NATHANIEL LEE'S THE RIVAL QUEENS:
A STUDY OF DRAMATIC TASTE AND TECHNIQUE
IN THE RESTORATION

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the
Graduate School of The Ohio State
University

By
NANCY ELOISE LEWIS, A.B., M.A.

*******

The Ohio State University
1957

Approved by:

.Adviser
Department of English
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I   INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II  ALEXANDER AS HERO</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III THE RIVAL QUEENS AS TRAGEDY</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV  THE RIVAL QUEENS ON THE BOARDS</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V   THE DRAMATIC INFLUENCE OF THE RIVAL QUEENS</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In the annals of English drama, the period of the Restoration is labeled chiefly as the age of the comedy of manners, the witty, sophisticated, amoral society comedy written primarily for the pleasure of the audience of nobility and gentry that attended the theatres during the reign of Charles II. Critical studies devoted to this genre have been numerous; the plays of Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve, as well as those of their lesser contemporaries in this field, have been examined individually and collectively by scholars of several generations. Aesthetically, such attention seems justified. Restoration plays which have survived their age are, for the most part, comedies. Dryden's All for Love is the only notable exception.

The serious drama of the Restoration is just as representative of the age, notwithstanding its limitations as lasting literature; indeed, Allardyce Nicoll calls heroic tragedy "that most characteristic of all the Restoration theatrical species."¹ Thus it cannot be ignored in any

complete study of the dramatic literature of the period. Certain parts of it have not been slighted. There are several adequate treatments of the rhymed heroic tragedy or heroic play, which flourished mainly from 1664 to 1677, and of Dryden's serious dramas. Except, however, for a relatively few studies of individual playwrights, most of which are inadequate, other Restoration tragedy, especially that which succeeded the vogue of the rhymed play, has been examined only casually. Certain isolated plays have received scholarly attention, yet more often than not they have been examined in the light of a particular subject (i.e., the political implications of Otway's *Venice Preserv'd* or Rochester's *Valentinian*, Dryden's adaptation of Shakespeare in *All for Love*, anti-Catholic sentiment in Settle's *The Female Prelate* or Crowne's *Henry the Sixth*) rather than as examples of the dramatic taste and technique of their age. Therefore since knowledge of all types of drama in vogue during any period is needed to determine its dramatic characteristics, and since adequate material on Restoration tragedy is lacking, an examination of this genre seems justified.

During the period from 1660 to 1700 some two hundred and fifty serious plays were presented or published. Obviously many of these dramas are not worth the attention of the student because of their brief

---

existence on the stage and in print, their apparent lack of influence on other plays and playwrights, or the absence of dramatic or literary merit. Some are not extant, being known solely by entries in the Term Catalogues, commentaries in contemporary criticism, or notations in diaries or memoirs. Even after elimination of these categories of plays, there still remains such a large number that there is evident need for a focal point from which one can study varying aspects of Restoration tragedy and, at the same time, bring a many-faceted subject into sharper focus.

Nathaniel Lee's The Rival Queens; or The Death of Alexander the Great, performed first in March, 1676/7, at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, with Charles Hart, leading actor of the King's Theatre, playing Alexander, seems an eminently suitable choice for such a purpose. In the first place, Nat Lee, by the latter part of 1676, had already won attention as a writer of tragedies. Three of his plays had been produced at Drury Lane theatre: The Tragedy of Nero, Emperour of Rome in May, 1674; Sophonisba, or Hannibals Overthrow in April, 1675; and Gloriana, or the Court of Augustus Caesar in January, 1675/6. He had apparently attracted the attention of the Duke of Buckingham, who had been Chancellor of Cambridge when Lee was in attendance at Trinity College and who may have introduced him to London before the Duke's interest wandered from the young playwright. Lee dedicated Nero to the Earl of Rochester,


imploring his protection and favor, probably largely be ause of hostile attacks of the critics after the presentation of the play. Such a dedication does not, of course, constitute evidence that Rochester became Lee's patron. By the end of 1676 the group of young nobles known as the Court Wits attacked Lee in "A Session of the Poets" (ca. December, 1676), a poem written probably as a group enterprise of the Wits, although it has been labeled anonymous and variously attributed to Buckingham and Rochester. A derisive attack on a young playwright's work — this time on Sophonisba — by men of importance in the theatrical world indicates that the man had at least made himself known to the play-going public.

