MRS. ELIZABETH BARRY: PORTRAIT OF
A RESTORATION ACTRESS

A Thesis Presented for the
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By

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The "famous Mrs. Barry" occupies a high pinnacle both historically and artistically in the annals of English theatrical history. Coming upon the boards only some fourteen years after actresses in England had secured themselves a place, she underwent a rigorous training for her career unusual in that day and ultimately carried her art, especially as a tragedienne, to a peak that has been pointed to and revered by almost every writer on the English theatre from her own times down to the present moment.

From being at first thought so lacking in dramatic genius that she was twice or thrice given up by her managers as hopeless, she rose to create the best rôles of Dryden, Otway, Lee, Rowe, Etherege, and Congreve, and to recreate, often in what was said to be memorable fashion, what the Restoration chose to see of Shakespeare and those dramatists who followed him in the Jacobean and Caroline reigns. We know that during the course of a long span of years in the theatre her position was recognized as supreme, even a much younger Mrs. Bracegirdle wisely declining to accept any of her roles and so to challenge her.

The personal life of this remarkable lady is well veiled in obscurity and exists piecemeal in the often conflicting observations and opinions of her contemporaries and near contemporaries. Her dramatic career can stand considerable clarification but exists in fairly full outline at least. I have attempted here to piece together such of the fragments as I could find into some sort of recognizable portrait. The evidence I do not presume to weigh but as evidence merely to review it in some sort of order.

A long tradition has it that Mrs. Barry was descended from a family ancient and of good estate, that she was the daughter of Robert Barry, Esquire, barrister-at-law, who for his loyalty in raising and maintaining a regiment of soldiers on the side of the King during the Civil War came to
be Colonel Barry, at the cost of his estate. This story, often repeated and fairly generally credited, probably was the one given out by the actress herself and seems to have been first set down by the "unspeakable Edmund Curll" in his *History of the English Stage*. The authorship of this work\(^1\) is uncertain, but there were probably several hands represented in-

\(^1\)The *History of the English Stage from the Restauration to the Present Time, including the Lives, Characters and Amours, of the most Eminent Actors and Actresses...* by Mr. Thomas Betterton (London, printed for E. Curll, 1741).

including that of Charles Gildon. Concerning his authority for his memoirs of Mrs. Barry, the writer says, "Some particular Memoirs, relating to her, we have been favoured with by a Gentlewoman, her most intimate Friend..."\(^2\)

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 12

Colonel Barry's impoverishment, the tradition continues, made it necessary for his daughters to earn their living; thus it was that Mrs. Elizabeth came to London.

That Mrs. Barry may have circulated this story appears from the "Gentlewoman" Curll mentions and from a reference in a lampoon\(^3\) written during her lifetime to the effect that she was given to boasting about her blood. According to Johannes Prinz\(^3a\) it was a custom even then for players to set up antecedents for themselves to enhance their reputation. Curll's story, then, may be open to question. The same lampooner had his own ideas:


\(^3a\)Johannes Prinz, *John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, His Life and Writings*, Palaestra, number 154 (Leipzig, Mayer and Muller, 1927), p. 50.
But prithee Joe, since so she boasts her Blood
And few have yet her Lineage understood,
Tell me, in short, the Harlot's true Descent...

Her mother was a common Strumpet known,
Her father half the Rabble of the Town.
Begot by Casual and Promiscuous Lust,
She still retains the same Promiscuous Gust,
For Birth into a Suburb Cellar hurl'd,
The Strumpet came up Stairs into the World. 4

4 Gould, ibid., p. 319.

According to the tombstone at Acton, the date of her birth is 1658.
Some writers have wanted to place it earlier; probably because they followed Dr. Doran's statement 5 that Sir William Davenant first trained her for the stage. Dr. Doran, in turn, probably elaborated on Curr 6 and Thomas Davies 7 who said that Lady Davenant, a "particular friend" of Sir William, took the girl and educated her in genteel fashion, calling her to the attention of Sir William who attempted to prepare her for the stage. This tale loses likelihood in view of the inconsistency of the dates of Davenant's death, 1668, of Barry's birth, 1658, and of her first appearance at Dorset Garden about 1673. 8 However that may be, the date on the tombstone is generally accepted, no authority having been found for another.

Anthony Aston, a younger actor who was playing before Mrs. Barry had left the stage, in a Brief Supplement to Colley Cibber, Esquire wrote that "She was Woman to Lady Shelton of Norfolk (my Godmother) — when Lord
Rochester took her on the stage. That Aston was personally acquainted


with her should be considered in comparing the story with Curll's of doubtful vintage. Indeed, she might have been Colonel Barry's daughter, a "woman" to Lady Shelton, and a member of Lady Davenant's household, all three.

There is another account, further variant and probably purely fictional, which runs to this effect: that she was the daughter of a yeoman in Kent, that she was sent to London by her parents to avoid seduction by one Lewin Brown (whose persistence, however, overreached the parents!) there to stay with an uncle until her wit, her "majestick" stature, "with a good stock of Impudence, recommended her to the Playhouse" where she quickly won fame. 10 The short sketch of Captain Smith in the Dictionary of National


Biography indicates the nature of his "works" as a biographer of highwaymen; his fame seems to have been widest in police courts and taverns. 11


By 1673, at least, Mrs. Barry seems to have got into the Duke's Company of players at Dorset Garden, and all testimony agrees, with the sole exception of Captain Smith, that she was a failure. The prompter at the Duke's Theatre, John Downes, speaking of the year 1673, says, "About this time the Company was very much Recruited, having lost by death . . . [others] by force of Love . . . Erept the Stage: In their rooms came in
Mrs. Barry . . . [and others].


At this time, to quote Tony Aston, "... she could neither sing nor dance, no, not in a country dance." 13 Colley Cibber (who, it will be noted, also acted with Mrs. Barry and was high in his praises of her) took her fault to be "... a defective Ear, or some unskilful Dissonance in her manner of Pronouncing." 14 He adds that she was discharged at the end of her first year and that her voice and person were pleasant and her understanding good. Curll reiterates Cibber on the bad ear, the pleasant voice and manner, but goes him two better on the number of times she was rejected. 15 Wrong emphasis, then, and inability to intone in the accepted manner of the time seem to have hindered her success.

Several noblemen, to continue the Curll account, 16 hazarded the guess that she would never play any part well. The Earl of Rochester, seeing true genius in her, wagered heavily that within six months he could transform her into a good actress, acceptable to the same audience that had rejected her. He was taken up on his bet and began to instruct her privately:

... he made her enter into the Nature of each Sentiment; perfectly changing herself, as it were, into the person, not merely by the proper Stress or Sounding of the Voice, but feeling really, and being in the Humour, the Person.
she represented was supposed to be in.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., p. 16

The Earl's care was painstaking. He rehearsed her in the parts of "the Little Gipsy" (Hellen, perhaps) in Mrs. Aphra Behn's \textit{Rover} and of Isabella, the Hungarian Queen in the Earl of Orrery's \textit{Mustapha}. Each of the parts he made her rehearse thirty times on the stage and twelve of them in costume. He emphasized facial expression and analyzed every motion for grace and majesty. Satisfied with his work he invited King Charles, the Duke and Duchess of York, and many others to see the result: Mrs. Barry in a revival of \textit{Mustapha} (the date, around 1673). The applause was enthusiastic and unanimous and her reputation as an actress was established. The Duchess of York especially showed her favor.

Modern authority has accepted the substance of this tradition. Johannes Prinz in his study of Rochester says, "One may say without much exaggeration that it is only owing to Rochester's efforts that this remarkable actress was won for the English stage."\textsuperscript{18} It fits in perfectly with the mode of the witty noble playing the finished amateur in theatrical matters and the like. Furthermore, there is other authority than Curll's in support of the tradition. Tony Aston made note of it in the citation given above. Davies was acquainted with the story and retells it in his \textit{Dramatic Miscellanies}.\textsuperscript{19} That Rochester was capable of this appears from the

\textsuperscript{18}Rochester, \textit{Life and Writings}, p. 66.

