Hell for their sins. In a bit of quick thinking on Isabinda's part (and a little anti-Catholicism on Centlivre's), Isabinda bribes the priests, still in her male disguise, and then trades places with one of them. She enters the room containing her husband and his mistress and quickly changes places with Charles, thus letting him escape. When the two "priests" leave the room they tell Don Perriera that he is not in his right mind, for there are two women in the room, and when the enraged Don runs in, that's exactly what he finds. Isabinda then calmly invites him to visit her at her apartments.

By the play's end, Isabinda has not only saved her husband's and Dona Perriera's lives, she has also taught the young wife the value of virtue and placed her firmly on the proper path. The Don is kept from suspicion when Isabinda, with her husband firmly at her side, introduces

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herself to him as the daughter of his old friend Sir Jealous Traffick. She generously forgives her husband's straying, and as a result, wins back his love. This generous forgiveness dilutes Isabinda's active role, returning her to the position of passive wife, but perhaps Centlivre needed a way to end the play without alienating the audience. Isabinda's strength is further undercut when she ends the play with these rather traditional words of advice to wives:

> To smooth the Husband's rugged storms of Life,
> Is the design and business of a Wife;
> Still all his Faults with Patience to behold,
> And not for ev'ry Trifle rant, and scold.
> Men from Example, more than Precept, learn,
> And modest Carriage still has power to Charm.
> After my Method, wou'd all Wives but move,
> They'd soon regain, and keep their Husbands Love.
>
> (2:62)

Perhaps Centlivre is employing irony, but I think it is more likely common sense. There were no divorces available for the women in her original audience, and perhaps the motivation behind her words is the well-worn maxim about catching flies with honey.

That the play ends weakly is no surprise — the entire play is inferior. It suffers the usual fate of sequels in that what was fresh in one play has now become stale. In this version Marplot has progressed from nuisance to positive annoyance. He is no longer fun, and at times the audience may share Charles and Colonel Ravlin's desire to "run him through." In this play Marplot's life is threatened more by

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his friends than by his enemies.

But he is still one of Centlivre's most intriguing creations. And in many ways he has features which hark back to the creations and themes of Behn. Pearson describes him as follows: "Short-sighted and well-intentioned, he tries desperately hard to help his friends, but at every turn succeeds only in obstructing them" (210). When I read this description I was struck at how much it could also be applied to Behn's most famous creation, Willmore the swaggering Rover. Willmore is never motivated by curiosity as is Marplot, but his drunken, bumbling good will destroys his friends' plotting time and again. If one were to demote Willmore to a non-romantic supporting role, he'd be very much a Marplot.

Pearson describes him as "a curiously unmale figure, in some ways an embodiment and parody of stereotypical views of women . . . . Again and again Marplot subverts male sexuality as he upsets the intrigues of George and Charles" (210). I would take Pearson's argument one step further. Marplot is Centlivre's attempt at drawing a homosexual character, the ultimate subversion of the culturally accepted norm of male sexuality.

This portrait is subtle in The Busie Body, but much more overt in Marplot. Her first description of him, in the dramatis personae, lists him as a "sort of silly Fellow, Cowardly but very Inquisitive to know every Body's Business, generally spoils all he undertakes, yet without Design." The ultra-patriotic Centlivre usually made cowardice a sign of the ultimate buffoon, the fool of the piece who deserves to be duped, but she treats Marplot with a much more gentle humor. His friends,

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especially Charles, do have a soft spot for him. Moreover, Charles is the unacknowledged object of Marplot's unrequited affections. Indeed, at one point in the sequel Marplot says that he loves Charles as he loves his life (2:46). It also appears that Charles recognizes this and exploits it. As he tells Sir George, Marplot is

> my Instrument; there's a thousand Conveniences in him, he'll lend me his Money when he has any, run my Errands and be proud on't; in short, he'll Pimp for me, Lye for me, Drink for me, do anything but Fight for me. (Stathas 1:13)

In the sequel Marplot has accompanied his friend to Portugal in order to see the country. Is it mere coincidence that now that Charles is married, Marplot has become nastier and more mean-spirited?