Three-quarters of a century earlier, it will be recalled, Robert Greene singled out a "Young upstart crow" for similar attention. Moreover, even if the noble critics despised the characters in Sophonisba, there is evidence that the play made a great hit with the ladies, especially with the powerful Duchess of Portsmouth, to whom Lee dedicated the printed version, recalling with pride the "largess of glory" the Duchess had bestowed upon him. The popularity of Sophonisba was apparently not maintained by Gloriana, if one accepts Lee's reference in the dedication of the tragedy (a second dedication to the Duchess of Portsmouth) to his blasted hopes as evidence of a cool reception accorded the play.

Sophonisba, however, had the distinction of being presented at Court in 1676. It seems clear that by the end of 1676 the name of Nat Lee was


well known in the somewhat circumscribed world of the theatre; and whether his tragedies brought forth praise or scorn, the fact that they elicited a response is significant.

A second justification for the choice of The Rival Queens as a representative Restoration tragedy is the popularity of the play itself. It is listed among the plays performed by the Theatre Royal Company before royalty, with a warrant for ten pounds being dated March 17, 1676/7.7 Apparently the play was presented twice at Court: on November 15, 1681, by the King's Players at the Theatre in Whitehall, and on October 27, 1686, by the United Company in the same Hall Theatre.8 On December 19, 1685, an order was issued to pay Betterton twenty pounds for "the King & Queenes Maties Seeing the Play called Alexander at the Theatre Royall."9 On January 16, 1689/90, another warrant was issued for a payment of fifteen pounds for a box for the Queen and a box for the Maids of Honor for the Alexander play.10

The Rival Queens went through six editions during the seventeenth century, quartos appearing in 1677, 1684, 1690, two in 1694, and 1699.11

11. As a point of comparison, one notes that The Rehearsal, the clever burlesque by Buckingham and his collaborators, which was known to be a great success on the Restoration stage, likewise went through six editions between its first appearance in quarto in 1672 and the end of the century.
Five more editions appeared during the early part of the eighteenth century. The play, dedicated to the Earl of Mulgrave, was embellished by two noteworthy names: Dryden wrote commendatory verses for it and Sir Car Scroop contributed the prologue. Furthermore, the dedication to Mulgrave makes it clear that this was no merely hopeful gesture tossed at an important but unconcerned nobleman. Mulgrave was interested enough in Lee and his play to "read it over, Act by Act," and give the playwright the benefit of his judgment.

Colley Cibber, whose remarks on The Rival Queens are derogatory, and who is inclined to lay the play's popularity to the stirring performances given by various eminent actors and actresses, nevertheless states that "there was no one tragedy, for many years, more in favour with the town than Alexander." 12 Langbaine says: "This Play has always been applauded by the Spectators, and is acknowledg'd a Master-piece by Mr. Dryden himself, in that Copy of Verses prefix'd to it, which are a sufficient Testimony of its worth." 13

The close of the century did not mark the cessation of interest in The Rival Queens. The presence of eighteenth-century editions has been mentioned. More important, the play was acted with great frequency on the London stage throughout the entire century. Performances were especially numerous during the first half of the century. The popularity of the play spread from London to the provincial theatres during


this period, an added evidence of widespread stage appeal.

The Rival Queens was chosen to represent Lee in such collections of British drama as Bell's British Theatre and The London Stage. Eighteenth-century critics -- among them Addison, Dennis and Thomas Davies -- discussed Lee and commented particularly on The Rival Queens.