\textsuperscript{19}III, 199.

story of his training of another actress, Miss Sarah Cook. The anecdote
is related in the *Memoirs of Count Grammont*\(^\text{20}\) and long was thought to refer to Mrs. Barry. From the nature of the context it is obvious that Mrs. Barry isn't meant: this actress was pretty but the "worst actress in the kingdom," and she entered in the King's Company of comedians, as Sarah Cook did;\(^\text{21}\) finally, her name is given as Sarah.\(^\text{22}\)


The date of such a revival of Orrery's *Mustapha* is not known; it may have been performed at court. Genest\(^\text{23}\) points out that the second wife of

\(^\text{23}\) *Some Account of the English Stage from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830* (10 vols., Bath, H. E. Carrington, 1832), I, 157.

the Duke of York arrived in England November 21, 1673, thinks that Barry's first success on the stage was during 1674. Johannes Prinz states that "her first recorded appearance in 1674 was a decided failure"\(^\text{24}\) but gives no authority. At any rate she seems to have been reengaged by 1675 when her name appears in the small part of Draxilla in Thomas Otway's first tragedy *Alcibiades*.\(^\text{25}\) In this "... the great actress, Mrs. Barry, gave the first indication of her rising merit."\(^\text{26}\)

\(^\text{24}\) Rochester, *Life and Writings*, p. 51.

\(^\text{25}\) Genest, I, 177.

\(^\text{26}\) Davies, III, 179.

During 1676, her proficiency and reputation must have become well known if they had not already, for this year she created one of the best parts in one of the finest plays of the manners school: notably, that of Mrs. Loveit
in Etherege's *The Man of Mode*. The part is important and calls for some skill in acting. It is interesting to note in this connection the relation of Mrs. Loveit to Dorimant, the rake of the play, who is often said to have been copied from Lord Rochester: this may well have afforded him and the audience added amusement.

From 1576 to 1680, Mrs. Barry may have been serving a sort of apprenticeship to her art. Her greatest fame was to be won in tragedy, but of sixteen roles portrayed between these years, only three of them were in tragedies, these chiefly as the confidante to the tragediennes. Such a part was hers of Phoenicia to Mrs. Lee's Berenice in Otway's *Titus and Berenice* in 1677. In comedy she was making a name for what Dr. Doran calls "the rattling, reckless, audacious women" of Mrs. Behn, Thomas D'Urfey,

27*Their Majesties' Servants*, p. 51

and others. Mrs. Lee and Mrs. Betterton were still the leading ladies of the company.

But in 1680, came Otway's best tragedy to date with a part for Madam Barry that she turned into a triumph: "Mrs. Barry's Monimia seems to have raised that reputation to the height which had gradually been increasing." 28

28*Davies, III*, p. 196.

She came now to be known as "the famous Mrs. Barry," says Downes:

... All the Parts being Admirably done, especially the Part of Monimia: This, and Belvidera in Venice preserv'd... together with Isabella, in the Fatal Marriage: These three parts, gain'd her the Name of Famous Mrs. Barry, both at Court and City; for whenever She Acted any of those three Parts, she forc'd Tears
from the Eyes of her Auditory, especially those who have any Sense of Pity for the Distress't. 29


Thomas Betterton, the leading actor of the company and Castalio to her Montima in this tragedy, is supposed to have said this, "How often have I heard Mrs. Barry say, that she never spoke these Words in the Orphan. -- Ah! poor Castalio! -- without weeping." 30 No dissenting voice is heard on her excellence here. The fame of her creation endured although for 150 years this play kept the stage and her part was played by the most famous tragic actresses of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. 31 Tear-


wringing, to become one of her strong points, from the comments cited above, seems to have been well begun.

Yet she did not neglect the lighter and more delicate lines if we may believe Tony Aston: "To hear her speak the following Speech in the Orphan was a Charm:

I'm never so well pleas'd as when I hear thee speak,
And listen to the music of thy Voice ...

... . . . . . . .
Who's he that speaks with a Voice so sweet,
As the Shepherd pipes upon the Mountain,
When all his little Flock are gathering round him?" 32

32 Cibber's Apology (Lowe's ed.), II, 303.
Madam Barry's life off the stage by this time had had its exciting moments, too. "From the Moment he had this Dispute [the six-month wager], he became intimately acquainted with her, but to the World he kept it private,"\textsuperscript{33} says Curll of the Earl of Rochester. However doubted be he his pre-

\textsuperscript{33}\textit{History}, p. 15.

paration of the actress for the stage, however vague some of the phases of the affair they had, of one fact there can be no doubt -- that Barry was his mistress. Very likely he found her in the servant-room of some lady, from whence he had been known to recruit other mistresses.\textsuperscript{34} Her re-engagement by the Duke's Company in 1675, if true, was probably done in compliment to Lord Rochester as it is known he did the Betterttons some favors about the Court at that time.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{34}\textit{Prinz, Rochester}, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{35}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 51.

Captain Smith gives a lively and probably purely imaginary account of their intrigue,\textsuperscript{36} According to Smith, Rochester found her at the playhouse, "often attacked her with Love Addresses without Success" until he threatened one night to satirize her. The threat turned the trick and "his Lordship prov'd a constant Friend to her till his dying Day . . ." although she carried on intrigues with many noblemen, including the Earl of Dorset at the very time Rochester was besieging her.


Rochester " . . . by talking with her, soon found her the Mistress of exquisite Charms . . . . it was thought that he never loved any person so
sincerely as he did Mrs. Barry."  

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37 Curll, History, p. 15

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For variety in mistresses has often been publicized leads to an investigation of these "charms." Beauty seems not to have been among them. "And yet," says Aston, "this fine creature was not handsome, her mouth op'ning most on the Right Side, which she strove to draw t'other Way, and, at times, composing her face as if sitting to have her picture drawn."  

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38 Cibber's Apology (Lowe's ed.), II, 302.

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Further he describes her as middle-sized with "Darkish" hair and eyebrows, "Light" eyes, her figure "Indifferently plump." Colley Cibber is thought to mean Mrs. Barry in these lines, "... a late valuable Actress (who was conscious her Beauty was not her greatest Merit) desired the Warmth of some Lines might be abated when they have made her too remarkably handsome ... ."  

39 Ramble, a character in Charles Gildon's Comparison Between the Two Stages (1702) puts it thus, "I do think that person the finest woman in the world upon the stage and the ugliest woman off on't."  

40 But, "in her time she has been the spirit of action in everyway."  

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39 Apology, I, 251 and note by Lowe.  
40 Cited in Genest, II, 463.  
41 Loc. cit.

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A portrait of her was made by Sir Godfrey Kneller (there are numerous reproductions) which brings out well the meaning of these comments. The face, in profile, is not beautiful. But the features are strong and the expression is bright; intellectual alertness is written over it. Thomas Davies saw this portrait "above forty years since [1744] at Mrs. Bracegirdle's house in Howard-street. . . . Mrs. Barry, it appeared from
the painting, had not been a great beauty, but her countenance commanded attention and was extremely expressive."42 Curll's "exquisite Charms" —

42 Davies, III, 197.

the quickness one reads into her large eyes which could look soft and "flow with Pity,"43 the full figure, the large twisted mouth used in "... a peculiar Smile she had, which made her the most genteely malicious person that can be imagined..."43 herein, I think, lies the key to her fascination.

43 Curll, pp. 19-20.

In addition to contemporary statements of Rochester's devotion to Mrs. Barry, there are questionable evidences of her jealousy of another actress's relations with Rochester, of a painting of the Earl which Mrs. Barry owned, of a child she bore to him, and of a series of letters he addressed to her.