The portrait becomes more pointed in Marplot. In its dedication Centlivre begins to link Marplot and women by writing "Women, and Men like Women, naturally fly to the Brave for Protection." As in the first play, Marplot is not engaged in any "amours." At one point he does offer to intrigue with the disguised Isabinda's imaginary "lady," but as he says in an aside, "Egag, there may be new pleasure in having an Intreague of one's own, for ought I know, for I have never had one in my life" (2:28). This may be a result of his own silliness and ill grace, but there could be a deeper reason. Later in the story there are two incidences which suggest to the reader that Marplot could very well be a coded homosexual. To assure the veracity of Marplot's statements in the play, it must first be noted that early-on Charles states that in matters of importance, Marplot never lies, which is one of his virtues. When faced with the possibility that an amorous woman is searching for a

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lover, Marplot tells Charles and Colonel Ravlin, "But hang it, I'm good-natur'd, she shall fall to one of your shares, for I wou'd not give a Half-penny for the finest Woman in Lisbon" (2:35). Shortly thereafter, when threatened by Dona Perriera's jealous brother bent upon avenging the family honor, he makes the most blatantly homosexual assertion of the play: "Upon my Faith, I never knew what Woman was, nay, Sir, I never car'd for a Woman, that's more – But indeed here is two or three Gentlemen of my Acquaintance very much given that way" (2:35). Women, then, are not his inclination; it is left for a canny, or observant, reader to guess which inclination he has.

To return to Centlivre's female characters, the next unusual women are Violante, the title character of 1714's The Wonder! The Woman Keeps a Secret, and her friend Isabella. This is Centlivre's second most popular play, and like The Busie Body has enjoyed a number of editions, including two French translations: Le prodige, ou la femme discrète (1714), and in OEuvres de Mistress Susanna Centlivre in 1784; a Polish translation: Kobieta dotrzyuiaca sekretu (1820); and a German, Die vier Vormünder. Ein Lustspiel in drey Aufzügen (1791) (Frushell "Introduction" lxxvii n 7). It is the foolishness of the men – Felix's insane jealousy, the two fathers' tyranny over their daughters, and the servants', Lissardo and Gibby's, fumbling – which causes all of the trouble, heartbreak, and confusion.

In the two heroines we see two very different types, each strong in her own way. In Violante, we find a forward-looking, sentimental heroine who echoes the innately honorable heroines of Trotter and Manley. Isabella, on the other hand, harks back to the saucy heroines

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of Behn's comedies.

The main problem of the play revolves around Violante's promise to keep the secret of Isabella's presence in her home inviolate no matter what may happen. "When I betray thee, may I share thy Fate," she promises her friend (1:181). And this promise causes more trouble than either of them had ever envisioned.

Violante is in love with Felix, brother to Isabella, though her father, Don Pedro, has decreed that she will enter the convent. This is a plot on her father's part to keep control of the £20,000 Violante's grandfather had left her, to be given to her on her 21st birthday or upon her marriage either to man or Christ. Don Pedro has informed Violante of only part of the will – that she will inherit if she enters a convent (where she won't need the money) – but before the action Violante has learned the truth. Like Miranda (and any number of Shakespeare's heroines), she uses dissembling to gain her own ends. She appears to agree with her father's choice for her, and even furthers the deception by letting him think the convent is her own inclination because of her natural piety and lack of interest in men.

Isabella's father has decreed that she marry an old Spaniard, a choice she detests. In order to avoid that fate, she runs away from home, determined to become a nun for lack of a better option. Before she makes it to the convent, though, she meets Col. Britton, falls in love, and marries him. But it is her running away which involves Violante in her fate, for through a series of coincidences she ends up at her friend's home and asks for shelter for a few days. Her only request is that Violante tell no one, not even Felix, for jealous

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upholder of family honor that he is, he would either return her to their father or kill her himself. As is to be expected, Felix realizes that Violante is hiding something and suspects that she is cheating on him. She shows her mettle, and her honor, when she refuses to clear herself with her lover at the expense of her word to her friend: "Oh think how far Honour can oblige your Sex," she enjoins him. "Then allow a Woman may be bound by the same Rule to keep a Secret" (Stathas 1:187).

Keeping her word to Isabella eventually loses her Felix's love, causing her much sorrow. Her only hope is that once Isabella reveals herself and her plotting, she and Felix will be reconciled. On her part, Isabella feels that the breach between her brother and his lover ends the ties between the two women as well, but Violante chides her, "You wrong my Friendship, Isabella; Your own Merit intitles you to every thing within my Power" (Stathas 1:221). Violante knows that women are not just connected through the men in their lives; they have the intelligence to choose their own friends and the same innate honor men have which enables them to serve their friends selflessly.