As for its stage history subsequent to 1800, the record is impressive:

One finds that Lee's play was revived in one form or another almost every season on the London stage until well past the middle of the nineteenth century, and on the New York stage from 1769 (the first recorded performance) until 1863. . . . Of course the versions played by Kemble, Siddons, Kean, Duff, and Procter were somewhat removed from what Lee wrote, being variously cut, "improved," and "refined"; but, as Odell remarks, "Nat. Lee's spirit still walked abroad" in these productions.\[14\]

In the third place, the influence of The Rival Queens on later writings, both dramatic and non-dramatic, appears considerable. Indicative of the popularity of a stage piece are the allusions to characters or incidents found in popular literature of the period, and in these one finds evidence of the familiarity of the play-going and play-reading public with Lee's tragedy. In 1697 Dryden was asked to compose a poem for the Musical Society's celebration of St. Cecilia's day; he wrote "Alexander's Feast." One wonders whether the many successful performances of The Rival Queens at this particular time might have influenced Dryden's choice of subject as he composed an ode for a popular occasion. Might one not assume that the audience's familiarity with "Philip's warlike son" was assured because of the play which featured

---

him? Although such a conjecture must remain in the realm of possibility rather than fact, one is cognizant of Dryden's association with Lee and, consequently, his probable interest in the success of his young collaborator's work. And might not Farquhar have counted on his audience's knowledge of the majesty of the imposing stage Alexander when he had Archer in The Beaux' Stratagem (1706/7) advise his friend Aimwell to address Dorinda "like Alexander in the height of his victory" (7, iii)? The historical and legendary Alexander had been, of course, a familiar figure to literate Englishmen since the Middle Ages, as will be pointed out subsequently, but it seems reasonable to suppose that a playwright might count upon a more recent and less learned acquaintanceship with history when he inserted an allusion in a play written for an audience which included a greater proportion of middle class citizens, lacking, in all probability, the cultural background and classical training of the nobility and gentry who attended plays during the reign of King Charles II. Similarly, Defoe's Roxana appeared in 1724. Genest lists productions of the Alexander play in 1722 and 1723. Again, might Lee's play have been a popular influence on Defoe?

The foregoing examples are, admittedly, highly selective; they are cited only as possible evidence of the popular success and consequent influence of Lee's play. In a later chapter the more important influence of The Rival Queens on subsequent drama will be discussed in some detail. One may, however, note here that the tragedy marked the beginning of a series of Alexander plays on the seventeenth-century stage, and it was followed by other plays with a Persian setting.
A fourth reason for the critical examination of *The Rival Queens* is the dramatically significant time of its composition. The years 1676 to 1678 marked an era of changing technique in serious drama. The recognized reign of the rhymed heroic play was from 1664, beginning with the plays of D'Avenant, Roger Boyle, and Dryden and Howard, to 1677. Actually the performance of Dryden's *All for Love* in December, 1677, has often been made the division between the rhymed heroic play and the blank verse tragedy which it seemed to introduce. It appears unnecessary at this time to present conflicting opinions in detail concerning the relative importance of rhyme as an integral part of a specific dramatic genre; what is important is that at the time Lee wrote *The Rival Queens* he and his contemporaries were deliberately changing the style of serious drama by forsaking the rhymed couplets, which had been popularized by the translation and assimilation of French serious drama and French criticism, for the blank verse of the Elizabethans and Jacobins. The *Rival Queens* anticipates *All for Love* in the use of blank verse, but Lee, apparently disinclined to enter the critical arena,