Curll tells us that, at the time of a dispute between Mrs. Barry and Mrs. Boutel, presumably occurring much later, there were rumors of Mrs. Barry's spite being heightened because she was jealous of the place Boutel had enjoyed in Rochester's graces.44 I was unable to find any other trace of 44 Curll, p. 21.

of this jealousy.

There is a letter written by William Congreve to Mr. Edward Porter, no date being superscribed, which adds an interesting footnote to the Rochester-Barry affair:

Sir:
If you see Mr. Custis to night pray know of him if it be possible for me to have a picture of Lord Rochester which was Mrs. Barry's. I think it is a head. I think it is not as a painting any very great matter, however
I have a very particular reason why. I would have it at any reasonable rate at least the refusal of it, if this can be done he wil . . . oblige his and

Yr;
very humble servant
Wm. Congreve

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This Mr. Custis is probably "John Custis, Gent., formerly Page to the Prince" who was left a good portion of Mrs. Barry's estate in her will.46

46 Roswell G. Ham. Otway and Lee, Biography from a Baroque Age (New Haven, Yale U. P., 1931), p. 239.

That Mrs. Barry bore Rochester a daughter and the date of that birth if fairly fixed by a letter written by Henry Savile to the Earl in 1677, thus:

Whitehall, Dec. 17, 1677

... The greatest newes I can send you from hence is that the King told mee last night, that your Lordship has a daughter borne by the body of Mrs. Barry of which I give your honour joy. I doubt she does not lye in much state, for a friend and protectrice of hers in the Mall was much lamenting her poverty very lately, not without some gentle reflections on your Lordship's want either of generosity or bowells toward a lady who had not refused you the full enjoyment of her charmes.47

47 Historical Manuscripts Commission, Bath MS. II, 161.

This letter does not account for the tradition which almost everyone writing on the subject has mentioned. Rather that seems to stem from a series of letters published in 1697 and commonly assumed to be addressed to Mrs. Barry by Rochester; these letters mention a child, Betty, the fruit of the union.48 Also taken for granted has been the forty pound

annuity with which Rochester remembered a child of his, Elizabeth Clerke, in his will. But Rochester had a mistress named Mrs. Clerke and this is probably her "Betty." Correspondence supposedly addressed to Mrs.


Barry and attributed to Otway also mentions "that sweet Pledge of your first softest Love," which has been taken for her child by Rochester.


William Oldys about 1750 in a manuscript note to Langbaine's Lives of the Dramatick Poets mentions the rumour thus, "Mrs. Barry could get bastards with other men, and 'twas wonderful condescension . . . to let Otway kiss her." Curll tells us the actress had a daughter by Rochester and adds that the Earl settled a forty pound annuity on her in his will, that she died at the age of thirteen.

52 Pinto, Rochester, p. 120. Oldy's notes are not available.

A satire, "To the most Virtuous and most devoted Overkind, Notorious Mad Barry" (unpublished), was written on the occasion of the death of Mrs. Barry's daughter. No date is indicated, but in a manuscript volume, A Choice Collection of Poems, it is placed between poems dated 1688 and 1690. If the date of this poem should be 1689, then the daughter might be Rochester's for according to Curll that daughter died at the age of thirteen (which would have been around 1690). Note the following:
Hail Pious Drab of an Imposthume Brat,  
The Spawn of Blasphemy, Old Fox & cheat:  
Thou Charitable Parent ever Hail  
... ... ... ... ... ...  
Since 'tis the first thing thou didst e're bewail.  

The poet chides Barry to the effect that she should retire the stage --  

He has took the Child, as if he'd let the know  
Thou hast no colour for thy Vices now ...  


Rochester died in 1680; in 1697 Charles Gildon published a series of thirty-five letters "to Mrs. * * *" which until recently were generally ascribed to Mrs. Barry. How Gildon got hold of them, on what grounds he attributed them to Rochester, or why he hid the addressee's name is a mystery.  

"Mrs. Barry being the person to whom those letters were addressed ..." said Curll and added excerpts from the correspondence. His assertion was accepted. The only modern editor of Rochester admits of no doubt and entitles them "to Mrs. [Barry]".

Prinz, Rochester, p. 178.  
Curll, History, p. 15  
Hayward, Works of Rochester (1926), pp. 267-80.

Prinz, however, seems to have overlooked one bit of evidence given in Davies' Dramatic Miscellanea, "Letters addressed to Madam B____, by the Earl of Rochester, were printed in that edition of his poems fit for the public eye, which was published by J. Tonson in 1716; and are generally said to be the earl's epistolary correspondence with this celebrated actress."  

The Dictionary of National Biography speaks, also, of these "letters of Rochester to 'Madame B' first printed in Tonson's edition ... 1716."  

Prinz in his exhaustive bibliography of the editions of Rochester

Prinz, III, 199.  
Prinz, I, 1239.
mentions no such edition by Tonson in this year.58 "To Madam B..."

58Rochester, Appendix I.

points one step nearer to Barry as the recipient than "to Mrs. * * *."

The internal evidence from the letters points the other way. Prinz sums it up thus: their terms are those of professional gallantry of the time with no mention of the addressee's professional career which the writer must have been intensely interested in; it seems that this woman had no connection with the theatre, "Whether you will come to the Duke's Playhouse to Day, or at least let me come to you when the Play is done, I leave to your Choice..." 59 "I have therefore sent you the two Plays that are acted this afternoon..." 60 "Shew yourself at the Play..." 61 He concludes it is quite unlikely these letters were addressed to Mrs. Barry.62

60Page 29.
61Page 30.
62Prinz, Rochester, p. 53.

Furthermore, Rochester speaks in several places of her servants, "Your Maid;" once he had wronged her "Wretches"63 -- it is not at all likely that Mrs.

63Pages, 17, 43.

Barry could have had servants by 1680. Note in this connection that Savile mentions her poverty at the time she was lying in, 1677.

On the other hand, he talks of her safe delivery, of the child's belonging to "the soft Sex I love,"64 of taking away the child,65 of being absent, of his illness while she was confined.66 He tells her of news

64Page 10.
65Page 26.
66Page 27.
from the King he had heard about her. These seem to jibe with the state

67 *Familiar Letters*, p. 27.

of affairs Savile describes in his letter: the child a girl; Rochester's absence and illness at the time of her Birth. Savile's news of the child came from the King.

The internal evidence points also, it seems to me, to more than one addressee. Mrs. * * * is not necessarily one woman. In the first letter he speaks of Mrs. R. ___ (Roberts?) 68. Later he regrets that he can't go to Windsor with the lady. 68a Such a lady could hardly be the owner of

68 Page 8. See also, Ham on Gildon's unscrupulousness as editor, Otway and Lee, p. 35.
68a Page 33.

wretches, a lady who goes to Court, and at the same time one to whom his lordship would send a "box" of trifles such as she might need at her lying-in, from whom he would take away his child because she didn't seem to be able to care for it properly. These inconsistencies and the conventionalized tone of many of the letters indicate the implausibility of assigning the whole series to any one lady, much less to Barry alone. No date is given for any of them and the only indication of a date is the birth of the child, possibly Elizabeth Barry's child. It should be remembered that Rochester had many mistresses to whom he might write.

Johannes Prinz thinks the following letter printed by Captain Smith the only genuine example of Rochester - Barry correspondence: "Its passionate tone is quite different . . . and reminds one strikingly of the diction of Rochester's genuine love lyrics." 69

69 Prinz, Rochester, p. 54
My Dear,

As you are the Life and Joy of my Soul, I die for you, and languish after you, my Life; since I am out of your Presence (which is more intolerable to me than the severest Death) I cannot live without a Sight of you; so I wait upon Directions... which if you forbid me, you strike a Dagger to my Heart, which now bleeds for you. Your answer is my Sentence of Life or Death, which I impatiently wait for and if you ever loved, I now beg your Pity on the most unhappy and forlorn.

Rochester

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70 Prinz, Rochesteriana, p. 27, repr.

Barry's answer is published and arranges the desired meeting in Covent-Garden, "the Earl of P... he goes out of town."