Violante steadfastly protects her friend's secret throughout the action of the play, even though at times it is against her better judgment. In fact, she even remonstrates with Isabella for putting her own honor in jeopardy. But throughout all the tests she must face, Violante stays true to her ideals and to her word. In the very last scene, when all is unravelled, she wins both the man and her fortune. Don Felix, who we hope has learned the error of his excessive jealousy, is allowed to deliver the play's moral in these last words:

> Now, my Violante, I shall Proclaim thy Vertues to the World:

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No more let us Thy Sex's Conduct blame,
Since thou'rt a Proof of their eternal Fame,
That Man has no Advantage but the Name.

(Stathas 1:271)

Isabella is a very different woman. There's no dissembling with her. In order to avoid the fate her father has planned, she runs away to enter the cloister. She escapes her locked bedroom by literally jumping out the window. Luckily her fall is broken when she is caught by a passing English soldier, Colonel Britton, who brings the now-unconscious woman into the nearest house he can find, which is, of course, Violante's. But Isabella had seen enough of the man to know he is the one who could "spoil her devotion," so she actively sets out to catch him, enlisting the help of Violante's maid, Flora.

Flora is able to arrange a meeting between the colonel and the disguised Isabella, and in a scene reminiscent of the marriage-bartering scene between Hellena and Wilmore, Isabella pursues and the colonel avoids. He invites her to his lodgings to consummate their love, but she calls for marriage first:

Col: The Lawyer, and the Parson! No, no ye Little Rogue, we can finish our Affairs without the help of the Law – or the Gospel.

Isab: Indeed but we can't, Colonel.

Col: Indeed! Why hast thou then trappan'd me out of my warm Bed this Morning for nothing! Why, this is showing a Man half famish'd, a well furnish'd Larder, then clapping a Padlock on the Door, till you Starve him

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quite.

**Isab:** If you can find it in your Heart to say Grace, Colonel, you shall keep the Key.

**Col:** I love to see my Meat before I give Thanks, Madam, therefore uncover thy Face, Child, and I'll tell thee more of my Mind. (Stathas 1:112-3)

He wants sex; she wants marriage. But she has sounded out her man, and decided that he is the one for her. She then pleads with Violante to question him further, and if possible, arrange for a marriage. Against her better judgment, Violante agrees, and as she soon finds out, he is not adverse to the institution – he has fallen in love with the woman he had rescued the evening before. Violante is the one who makes the final arrangements for the wedding, but it is Isabella who made the choice and has decided her own fate (see Stathas 1:226-27).

An earlier woman-centered play was <u>The Basset-Table</u>, which had an initial run of only four nights and was not revived until 1993. The feminism of the relatively minor character Valeria has attracted a disproportionate amount of attention in criticism of the play. She is indeed a striking character, for as Rogers reminds us, despite "neoclassical exhortations to reason, the woman who aspired to shine in any intellectual field was a stock butt in comedy from the later seventeenth century on" (<u>Troublesome</u> 180). She adds that most "of the learned ladies in drama are not only odious for their unwomanliness, but ridiculous for their gullibility, their pride in nonexistent learning, and their belief that women are mentally capable of studying" (180).

None of this holds true for Valeria. Passionately dedicated to

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scientific pursuits, Valeria is also young, attractive, and well-mannered. Her suitor, Ensign Lovely, is even bemused by her scientific bent. It appears that he humors her because he truly loves her; he asks her to run away with him to get married. But, like many a Centlivre heroine before her, she refuses for material reasons, but with a twist: "What, and leave my Microscope, and all my Things for my Father to break in Pieces?" (1:30) Immediately after this exchange, her father, Sir Richard, approaches, and Valeria must hide her ensign, for her father disapproves of Lovely and has chosen a sea captain for her husband. In order to save her beloved, she dumps out a tub of fish she has been saving for an experiment and hides him in it.