15. For a discussion of the rhymed heroic play see the following: Lewis N. Chase, *The English Heroic Play* (New York, 1903), a study which includes only those plays written in rhyme and thus argues that verse was the essential point of distinction; Bonamy Dobrée, *Restoration Tragedy 1660-1720* (Oxford, 1929), which calls attention to the importance of rhyme without making it the essential point; Allardyce Nicoll, *Restoration Drama*, which says that heroic verse in drama is really of very little account in determining whether or not a play is actually heroic; William S. Clark, "The Definition of the 'Heroic Play' in the Restoration Period," *RES*, VIII (1932), 437-44, which concludes that for the period which produced it, heroic tragedy was rhymed tragedy, the term being abandoned in dramatic criticism as the decline of the rhymed tragedy occurred on the stage.
nowhere calls attention to his departure from previous form; it remained for Dryden in the Preface to *All for Love* to publicize his new style by which he endeavored to "imitate the divine Shakespeare" and so "disen-cumbered" himself from rhyme.

Aside from matters of style, the year which saw the first performance of *The Rival Queens* also saw serious drama approaching the earlier English tragedy insofar as the tragic ending is concerned. Earlier heroic plays more often than not end happily for the hero and heroine; the villains appropriately expire. Later plays tend to move toward a tragic conclusion. Lee, however, used the tragic ending in his earlier plays also, *Nero*, *Gloriana*, and *Sophonisba* all proceeding to tragic outcomes which seem inevitable as the scenes of the plays progress. It was not until the later 1670's that Lee's contemporaries began, in any great number, to abandon the satisfactory conclusions which mark their early plays. It is significant, in an estimate of the importance of Lee as a dramatist, that in these changes of style and plot he was among the innovators rather than the followers.

In the fifth place, Lee's *The Rival Queens* is a typical Restoration play in the extent to which the writer made use of the two chief dramatic influences of his age. It has been established that Restoration tragedy was molded by several models. The influence of pre-Commonwealth English drama, neglected for some time in the critical attention given continental influences, seems obvious. Restoration drama forms a chapter in the continuous story of English drama, and it is impossible to treat it as an isolated phenomenon. Revivals and adaptations of earlier English plays were numerous and popular, especially the dramas of Shakespeare,
Jonson, and Beaumont and Fletcher. Equally important was the French influence, because of the close ness of the court circles of London and Paris, the acceptance of French standards in dress, manners, art, and literature by most of the British nobility, and the popularity of French books in England, both in the French language and in translation. The French romances were used extensively as source material for English plays, and, to a lesser extent, so were the plays of French dramatists, especially those of Corneille. Obviously there were other influences: Italian scenery and opera and Spanish romances and plays left their marks, although little has been done to trace thoroughly these less dominant influences. In The Rival Queens there is a plot drawn largely from a French romance and elements of style which seem to stem from earlier English tragedy. Suffice it to say at this time that La Calprenède's Cassandre (1642-1645) provided a major part of the plot of Lee's tragedy, and the popularity of this romance in England in 1676, a year which saw a new English translation of the work, was in all probability largely responsible for Lee's choice of subject. Also, the mark of Shakespeare is very plain upon The Rival Queens, in style, tone, and phrasing. In a later chapter it will be necessary to demonstrate the truth of these assertions, but for the present it is enough to point out the fact that this tragedy represents the two most significant influences at work on Restoration drama, without being an adaptation or an imitation of either.

16. For a convenient tabulation of such revivals and adaptations see John Harold Wilson, The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Restoration Drama (Columbus, Ohio, 1928), Appendix, pp. 119-46.
Finally, there has been a singular lack of scholarly attention devoted to a play which critics term "important." For example, Nicoll gives The Rival Queens less than one sentence in his Restoration Drama. Ham's study of Otway and Lee contains only scattered references to the play, and these bear mainly on Lee's use of his sources; there is no attempt to assess the importance of the play on the Restoration stage. Dobrée calls The Rival Queens Lee's "most popular play, and in many ways his best," and quotes a portion of the scene between Roxana and Statira, the dialogue between the ghosts of Darius and Queen Statira, and several lines from one of Alexander's speeches; but he does not show why he designates the tragedy as Lee's best, nor does he suggest the widespread influence of the play.