But the Earl of Rochester was by no means the only conquest Madam Barry made during her first decade on the stage. It is pretty likely that the poet who wrote her first success, who wrote her greatest triumph to date, who was to write more famous roles for her to portray had fallen hopelessly in love with the lady and had met that to which he would prefer hate—mere Friendship. This affair is quite as famous as the Rochester one.

However, the needy poet was scorned. A recent biographer summed up Otway's life thus, "His life was fashioned upon a single theme: 'I love, I Dote, I am Mad, and know no means.'" 71

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71 Ham, Otway and Lee, p. 133.

In the same volume with Rochester's were published six letters... Written by the most Ingenious Mr. Tho. Otway... edited by Tom Brown. 72

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72 Familiar Letters, I (1697), 77-92.

They are more touching and strike a truer note than Rochester's and sing a sadder song, one of unrequited love. The language is carefully balanced
and often scans as blank verse. By tradition these, though not super-
scribed, are addressed to Mrs. Barry. This theory was attacked and re-
examined some years ago in a series of scholarly articles and books and
some new matter brought to light on it.\textsuperscript{73} The result of these but es-

\textsuperscript{73} J. C. Ghosh, "Thomas Otway and Mrs. Barry," \textit{Notes and Queries}, 12th ser., XII (192), 103-105; Roswell G. Ham, "Otway, Rochester, and Mrs.
Barry," \textit{Notes and Queries}, 149 (1925), 165-167; Graham Green, "Otway and
Mrs. Barry," \textit{Times Literary Supplement}, April 16, 1931, p. 307 (and the
reviewer's answer); Roswell J. Ham, \textit{Otway and Lee} (New Haven, Yale U. P.,
1931), pp. 82-96, 179-186; J. C. Ghosh, ed., \textit{The Works of Thomas Otway}

ablishes the tradition more firmly.

William Oldys's manuscript notes to Langbaine contain this reference,

"In the familiar letters . . . are six of Otway . . . written as I am in-
formed, to Mrs. Barry . . . "\textsuperscript{74} His informer seems to have been old John
Bowman,\textsuperscript{75} an actor who appeared with Mrs. Barry and who lived to be nearly
ninety.\textsuperscript{76} From Oldys the note comes into print in the \textit{Biographica Dramati-
tica} of 1812,\textsuperscript{77} from which Gosse\textsuperscript{78} and any number of nineteenth century

\textsuperscript{74} Ghosh, \textit{Notes and Queries}, 12th ser., XII, 104.

\textsuperscript{75} Ham, \textit{Notes and Queries}, 149, p. 187. See also Theophilus Cibber,
\textit{Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland} (London, P. Griffiths,
1753), III, 35.

\textsuperscript{76} Summers, ed., \textit{Roscius Angli.}, note, 213.

ii, 555.

\textsuperscript{78} Sir Edmund Gosse, \textit{Seventeenth Century Studies} (New York, Scribner's

editors of Otway took it up.

However, there is earlier authority than Oldys. In the first col-
clected edition of Nathaniel Lee's plays in 1713, the year of Mrs. Barry's death,
appeared an advertisement of the letters "the ingenious Mr. Otway to that
excellent actress Mrs. Barry,"\textsuperscript{79} The name was added by Richard Wellington,
the original publisher.

The language of the letters points strongly enough to Mrs. Barry. Otway had seen Mrs. Barry by the time of her appearance in Alcibiades, 1675, at least, and in the letters has "languished" seven years:

I lov'd you early; and no sooner had I beheld that soft bewitching Face of yours, but I felt in my Heart the very Foundation of All my Peace give way: But when you became anothers I did then rebel . . . each Day it was my chance to see or be near you: with stubborn Sufferance . . . to bear and brave your Power . . .

Later he speaks of her resolution to quit the world, a world of which he and she were both a part. Add to this her practice of carefully consulting the dramatist about every part, and the approximate date of these letters, seven years after 1675, and then consider the relationship that must have existed during those years between Otway, the creator of Draxille, Phoenicia, Lucia (Cheats of Scapin), Mrs. Goodvile (Friendship in Fashion), Monimia, Levinia (Caius Marius, 1680), Lady Dunce (The Soldier's Fortune, 1681), Belvidera (Venice Preserved, 1682), and Mrs. Barry, who acted each of them. These parts may well have given him opportunity to see or be near her each day. That he saw her become another's is a discrepant note: Barry must have belonged to Rochester when Otway first saw her and he surely was aware of this.
Such obvious parallels exist between the tragic protagonists in his plays and the poet as pictured in such of his poems as *The Complaint*, *The Poet's Complaint to His Muse*, *The Enchantment*, as to lead one to believe he was drawing materials from life. In the tragedies Carlos, Jaffeir, Castallo are perpetually despairing over their separation or disappointment.\textsuperscript{83} The same tone prevails in the letters:  

\textsuperscript{83}See Ham's arguments for this idea, *Otway and Lee*, p. 87; Ghosh's, *Notes and Queries*, 12th ser., XII, 104.  

I love you, I dote on you; Desire makes me mad, when I am near you; and Despair when I am from you . . .  
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .  
My Sufferings, my Diligence, my Sighs, Complaints, and Tears are of no Power with your haughty Nature . . . gross, thick homespun Friendship . . . must that be my Lot!\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{84}Familiar Letters, I, 73, 79.  

It is worth noting in this connection Rochester's patronage of Otway which ended about 1677 with the dedication of *Titus and Berenice* to the Earl. In that play the hero is torn between love and friendship, two great loyalties. After this, Otway's patron seems to have turned elsewhere; the tradition goes that Rochester was indignant at the poet's presumptions to his mistress.\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{85}Frinz, *Rochester*, p. 78, argues against this.  

Otway's champions maintain that Mrs. Barry kept him dangling on till the end to write parts for her.\textsuperscript{86} At least one historian blames his approach:  

\textsuperscript{86}Summers, ed., *Otway*, I, lxvii.
That language of doting, madness, and despair, however it may succeed upon raw girls, is so seldom successful with such practitioners of the passion of love as Mrs. Barry was that it only hardens their vanity against their consent.  

When Thomas Otway died in 1685 he had written Venice Preserved in which Madam Barry enacted Belvidera during 1682. Downes numbers Belvidera one of her three finest portrayals. "In it she seems to have attained a perfection which was acknowledged as unrivalled and unapproached." 

This same year of Otway's death was published Gould's fierce assault on Mrs. Barry in The Playhouse. In it, Gould lays a death at Barry's door:

But talking of their shifts, I mourn, my Friend, I mourn thy sad, unjust, disastrous end; Here 'twas thou didn't resign they worthy Breath, And fall Victim of a sudden Death: . . . The shame, the quiet, the horror and disgrace, Light on the Punk, the Murderer and the Place . . . How well do those deserve the general hiss, That will converse with such a thing as this? 

These lines refer to Mrs. Barry. This "Friend" may or may not be Otway. Ham suggests that Gould and Otway were friends—note the tone of the following in a poem marked by its scathing satire:

But Thee, my Otway, from the Grave, I'll raise, And crown thy memory with lasting Praise.

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87 Oldys's MS notes to Langbaine, repr. Ham, Otway and Lee, p. 183
88 Summers, "Introduction," Works of Otway, I, xcii
89 The Playhouse, Summers' Restoration Theatre, p. 311.
90 Otway and Lee, p. 85
91 Restoration Theatre, p. 306
After Rochester's death in 1680, tradition has it that Sir George Etherege took over his mistress. "... but from the information of Mr. Bowman we can say, that he cohabited, with the celebrated Mrs. Barry, the actress, and had one daughter by her; that he settled 5 or 6,000 l. on her, but that she died young."\(^{92}\) According to Sybil Rosenfeld, author of the most up-to-date biographical study of Etherege, Oldys is the only authority for the tradition.\(^{93}\) The only reference to Barry in the Letterbook is vague. Etherege writes from Ratisbon in 1688, "The best fortune I have had here has been a player, something handsomer and as much a jilt as Mrs. Barry." Later in the same letter, discussing the theatrical world he has left behind "Mrs. Barry bears up as well as I myself have done. My poor Lord Rochester could not weather the cape ..."\(^{94}\) That Etherege could settle a small fortune on this daughter at a time when he seems to have been short of funds doesn't seem likely, as is pointed out by a recent editor of Etherege.\(^{95}\)

\(^{92}\)T. Cibber, Lives, III, 36. See also, Biographica Dramatica (1782), I, p. 149; Gosse, Seventeenth Century Studies, p. 284


\(^{94}\)Ibid., p. 337-8.