Valeria truly loves her ensign in return; that is settled without a doubt, but she is of a practical turn of mind, and silly romantic courtships are not her style. As she exasperatedly reminds him, "have I not told you Twenty Times I Love you, – for I hate Disguise; your Temper being Adapted to mine, gave my Soul the First Impression" (1:30). Later, when she thinks she is about to be married to someone else (luckily it is Lovely in disguise), she cries out

> O my dear _Lovely_! – We were only form'd for one another; – thy Dear Enquiring Soul is more to me – than all these useless Lumps of Animated Clay: Duty compels my Hand, – but my Heart is subject only to my mind, – the Strength of that they cannot Conquer; – no, with the Resolution of the Great Unparallell'd _Epictitus_, – I here protest my Will shall ne'er assent to any but my _Lovely_. (1:45-6)

At the end of the play Centlivre shows her approval of Valeria when she

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rewards her with the man she loves and a settlement of £20,000 down and the promise of her father's entire estate when he dies. And even more telling, there is no mention of her putting her scientific experiments aside after her marriage.

Valeria is doubtless a positive character in the play; her name speaks for itself. Her question to a suitor about a multiple universe shows an important Behnian tie. She is showing her interest in the most popular and influential work advancing Cartesian thought in England — Fontanelle's Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes, the very book Behn had translated years before.[23]

These women are only the best of the numerous outstanding female characters Centlivre created during her over twenty years of playwriting. In many ways, she allows her work to speak her mind about women's condition in her society and the treatment women writers received. And while not as frequently as Behn and the Female Wits, she occasionally turned to her prefaces and dedications to air her views. In the dedication of Marplot she complains that it "is the Misfortune of our Sex, that we are deterr'd from the Advantages of a Learned Education."

But earlier in her career she had been much bolder. She dedicated The Platonick Lady (1707) to "all the Generous Encouragers of Female Ingenuity," both male and female. Her anger about the attacks against her sex for writing must have come to a head that year, for in the strongest invective Centlivre ever used for something other than a Tory, Catholic, or Frenchman, she asks protection against "the carping Malice of the Vulgar World; who think it proof of their Sense, to dislike

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everything that is Writ by Women." She explains that she feels driven to write this dedication because of the ill usage she has met "on all sides."

As Behn had years before, she deplores the double standard, and covertly complains about women earning less money than men for their literary work, when she explains that as long as a play is produced anonymously, all goes well and everyone's financial expectations rise: the actors, the bookseller, and the author. But if the work is found to be "Fatherless, immediately it flags in the Opinion of those that extoll'd it before, and the Bookseller falls in his Price, with this Reason only, <u>It is a Woman's</u>. Thus they alter their Judgment, by the Esteem they have for the Author, tho' the Play is still the same."

She then goes on to relate the story of a "spark" who was quite fond of <u>The Gamester</u> and had seen it three or four times. When he went to buy the book, he happened to ask the book-seller who was the author. When he learned it was a woman he "threw down the Book, and put up his Money, saying, he had spent too much after it already, and was sure if the Town had known that, it wou'd never have run ten days." She then declares that the spark probably thought he was showing his wit, but it "is such as these that rob us of that which inspires the Poet, Praise."

That Centlivre craved praise is apparent from her next complaint, that the printer of <u>Love's Contrivance</u> not only printed it anonymously, he also assigned the incorrect initials to the preface to further obscure the author's identity.

She echoes Behn when she declares "since the Poet is born, why not a Woman as well as a Man?" She doesn't want to detract from men who

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have been able to improve their natural abilities through learning, she explains, but rather she objects "against those ill-natur'd Criticks, who wanting both, think they have a sufficient claim to sense, by railing at what they don't understand." And she complains, as Behn had over forty years earlier, that when someone finds he likes her play against his better judgment, he then declares that it couldn't be the work of a woman; it must belong to a man. Even her own sex, who should show more solidarity, are "often backward to encourage a Female Pen".

She concludes her attack by reminding her readers that in the past women have excelled in the arts, music, painting, poetry, and even war. Ever the patriot, she asks

> What cannot England boast from Women? The mighty Romans felt the Power of Boadicea's Arm; Eliza made Spain tremble; but ANN, greatest of the Three, has shook the Man that aim'd at Universal Sway. After naming this Miracle, [Queen Anne] the Glory of our Sex, sure none will spightfully cavil at the following Scenes, purely because a Woman writ 'em.

Through this paragraph Centlivre shows that support for women writers is more than just a wise thing to do; it has been metamorphosed into one's patriotic duty: one owes it to England.

This preface was Centlivre's strongest call for intellectual equality of the sexes, but it was not her only one. She peopled her plays with unusual women, constantly showing how personal freedom for all is the wisest choice for life and the cornerstone for economic and political stability, a rising concern in the early eighteenth century. Her message was that those with common sense and intelligence would

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inherently know that freedom was a good and a right. It was only the fools – tyrants, heretics, traitors, and non-patriots – who would obstinately continue in their errors until corrected, even if by force or trickery where needed.