For all these reasons, then, it seems wise to select Lee's The Rival Queens as the focal point from which to examine the dramatic taste and technique of the Restoration. It would be difficult to find a tragedy of that period which has a longer record of popularity, reflects more clearly the dominant influences working upon playwrights of the era, affected subsequent drama more obviously, and has been as thoroughly neglected by scholars of Restoration drama.

17. Nicoll, p. 120.

CHAPTER II
ALEXANDER AS HERO

During the winter of 1676 Nat Lee, the young playwright, was in all probability working on his fourth tragedy, The Rival Queens, or The Death of Alexander the Great. What might have determined his choice of subject?

In seeking possible reasons for Lee's decision to use Alexander the Great as protagonist, one might reasonably consider first the playwright's interests as indicated in his earlier plays. The select audience at Drury Lane had already seen his ranting Nero throw restraint to the winds as the protagonist in Lee's first tragedy. Not quite a year later Sophonisba, a play set in Carthage, had delighted especially the ladies in the audience, and Gloriana, with its scene at the court of Augustus Caesar, had followed in short order. These tragedies are in no sense extraordinary. Lee worked, with few exceptions, in the established pattern of those years: his plays are rhymed heroic plays, fulfilling both in form and in tone the requirements of the prevailing dramatic genre. No trailblazer, Lee had given the audience what it had come to expect, perhaps because his talents seemed to lie obviously in the direction of popular taste.
Within the mold of the heroic play, however, Lee's three early tragedies are alike in having main characters from spectacular periods of classical history; and yet the playwright's attention is not centred in historical happenings but in incidents of passion, which are a blend of history, legend, romance, and pure invention. For 
Nero, Lee does not adhere closely to historical accounts, even for his main plot, and the secondary plot is entirely fictitious. Lee's editors have pointed out some similarities to an earlier anonymous 
Nero (1624).¹ For Sophonisba, Lee's chief source appears to be Livy's account of the Second Punic War, but many of the numerous departures from fact are found in Roger Boyle's Parthenissa (1654), a prose romance written in the French style. Several minor variations are traceable to earlier dramatic treatments of the Sophonisba story.² For Gloriana, La Calprenède's romance, Cléopâtre (1617; translated into English 1665, 1674), is the principal source, but there is evidence that Lee used, to a lesser extent, Suetonius and Plutarch.³ This list of Lee's principal sources for the three tragedies serves to illustrate the fact that, as a dramatist, he was apparently less interested in bringing to life on the stage great historical figures in their moments of greatness than in taking from the history of the remote and often shadowy past great figures who were possibly familiar to his audience largely because they had appeared in other popular literature, and about whose exploits there

² Stroup and Cooke, I, 75-76.
³ Stroup and Cooke, I, 117.
remained enough of the unknown to permit the playwright to draw freely upon fictional accounts or upon his own imagination. It is, of course, true that most heroic plays have settings in remote lands, real or imaginary, but Lee concentrated on the classical past. Thus, Lee's interests as indicated in his three plays -- spectacular periods of classical history and historical episodes chiefly as a background for incidents of passion -- might lead him to write a tragedy about Alexander the Great. Perhaps it was only natural that Lee, having achieved some measure of success with this formula, should cast about in the same waters for another protagonist. Looking beyond the limits of the Roman Empire into the classical Orient, he found one figure who so dominated the area and the era that, Colossus-like, he dwarfed the world.