The letters speak of another rival, one who was alive at the time, in terms that don't quite fit Etherege:

Take it [your heart] Ill-natur'd, take it; give it to him who would fill your Lap with Gold; court you with offers of vast rich Possessions; give it the Fool that has nothing but his Mony to plead for him.\(^{96}\)

\(^{96}\)Familiar Letters, I, 79.
Ham cites in this connection a couplet from an unpublished Satire on
Three Late Marriages:

Which makes her all the Captains Love forgett
And nauseous St. Johns to her Arms admitt. 97

97B.M., Harleian 6913, f. 345. Quoted in Ham, Otway and Lee, p. 132.

The Captain is evidently Otway who became so on an expedition to Flanders
with the Duke of Monmouth about 1678. St. Johns must have been Sir Henry
St. John, the father of Bolingbroke of eighteenth century renown. Henry,
the son of Sir Walter, was a dissipated man about town, who got into trou-
ble for killing Sir William Estcourt in a brawl in 1684, and is said by
Burnet (Own Times, ii, 444) to have had to pay Chas. II and two ladies
16,000 l. for a pardon. 98 Ham calls him "a fop of the first water." 99

98DNB (1897), 50, p. 129.
99Otway and Lee, 183.

Captain Smith mentions several other nobles who won Madam's favors;
what his authority is, if any, we don't know. He enumerates the Earls of
Dorset, of P. ... ke (later Pembroke), of S. ... and of a fourth "great
Earl," the last of whom pursued quite ardently but finally was forced to
carry her away to his "Country Seat" to win her. 100

100Rochestriania, pp. 27-30.

During this time, Mrs. Barry's fame was growing in her vocation as
the lampoons assert it was in her "avocation." After the union of the two
companies in 1682, she created the part of Marmoutier in Dryden and Lee's
tragedy, The Duke of Guise.

Witness to her rising star is the fact that after her success in The
Orphan she came to be more and more trusted with delivering the prologues
and epilogues. These players took the office of pleader; thus it was necessary that they be of sure-fire popularity. " Appropriately to deliver a Prologue or Epilogue would require a certain particular quality or verve." 101 It has been found that Mrs. Barry gave at least six prologues and some eighteen epilogues from 1679 to 1709. 102


To her list of new roles in 1684 at the Theatre Royal, Mrs. Barry added Lucina in Rochester's adaptation of Valentinian; Fausta in Lee's Constantine the Great; and Porcia in Otway's last play, a comedy, The Atheist. Lucina, says Dr. Doran, is "the very last part any other lover would have thought of for his mistress . . . the young actress gayly alluded, in a prologue, to the demure nymphs in the house, to the irresistible blandishments of this very prince of blackguards." 103 The prologue laments the early death of such a fine wit, and the following lines are more touching than gay:

As sharply could he wound, as sweetly engage,
As soft his Love, and as divine his Rage.
He charm'd the tender'st Virginia to Delight. 104

103 Their Majesties' Servants, p. 131.
104 Rochester, Poems on Several Occasions With Valentinian; A Tragedy . . . (London, for Jacob Tonson, 1705), p. 58.

A hazy tradition (again stemming from Mr. Currll, and widely credited) dates a renowned performance of Mrs. Barry in the part of Queen Elizabeth as occurring in 1685. 105 The Duchess of York, it will be remembered, had

105 See, Genest, I, 448.
favored Mrs. Barry from the time of her first success, presenting her, afterwards, with her wedding suit and coming to her" ... to improve in the English language.\textsuperscript{106} The Duchess was crowned Queen of England

\textsuperscript{106} All of this story comes from Curll, History, p. 17 sq.

April 23, 1685, and now gave up her coronation robes for her protegée to act Elizabeth in. From this play, The Unhappy Favourite or the Earl of Essex by Banks, "indifferently wrote and stuf with Bombast," the actress brought Elizabeth to life as an idolized character. Here it was Barry against history, and for those who saw her Barry won.

The Air with which she looked when she penetrated into the Thoughts of the Countesses of Rutland and Nottingham (on their endeavouring to hide the different Passions of Hate and Love) shewed, more than the Language, the piercing Genius of that great Lady ... her Eyes flowed with Pity for the Follies and Mismannages which drew on their Fates ... so that Love, Severity and Pity, were so blended together in this Politic Queen, one could not say which had the Mastery ... \textsuperscript{107}

Either this comment is from the hand of one who saw the performance or it is the work of a master liar. No record of the Unhappy Favourite exists for 1685, although Barry played it at Haymarket in 1706.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{107} Curll, p. 18. See also, Dr. Doran, Their Majesties' Servants, p. 54
\textsuperscript{108} See Rosamond Gilder, Enter the Actress (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1931), p. 147 sq. for a recent review of this event.

From 1686 to 1691, Mrs. Barry's performances seem to have been few, and little is heard of either her or them. But in 1692, a famous note of praise by Mr. John Dryden in his preface to Cleomenes focuses the spot on her once more, as Cassandra this time.

Dryden has been well pleased with the performance of Cleomenes and says as much -- continuing on the actors:
... but none of them will be offended, if I say what the town has generally granted, that Mrs. Barry, always excellent, has, in this tragedy, excelled herself, and gained a reputation beyond any woman whom I have ever seen in the theatre. 109

Colley Cibber, who first came on the stage about 1692, remembers her as Cassandra and ventures to add "that ... the same compliment to this Hour 1749 may be due her Excellence." 110 He adds that Mrs. Barry was then in possession of almost all the chief tragedy rôles. "And tho' she was then not a little past her Youth, she was not till that time fully arriv'd to the maturity of Power and Judgment 111 -- the short life of beauty is not enough to form a "complete actress." But Colley does not agree that this is her greatest role, thinks Dryden's partiality for Cassandra led him to mark this her masterpiece; there is no "Compassion" here as in Monimia, "nor equal cause for Admiration as in the nobler Love of Cleopatra, or the tempestuous Jealousy of Roxana ... where Mrs. Barry shone with a much brighter Excellence than in Cassandra." 112

Writing, further, of the hard times in the theatre at this moment, Cibber illustrates how unquestioned a position Mrs. Barry had come to occupy. The patentees were in debt, audiences had fallen off, actor's salaries were


110 Apology, I, 158.

111 Ibid.

112 Ibid., p. 161, and Note 1 where Lowe points out that she had not played Roxana nor Cleopatra as yet.
cut, and Christopher Rich, in cutting, started with the principals. "To bring this about with a better Grace, they, under Pretence of bringing younger Actors forward, ordered several of Betterton's and Mrs. Barry's chief Parts to be given to young Powel and Mrs. Bracegirdle."[113] But

[113] Ibid., p. 189.

Mrs. Bracegirdle had the good sense to accept none of those parts.

Downes mentions three plays, produced during the next two years, that were outstanding: Congreve's *Double Dealer* and *Old Bachelor*, 1693, and Southerne's *Fatal Marriage*, 1694: "All 3 good Plays; and Madam Barry's *Unparrell'd.*"[114] The *Old Bachelor*'s brilliant cast has more than once been noted. Thomas Davies writes:

> The stage, perhaps, never produced four such handsome women, at once, as Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Bracegirdle, Mrs. Mountford, and Mrs. Bowman; when they appeared together in the last scene of the *Old Bachelor*, the audience was struck with so fine a groupe of beauty, and broke out into loud applause.[115]


Evidently the stage was showing off Mrs. Barry's features to advantage once more. Downes had already mentioned Isabella in *The Fatal Marriage* as one of the roles which gained her the name of "Famous Mrs. Barry."