Centlivre was a true daughter of Behn; no one can argue with that. Throughout her career, she constantly used Behnian themes and situations, styles and forms. And she used her literary foremother as a guide, both consciously – the pen name Astraea is a definite allusion – and unconsciously. The Behnian overtones in her plays are numerous. But even more intriguing, Centlivre was very careful with the maintenance of her personal reputation. It is no error that her early life is shrouded in mystery. Too much damage had been done to Behn's literary reputation by her personal life, and Centlivre learned the lesson well. Behn's unhappy end was not for her. Like Trotter, she died in relative comfort, and perhaps even content in her marriage, for there is no evidence to the contrary. Between her earnings and her husband's steady wage, she was comfortable. In fact, of all the heirs of Astrea, she made the most money from her pen. And perhaps more important, she died knowing that she was a successful playwright. Her plays were still being staged; she had not fallen out of political favor, as Behn and Manley had by the end of their lives, nor did she die in relative obscurity as Trotter and her friend Pix had. The number of obituaries printed about her are testament to that.

As the twentieth century comes to a close, Centlivre is being studied more and more. My hope is that her plays will continue to receive the treatment that they deserve, and she will regain her

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rightful place as one of the early eighteenth century's leading playwrights.

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**NOTES**

[1] Susanna Centlivre wrote under the name of Carroll (variously spelled Carol, Carrol, Caroll) for the first six years of her writing career. In some sources and quotations she is referred to by that name.

[2] James Sutherland points out that after Farquhar's death in 1707 and Steele's transfer of interest from the stage to the essay, "she could fairly lay claim to being the leading comic dramatist of Queen Anne's reign" ("Progress" 168).

[3] See Richard C. Frushell's note on the painstaking process used to arrive at these numbers, "Introduction," The Plays of Susanna Centlivre, New York: Garland, 1982, 1:lxxviii n 8.

[4] For reviews of these two performances see Janet Todd, "Wheels of Invention," TLS, Mar 19, 1993, 19; and Rosemary Bechler, "The Lure of Gambling," TLS Aug 20, 1993, 19.

[5] Ashley H. Thorndike writes that she was the only author to rival The Non-Juror, The Provok'd Husband, and The Conscious Lovers. He adds that her "plays may be taken as representative, the continuation of the Restoration methods, with even fewer traces of sentimentalism than attach themselves to the contemporary plays of intrigue by Bullock, Johnson and Taverner" (365). Robert D. Hume calls her a "cautious professional" whose "concern is to breathe life into standard devices," something she "has a flair for" (Development 486, 121). He adds that she "knows how to wring comic suspense and laughter out of predictable situations" (121).

[6] Thorndike finds that "she is nearly as immoral, even less sentimental, and even more skillful in theatrical contrivance" than Behn (365), and Hume believes that she "moralizes Behn's racy intrigues" (Development 494). Jacqueline Pearson sees her as another Astrea/Orinda mix with her racy past and respectable marriage giving a double-sided aspect to her literary reputation (230). Douglas Butler argues that Centlivre used her feminism differently from her foremother. Unlike Behn, "who made it quite clear (without writing social tracts) that she felt women were getting a raw deal from society, Centlivre uses feminism not as a subject but as a vehicle for stage business" (362).

[7] For Centlivre's early biography see John Wilson Bowyer, The Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre, (1952; New York, Greenwood, 1968) 3-14; F. P. Lock, Susanna Centlivre, TEAS #254 (Boston, Twayne, 1979) Chronology. For illuminating commentary see James R. Sutherland, "The Progress of Error: Mrs. Centlivre and the Biographers," RES 18 (1942): 167-82.

[8] For information about this child see Bowyer 12, and John H. MacKenzie, "Susanna Centlivre," N & Q 198 (1953): 387.

[9] There are two excellent accounts of the sources and stage histories of Centlivre's plays: Frushell, "Introduction," 1:ix-cxlv, and

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Bowyer.

[10] For more about these letters see Bowyer 15-33.

[11] This was a position of some note. Joseph was paid £55 board wages and £5 wages per annum, and he was due £1 6s from each person knighted (Bowyer 93).