It is necessary to consider briefly the requirements of the heroic or Restoration tragedy in order to see how logical and fortunate a choice Alexander was for Lee's protagonist. Technical dramatic form is not of primary concern here; for that reason the term "heroic tragedy" seems preferable to the more confining "rhymed heroic play." As Nicoll points out:

Rime in tragedy was but a passing, external fashion in dramatic technique, which synchronised very largely with the main heroic period, but which had an influence slight when compared with the influence of the other
Although rhyme in serious drama appeared rarely after 1678, the elements of plot, characterization, and tone represented in the heroic plays continued to be found in plays written from 1678 to 1700. In rhyme or not, plays written by Lee and his contemporaries were "heroic" in many respects. In 1672 Dryden, in the essay "Of Heroic Plays" published as preface to The Conquest of Granada, stated that the heroic play was to be an attempt to reproduce the classical epic on the modern stage: love and valor were the fitting subjects for such an undertaking. As "rules" for heroic drama, one might list, in addition to the love and valor motif, an emphasis upon such externals as scenery, spectacle, and music; a setting in a remote land, either real or imaginary; a romantic conquering hero, whose martial exploits seem to form a background for his conquests in the field of love; an exaggeration of emotion, speech, and action; a background of war and intrigue, vague enough to allow the playwright to adapt circumstances to his own purposes; emphasis on a love-honor or passion-reason conflict rather than on the affairs of state. Dobrée suggests that the addition of love and admiration to the Aristotelian terror and pity is the hallmark of Restoration tragedy.

---


An earlier critic underlines the importance of love in the plays:

Love is the main theme of all heroic plays, and the sole theme of many. All major and most minor characters are lovers. The hero is always a warrior, but the martial element is made so unimportant that nought but the lover remains.

Noting the quality of unreality in the plays, Thorndike says:

The English plays, however, formed a type unknown in France or anywhere else on sea or land. The persons are usually historical, English, Classical, or Eastern, and a little historical fact was intended to give a kind of grandeur to the story. The Alexanders and Montezumas, however, have manners and sentiments drawn partly from the courts of Louis and Charles and partly from the world of romance.

And Nicoll agrees with this statement when he says:

Even when the settings of the plays were historical -- that is to say, had, at least, an historical basis -- the characters, were they Romans, Turks, Arabs, Mexicans, Chinamen, were all warped out of their national characteristics and made to live in the one world -- the world of heroic ardor and of dauntless courage.

These characteristics seem to have developed from an amalgam of literary sources and contemporary ideas and styles. Dramatic critics do not always agree on the amount of influence attributable to various sources, such as the earlier English drama and the French romances, but most would subscribe to the idea that there were multiple influences:

The chief forces which were at work in determining the characteristics of the heroic play I take to have consisted first of general European factors, comprising (a) the Literary Ideal, (b) the fame of the French classical drama, and (c) the Rationalist movement in contemporary thought; secondly, of purely national elements, which included the inheritance from the Elizabethan drama, and the requirements of the Restoration audience.10

Such plays obviously demand heroes with certain recognizable qualities, and just as obviously Alexander the Great conforms to the pattern. Alexander as a conquering hero, sweeping before him the armies of Eastern Europe and Asia, fighting battles and winning great victories in such remote places as Susa and Persepolis, and being conquered in turn by a romantic, passionate love — this was a man dear to the heart of a Restoration playwright. Shakespeare and his contemporaries extracted from the pages of history men like Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, and Henry V, men about whom every British schoolboy knew the historical facts. Moreover, these men illustrated the ideals of kingship or demonstrated the tragic lack of such principles; but they were protagonists in dramas about the rise and fall of nations and empires. Their personal and private lives became commentaries upon their success or failure as leaders of men. Cleopatra, one might say, is not only the alluring siren or the devastating heroine; she is also the temptation which led a triumvir of the Roman Empire from his duty.

On the other hand, protagonists like Montezuma, Cyrus, Mithridates, 10.