It should be noted that there were probably frequent command performances of Barry's famous roles at court, especially in view of the interest James II's Queen seems to have shown in the actress. The records of such performances are pretty meager and consist chiefly in warrants for payment
by the Lord Chamberlain to the Lord Treasurer. Eileen Boswell in a recent study of the court stage has listed these warrants as has Allardice Nicoll.

Mrs. Barry’s name appears on most of them and Professor Nicoll has misinterpreted these as gifts to her. But several of them state definitely that the money has been assigned to her by the rest of the actors, and the explanation seems to be simply that she was persona grata to some one at Court who could secure prompt remittance.

Twenty pounds, later twenty-five, was usually the reward for a play:

Mrs. Barry seems to have been a favorite at Court and was probably largely instrumental in securing the warrant by which the actors set up their independence, but there is little trace of the Betterton-Barry company at Whitehall: the dedication and prologue of Banks’ Cyrus the Great, published 1696, indicate a Court performance, which may, of course antedate the secession, and there is an obscure reference to a play acted by ‘both companies’ on 4 November 1697.

In 1695 Betterton, Mrs. Barry and other old actors of the Duke’s company stated their complaints against the united management to Dorset, Lord Chamberlain, and were granted a separate license. “The authority is given to Betterton, Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Bracegirdle ... The position of women on the stage was definitely established.” The new company opened
in a new theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields on April 29, 1695, with Congreve's Love for Love, Mrs. Barry as Lady Frail: "... This Comedy being extraordinary well Acted ... it took 13 Days Successively" 121 -- an unusual run.

It is tempting at this point to connect Mrs. Barry's prominent part in the break with the united company and the license granted to her and Mr. Betterton, with the influence that Dorset exerted to bring this about, and with the suggestion thrown out by the quotation above that she may have been persona grata to someone at Court. Then, recall Captain Alexander Smith's allusion to an affair with Dorset and the letter he includes as from Dorset to Barry 122 in his small collection; and read into all this the bare possibility of an affair. There is little information to back up such a guess but it is a possibility.

The possibility that Mrs. Barry married, or contemplated marrying, appears in the light of a satire On Three Late Marriages, 123 an unpublished piece which contains the following:

At thirty-eight, a very hopeful whore
The only one o'the trade that's not profuse. . .

"Thirty-eight" would place the date at around 1696. "It is all quite obscure as to the man, but we are supplied with the epithet "slattern Betty Barry' . . ." 124 Her marriage presents another problem which it seems im-

121 Downes, Roscius, p. 44.
122 Prinz, Rochesteriana, p. 28.
123 B. M. Harleian MS 6913, f. 345, cited in Ham, Otway and Lee, p. 239.
124 Ham, p. 239.
possible to clarify without further discovery of material.

In Congreve's tragedy, The Mourning Bride, 1697, Mrs. Barry created
the part of Zara, one of her famous ones. The play "... had such Suc-
cess, that it continu'd Acting Uninterrupted 13 Days together,"ª said
Downes. Robert Gould added a third section this year to his satire, The
Playhouse, in which he attacks Mrs. Barry fiercely, calling her Zara.¹²⁶
Genest¹²⁷ remarks that the genius of Congreve comes in and goes out with
..."¹²⁸

ªRoscius Anglicanus, p. 44.
¹²⁷Genest, II, 120.
¹²⁸Antony Aston, Brief Supplement, repr. in Apology, II, 302.

In the Comparison Between the Two Stages published in 1702, Gildon (?)
indicates that Barry was holding her own as an actress. She would have
been forty-four at this time and forty-four was a pretty advanced age dur-
ing the seventeenth century. Sullen speaks:

Age and intemperance are the fatal enemies of beauty; she's
guilty of both; she has been a rioter in her time; but the
edge of her appetite is long ago taken off; she still charms
(as you say) upon the stage; but even off I don't think so
rudely of her as you do ... Ramble ... but on the stage
I am willing to let her still pass for an heroine.¹²⁹

¹²⁹Repr. in Genest, II, 463-4.

In 1700 she played Mrs. Marwood in Congreve's Way of the World, but
the comparative lack of success of this play upon its first performance ac-
counts, no doubt, for the silence of Mrs. Barry's commentators. For this
same year Downes commends Mrs. Barry's acting in the title role of Rowe's
Ambitious Stepmother, the same for her Arpasia in Rowe's Tamerlane, 1702.¹³⁰
One of Mrs. Barry's last great melting heroines was Calista of Rowe's *Fair Penitent*, 1703. At least one performance in this play's run was broken up by an incident that turned it into comedy. Mr. Powell was playing Lothario but he allowed his dresser, one Warren, to lie in the bier as the dead Lothario. At a very touching moment, as Calista was weeping over Lothario's corpse, Powell, a man of quick temper who evidently lost track of what was occurring on the stage, bellowed from the wings, "Come here this moment you Son of a Whore or I'll break all the bones in your skin." That was enough for Warren for he jumped out of his bier, sables and all, and started off the stage dragging the bier after him:

-- but this was not all -- the laugh and roar began in the audience and frightened poor Warren so much, that with the bier at his tail, he threw down Calista and overwhelmed her with the table, lamp, books, bones, & c. -- he tugged till he broke off his trammels and made his escape, and the play at once ended with immoderate fits of laughter -- this story was told to Chetwood by Bowman.131

No one deigns to mention the bruises Calista must have received on this occasion!

Another incident which has become a part of theatre tradition concerning Mrs. Barry is not so easy to place in time. It is told by Curll with flourishes and supposedly took place in an enactment of Lee's *Rival Queens*. It seems that Mrs. Boutel, a "flute-voiced" actress with a childish face who played the young innocent lady and was a favourite of the town, had incurred earlier the jealousy of Mrs. Barry. Then they had disputed over a veil which
the property-man had through partiality given to Boutel. This caused a hot dispute back-stage between the scenes and ultimately was carried into the performance. Barry was playing Roxana; Boutel, Statira.

... The dispute spirited the Rivals with such a natural resentment to each other, they were so violent in performing their Parts, and acted with such Vivacity, that Statira on hearing the King was nigh, begs the Gods to help her for that moment; on which Roxana hastening the designed Blow, struck with such a Force, that tho' the Point of the Dagger was blunted, it made way through Mrs. Boutel's Stayes, and entered about a Quarter of an Inch into the Flesh ... And then comes a delightful understatement:

the Veil dispute had so angered Mrs. Barry that she didn't use the customary caution in the dagger blow. ... 132

132 Curll, p. 21

It seems the offender got by with saying she had been carried away by the illusion.

Mrs. Boutel was the creator of Statira at the Theatre Royal in 1677.132a to Mrs. Marshall's Roxana. A performance of the play is recorded at Drury Lane, June 13, 1704, but the names of the two queens are omitted from the bill; 133 Mrs. Barry was acting at Lincoln's Fun Fields at this time. At Haymarket on December 30, 1706, Mrs. Barry acted Roxana to Mrs. Brasegirdle's Statira and "... her admirable acting seemed to have new-formed the Character. 134 Genest says that Mrs. Boutel left the stage around 1696.135 I was able to find no trace of this supposed performance. Modern writers136 have thrown no light on the question.