[12] See Anderson, "Innocence" 358 ff. Fidelis Morgan, editor of the modern edition of The Female Tatler, also believes that Centlivre wrote for the paper: "Much later in her career, when The Female Tatler was long gone, she used a plot taken from a Female Tatler story for her play The Artifice. Maybe she wrote the original story, maybe she just stole it" (Female Tatler ix).

[13] For an analysis of the Clinket/Centlivre connection, see George Sherburn, "The Fortunes and Misfortunes of Three Hours After Marriage," MP 24 (1926-27): 91-109.

[14] Alexander Pope, The Dunciad, Vol. 5 of The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope, ed. James Sutherland (New Haven, Yale UP, 1965), 146, see also 162. The note on Centlivre reads: "Mrs. Susanna Centlivre, wife to Mr. Centlivre, Yeoman of the Mouth to his majesty. She writ many Plays, and a Song (says Mr. Jacob, vol 1, p 32), before she was seven years old. She also writ a Ballad against Mr. Pope's Homer, before he begun it."

[15] John Gay, Three Hours After Marriage, Dramatic Works, vol. 1, ed. John Fuller (Oxford, Clarendon, 1983), 207-263. All references are to this edition.

[16] For a discussion of the rigors of and inherent dangers in repeated pregnancies and childbirth for women during this period, see Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500 - 1800 (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1982).

[17] Robert Adams Day and Bowyer both see Centlivre imitating Manley, who was following Behn, when she published her letters about her journey to Exon in 1700 (Day Told 43; Bowyer 17).

[18] Except for The Busie Body, The Wonder!, and A Bold Stroke for a Wife, which have been collected in a critical edition by Thalia Stathas, "A Critical Edition of Three Plays by Susanna Centlivre," Ph.D. Diss. Stanford U, 1965, all quotations will be from Frushell's three-volume facsimile edition. Since there is no continuous pagination in this edition, all citations will consist of the volume number followed by the page number of the individual play.

[19] In a private verse-note to a friend asking him to attend The Artifice (1722), Centlivre wrote: "The Favour I ask you with Honour supply,/ A Whig and a Woman you cannot deny" (Bowyer 237-38), but this was not published until after her death.

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[20] It is occasionally stated that The Wonder! was dedicated to the future George I as opposed to its true dedicatee, the future George II (see Bowyer 152; Loftis 55). This error may have begun with Bowyer who writes: "As Mottley says, she [Centlivre] dedicated her play 'to his present Majesty, then Duke of Cambridge, at Hanover'" (Bowyer 152). Mottley, though, wrote his biography of Centlivre in 1747, by which time George II had already been on the throne for 20 years. But a quick reading of Mottley's words may lead one to think that he was discussing George I, who was king at the time of Centlivre's death.

[21] But this is not the only factor that sets it apart from the rest of Centlivre's canon. As Pearson points out, the play has an "unusually high proportion of female to male characters, a high proportion of episodes where only women appear," and women are given nearly half the lines (23-24).

[22] During the bargaining scene the time agreed upon is ten minutes, but later during the actual scene a number of references are made to the time being an hour. Due to the brevity of the exchange, I believe ten minutes is the proper time. It also adds to the extravagance of Sir George's gesture.

[23] See Bowyer 73-74 for Centlivre's connection with Fontenelle.

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## CONCLUSION

One point which becomes evident in these preceding pages is that these daughters of Behn were not mere clones of their mother or imitators following after a pioneer. Each woman was an individual, clearing her own path, and contributing something to the world she lived in, yet always displaying traits inherited from Behn. Not all enjoyed the same level of public recognition; Manley and Centlivre far outshone Trotter and Pix, yet all wielded an influence.

But just as Behn had fallen into critical disfavor because of changing literary tastes and political ideals, the later writers, too, fell out of vogue, losing the fame that they had sought, as tastes and ideals changed yet again as the eighteenth century progressed. All four later writers showed the influence of sentimentalism, which was growing early in the century, but, with few exceptions, not enough of it was evident in their works to keep them read into the later part of the eighteenth century. All too soon, Trotter, Pix, Manley and Centlivre left current memory and joined Behn in a hazy past.

It has taken over two centuries, but Behn and her daughters are finally getting the critical attention that their writing and their place in their society earned them. And because of that attention we are able to realize that Behn is not the only one who deserves to have flowers placed on her tomb. Her daughter deserve our thanks and homage as well.

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