132a Genest, I, 198.
133 Genest, II, 300.
134 Curll, p. 19
135 Genest, II, 94, "Mrs. Boutel's name does not often appear after the Union."
136 Dr. Doran, Their Majesties' Servants, p. 54; Gilder, Enter the Actress, p. 147; John Fyvie, Tragedy Queens of the Georgian Era (New York, E. P. Dutton, 1909), p. 11; and others.
Vanbrugh opened his theatre at Haymarket in 1705 and Mrs. Barry acted in one of the first plays performed there, *The Gamester*. She was engaged with this company until the end of the 1708 season. In 1708, she created the part of Phaedra in Smith's *Phaedra* and *Hippolytus*. Chiefly to Barry's creation, done at the age of fifty, is owed the reputation of Phaedra on the English stage; says Curll.\(^{137}\) During the season she acted Lady Macbeth to Betterton's Macbeth in a very elaborate production.\(^{138}\)

\(^{137}\)Page 24.
\(^{138}\)Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving* (New York, Scribner's, 1920), I, 199.

During 1708, she acted at Drury Lane her last original role, a part of little importance, Valide in Goring's *Irene*.\(^{139}\) At the end of this season she is thought to have retired although her last performance in the *Scornful Lady*, that year is marked merely, "last performance this season" in the playbills.\(^{140}\) Her name doesn't appear in 1709 except for Betterton's benefit.

\(^{139}\)Genest, II, 397.
\(^{140}\)Ibid., p. 416

but she was engaged at Haymarket during the season 1709-10, and performed a large number of revivals.

April 7, 1709, was a memorable day in theatrical history -- London theatre-goers saw a performance of Congreve's *Love for Love* at Drury Lane for Mr. Betterton's benefit. The *Tatler* records thus:

*Will's Coffee House, April 8, 1709.*

On Thursday last was acted, for the benefit of Mr. Betterton, the celebrated comedy *Love for Love*. Those excellent players, Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Bracegirdle, and Mr. Doggett, though not at present concerned in the house, acted on that occasion. There has not been known so great a concourse of persons of distinction as at that time ... All the parts were acted to
perfection: the actors were careful of their carriage, and no one was guilty of the affectation to insert witticisms of his own. 141

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141 The Tatler (London, Rivington, 1789), I, 8.

The epilogue written for the occasion by Nicholas Rowe was spoken by Mrs. Barry as she and Mrs. Bracegirdle supported the aged Betterton between them.

So we, to former Leagues of Friendship true,  
Have bid once more our peaceful Homes adieu,  
To aid old Thomas, and to pleasure you.  

...  
Time was, when this good Man no Help did lack,  
And scorn'd that any She would hold his Back.  
But now, so Age and Frailty have ordain'd,  
By two at once He's forced to be sustain'd.  

...  
But true as Steel, he's Mettle to the last.  

...  
Find something for him more than bare Applause.  
In just Remembrance of your Pleasures past,  
Be kind and give him a Discharge at last.  
In Peace and Ease Life's Remnant let him wear,  
And hang his consecrated Buskin here. 142

"At the last word Mrs. Barry pointed to the top of the stage." 143 This pic-

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142 Gildon, Life of Betterton, pp. 3-5.
143 Genest, II, 416.

ture and these words reconstruct a thrilling moment out of the past. All three players represented perfection in the art of acting to an age that had been notably rich in dramatic output and one which had nourished the theatre. Mrs. Barry's last recorded role is that of Lady Easy in Cibber's Care-

less Husband at the Haymarket, June 13, 1710. From this point, it is be-

lieved she retired to Acton in Middlesex where she died in 1713. 144

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144 Curl, p. 127, says she had been off the stage seven years at the time of her death.
Of her death there are two versions. Colley Cibber bumbles dates in his, as he often does:

This great Actress dy'd of a Fever towards the latter end of Queen Anne; the Year I have forgot, but perhaps you will recollect it by an Expression that fell from her in blank Verse, in her last Hours, when she was delirious, \textit{viz.}

\textit{Ha! ha! and so they make us Lords, by Dozens!} \footnote{145}\n
This would have been 1711 when in the last few days of the year Queen Anne created twelve peers. \footnote{145} But Mrs. Barry's death wasn't until 1713. Thomas Davies writing some years after Cibber tells us:

An actress, who was in London when Mrs. Barry died, assured me, many years since that her death was owing to the bite of a favourite lap-dog, who, unknown to her, had been seized with madness. \footnote{146}

\footnote{146} \textit{Dramatic Miscellanies} (1784), III, 205.\n
The two stories, except for Cibber's dates, are not irreconcilable.

Roswell Ham has called attention to Mrs. Barry's will in Somerset House, Leeds 239.

She left a number of bequests, of which one of twenty pounds to Mrs. Bracegirdle is noteworthy and another to the same actress to save 'harmless from any debt of the Playhouse.' To Gabriol Ballam, Gent. she gave her estate of mills at Newbury, the residue of her estate to John Custis, Gent., formerly Page to the Prince and to Abigail Shackhouse, spinster. \footnote{147}\n
\footnote{147} \textit{Otway and Lee}, p. 239.\n
The will was signed November 4, 1713. A memorial, which may be still at her grave in Acton Churchyard, reads:
Near this Place
Lies the Body of Elizabeth Barry,
Of the Parish of St. Mary le Savoy,
Who departed this Life 7th Nov. 1713
Aged 55 Years. 148

148 Noted by Curll, p. 127, and others.

From the will it is evident Mrs. Barry died a wealthy woman, and this
is merely one among many such evidences. One frequently remarked aspect
of her character is that of thrift although it is not dignified by such a
term in the lampoons of the period.

Her salary as player was probably about fifty shillings a week when
highest:

Her Fifty shillings a week had rais'd her price
Besides her other charming Qualities. 149

149 On Three Late Marriages, B.M., Harleian MS. 6913, f. 345. Cited in
Ham, Otway and Lee, p. 181.

Tom Brown in "The Playhouse" points out Betterton and Mrs. Barry from the rest
of the players thus, "See what a deference is paid 'em by the rest of the
cringing Fraternity, from fifty down to ten Shillings a Week." 150

150 The Third Volume of the Works of Mr. Thomas Brown. . . The Fourth Ed-
ition, with large Additions (London, for Sam Briscoe, 1720), p. 39

From benefits, however, she fared better. Cibber thought she was the
first

. . . whose Merit was distinguish'd by the Indulgence of having
an annual Benefit-Play, which was granted to her alone .
. . first in King James's time, and which became not com-
mon to others till the Division of the Company after the
Death of King William's Queen Mary. 151

151 Apology, I, 161. Likewise Davies, III, 237 and others.
However Samuel Pepys on March 21, 1667 saw young men and young women act for their own benefit; again, September 28, 1668, he went to "women's day" at the playhouse. 152 "... An agreement between Betterton and Charles Davenant... dated 14 Oct. 1681, speaks of young men and women playing for their own profit." 153 The following reference is dated 1697:

W'ave but a third Day's Gleanings of the Stage
The rest is yours: -- and hence your Sharers rise,

... ... ...
And hence has Zara all her Thousands got...

153 DNB, I, 1238

One must also note in connection with her wealth the probability of her having profited from her "avocation," to use a gracious term. Mrs. Barry's lampooners are merciless on this score: "Should you lye with her all Night, she would not know you next Morning, unless you had another five Pounds at her Service..." 155

Retirement will befit thy Sins and Age
The vicious Treasure thy base ways have gain'd,
Which for they Daughter's sake was still obtain'd
Give to some Pious Use...

155 Works (1720), III, 39.
157 Playhouse, repr. Restoration Theatre, p. 312
158 Ibid., p. 312

And bitterer still is Robert Gould:

'Twas by this Conduct B_y grew so Rich;
Preferment You can't miss and be a B______

The Knight has nothing another Punk has all:
In another place:

Yet Covetous; She'll Prostitute with any,
Rather than wave the Getting of a Penny 158

The writer of A Satyr on the Players:

S So that wry mouth ne'r since come right again
Yet ten times more she'll bear for Slavish Gain 159
This from The Players turn'd Academicks:

And where's He or She that dares but attest,
That B ... had ever Deceit in her Breast . . . .
That she wickedly harbour'd a Lawless Intent,
Or Traffick'd for Debts at a Hundred per Cent. 160


The rich rival Otway161 mentions in the letters will also be remembered

161 Familiar Letters, I, 79.

as will the generous sum that Etherege is reported to have settled on a
daughter by the actress.

Mrs. Barry's thirty-seven years on the stage, a long span even at
the present, her wide reputation as the creator of some 112 original parts,
the high notes of praise sounded by her contemporaries and by later com-
mentators -- all bear Colley Cibber out as # . . . Proof of the Difficulty
there is in judging with Certainty, from their first Trials, whether young
People will ever make any great Figure on a Theatre. 162

162 Apology, I, 158.

Pity it is that the momentary beauties flowing from an
harmonious elocution cannot, like those of poetry, be
their own record! That the animated graces of the player
can live no longer than the instant breath and motion
that presents them; or at best can but faintly glimmer
through the memory or imperfect attestation of a few sur-
viving spectators.163

163 Cibber, Apology, I, 99-100

With Cibber's limitation in mind, it is pertinent, I think to inquire into
the great art of Mrs. Barry. In the first place her forte was tragedy.
While she was pleasing in the comedy of manners and of other types, it was
as the melting tearful heroines of the heroic plays of Dryden, Otway, Lee and Rowe that she won most fame.

And her art was conscious and conscientious. "It has always been mine and Mrs. Barry's Practice to consult e'en the most indifferent Poet in any Part we have thought fit to accept of," says Betterton.

163Gildon, Life of Betterton, p. 16

The incomparable Mrs. Barry seems always in earnest. . . She indeed always enters into her Part, and is the Person she represents . . . I have frequently observed her change her countenance several times as the Discourse of others on the Stage have affected her in the Part she acted . . . this is to know her Part . . . to express the Passions in the Countenance and Gesture. 164

164Ibid., 40-41.

This matter of gesture and movement upon the stage was coming to be systematized. From Betterton's observations, set down by Gildon and later incorporated by Curll, this much is clear. Certain movements of the hand, the head, the eyes were fixed to portray certain emotions. Mrs. Barry reflects Betterton's theories (though certainly not so woodenly as they are recorded) in her restrained and measured movements: "Mrs. Barry in Characters of Greatness, had a Presence of elevated Dignity, her Mien and Motion superb and gracefully majestick . . ." 165 Even her detractors echo this quality: "Their [sic] Nightly She Majestically rules;" 166 "that Majestical Man and Woman there . . . there is no coming within a Hundred Yards of their High Mightinesses." 167 " . . . When she talked of her hot

165Cibber, I, 161.
166Gould, Playhouse, in Restoration Theatre, p. 311
bleeding Heart, she seemed to feel a Fever within, which by Debate and Reason she would quench. This reminds one of the famous pose Betterton describes in which the left hand is placed over the heart to hold in the passions, leaving the right free to gesture and express those passions.

From the observations, it would seem she made use of varied facial expression, and the face in Kneller's portrait seems ideally fitted for such: large strong features are capable of great flexibility. Curll notes her "Softness of look," in another place her "Eyes flowed with Pity" -- and they were often filled with tears. Her twisted mouth she used to advantage in a "peculiar Smile" which made her look "most genteely malicious."

"Her Voice full, clear, and strong, so that no Violence of Passion could be too much for her: And when Distress or Tenderness possess'd her, she subsided into the most affecting Meoldy and Softness." Aston said she had no "Tone." However, it is certain that a chanting delivery was used at this time, copied from the French classical tragedians. Aston may mean that her chant was individual; Davies says that Rochester "... taught her... the proper cadence or sounding of the voice."

171 Dram. Miscellanies, III, 199.

be strong then or else it wasn't heard over the general confusion of the playhouse.

These elements of Mrs. Barry's style all combined into one effect and this was probably her main distinction: that of exciting pity, of tear-
wringing. Her critics say she was master of all the passions but it
is this one they stress most. Roxana complains to Alexander "... in
so Pathetick a Manner as drew Tears from the greatest part of the Audience."\textsuperscript{172}

\textsuperscript{172}Curll, p. 22.

It is possible that her particular greatness as an actress is summed up in
her utterance of that one line in \textit{The Orphan} which is commonly associated
with her name. By manipulation of her commanding figure, her expressive face,
and her full melodious voice she achieved the overwhelming pity of the mis-
take just witnessed on the stage; then, slowly come the words -- "Ah! Poor
Castalio." Here it is that the tears begin to flow from "her Auditory."

As for comedy, few have spoken of her. Tony Aston says she was "alert,
genteel, easy, pleasant in her face and action; filling the stage with a
variety of gesture."\textsuperscript{173} She always pleased in comedy and she acted in many

\textsuperscript{173}Apology, II, 303.

of the finest of the age. It may well be that Aston's "alert" holds the key
to her success here, for it is in the intellectual quality of comedy of man-
ners that the Restoration excels.

As a personality, so often it is merely "the notorious Madam Barry" who
is shuddered at with horror, that some attention should be given to another
side of her nature. It seems that her character is remembered only in the
violent scathing attacks found in the lampoons. This has led, along with her
reputation for having scorned Otway, to modern appraisals which view her as
she would be viewed if she carried over certain aspects of her conduct into
a modern code of manners and morals. Such a judgment is Sir Edmund Gosse's:

"... an ignoble, calculating woman; no generous act, even of frailty, is
recorded of her.\textsuperscript{174}

\textsuperscript{174} Seventeenth Century Studies, p. 310.

And yet her relations with her colleagues in the theatre were of the best. She played leading lady to Betterton for years, and he speaks in the highest terms of her and, according to Tony Aston, was never better pleased than when playing opposite her.\textsuperscript{175}

\textsuperscript{175} Apology, II, 302.

She could also be a friend. Along with Mrs. Bracegirdle she took a liking to the aspiring actress Mrs. Porter and was instrumental in getting her into the theatre, "treat[ing] her with the most tender indulgence."\textsuperscript{176}

\textsuperscript{176} Ourll, p. 61.

To Mrs. Bracegirdle, too, she seems to have been devoted, remembering her to the extent of some two hundred twenty pounds in her will. Mr. Smith, a retired actor who had created Sir Fopling Flutter, was wanted to appear in Love for Love but declined, even upon requests from some of the nobles. But he yielded when Betterton and Mrs. Barry begged him.\textsuperscript{177}

\textsuperscript{177} Chetwood, General History of the Stage (1702), cited in Summer's, ed., Otway, I, xxxvi.

However mercenary in her love affairs, Barry was capable of cherishing a painting of Lord Rochester with some degree of care.

The pictures which her detractors draw are indeed forbidding but the late seventeenth century satire is rarely mild and attacked even the purest on personal grounds.
There's one, Heaven bless us! by her cursed Pride
Thinks from the world her British Lust to hide

One that is Fox all o're; Barry her name,
That mercenary Prostituted Dame. 178

Robert Gould is known to have been animated in his severest thrusts by personal resentment. 179

178 Satyr on the Players, repr. Summers, Roscius, p. 58.

It isn't a pleasant picture of a woman, this:

A ten times cast off Drab, a Hackney Whore,
Insatiate as a Charnell . . .
Her ev'ry Act in the Venereal Wars
Who e'er would count, as well may count the Stars . . . 180

180 Restoration Theatre, p. 311.

But I submit that it is a one-sided picture, one which should be balanced in the light of certain other knowns.

Hers was not an age of softies. Tenderness didn't get one far in the world of The Man of Mode, of a select cynical theatrical coterie: the ill-starred life of Otway offers a picture of one who lost his balance there-in. But Mrs. Barry was shrewd and calculating and proud, and she held her own, gaining at the same time the respect of her colleagues and her friends—"... of all women the most earth-earthy and the most thoroughly the off-spring of the hard reality of theatrical London." 181

181 Ham, Otway and Lee, p. 82.
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