---

and Alexander, who entertained Restoration play-goers, were also heads of states or military leaders, but so remote were their exploits and so shadowy the details surrounding their conquests or defeats, that playwrights could safely use their official deeds as a background against which they might mingle fact and fiction to create glamorous characters and romantic actions. Legends about Alexander played up the ways in which he differed from other men: his supernatural birth, his superior intellect, his consuming passion for knowledge and devotion to the arts, his gallantry and his susceptibility to the charms of beauty. Consequently, the right or wrong of a military or political issue involving Alexander had faded as the centuries passed, and the image of a romantic, courtly, and vulnerable lover had grown. Thus Lee could accept as a fact needing no commentary the question of Alexander's prowess as an emperor and dwell instead on the fascinating prospect of a great man whose amours were as spectacular and as public as his military feats. In The Rival Queens the conflict is not between the duties of an emperor and the passions of a man, but between the protagonist's attraction toward two women, and the rival passions of the women themselves. In short, Lee had in Alexander a protagonist admirably suited to the requirements of Restoration tragedy. Conversely, the choice of such a protagonist defines for students of the drama the special qualities of this dramatic genre.

iii

In Alexander, moreover, Lee had a protagonist with whose name and marvelous exploits the Restoration audience was familiar. During the Middle Ages verse romances of Alexander were widely known in England. In
fact, when Chaucer's Monk comes to the portion of his long tale in which he is to relate the adventures of Alexander, he says:

The storie of Alisaundre is so commune,  
That every wight that hath discrecioun 
Hath herd somewhat or al of his fortune. 11

Of the four subjects generally used in medieval romances based on classical stories -- Alexander the Great, the Trojan War, the siege of Thebes, and the adventures of Aeneas -- only the tales of Alexander and Troy were genuinely popular in England, and Alexander far surpassed the other. 12 King Alisaunder, a poem of about eight thousand lines probably composed about 1300, and two fragments of a romance in alliterative verse known as Alexander A and Alexander B and dating from the early part of the fourteenth century are probably the best known examples of this literature. There is a fifteenth century prose romance and two long Scotch poems about Alexander which also belong to the fifteenth century. Modern scholarship has traced the sources of such legendary accounts of Alexander the Great, either directly or indirectly, to a Greek prose romance of uncertain date attributed to an anonymous Alexandrine now known as Pseudo-Callisthenes. This name, which serves as the generic term for various versions and traditions, derives from a Greek manuscript in which the author of Alexander's history is said to be Callisthenes, a nephew of Aristotle, who accompanied Alexander on his travels and left an


unfinished history, now lost. As historians are quick to point out, the Alexander Romance has little to do with history. Passing under the name of Callisthenes, its eighty versions in twenty-four languages circulated from Iceland to Malaya. But to Medieval Europe and to the Orient at all periods the Alexander of Romance has been the Alexander of reality. These Alexander tales came to Britain, of course, by way of France. For example, in Flamenca, a Provençal poem of the early thirteenth century, there is a list of the well-known stories which minstrels would be expected to sing, and included is the story of Alexander.

At the end of the sixteenth century, so much a part of British common knowledge was Alexander that Shakespeare alluded to his fame and exploits in five plays written for the popular theatre. In Love's Labour's Lost the village curate plays the part of Alexander in the pageant of the Nine Worthies that the rustics present for the sophisticated ladies and gentlemen (V, ii, 539-67). In Henry V there is a passing allusion to Alexander as a warrior (III, i, 19); later Fluellen makes an extended comparison between Alexander, who killed Clytus, and Harry of Monmouth, who "turn'd away the fat knight with the great belly doublet" (IV, vii, 11-47). As Hamlet puts down the skull he comments on the common fate of all flesh: the "noble dust of Alexander" might be mingled with the loam used to "stop a beer barrel" (V, i, 218-31). There


are passing references to the regal Alexander in Coriolanus (V, iv, 23) and The Winter's Tale (V, i, 47-49).\(^{16}\)

Such limited evidence from the vast field of Elizabethan drama would be valueless were it not for the reasonable assumption that a master playwright's repeated reference to Alexander indicates that the popular audience for which he wrote would know enough about the emperor to understand the point. Plays in which Alexander is actually a character will be noted later in the chapter.

Legend and romance were supplemented by classical history in conveying to the English the deeds of Alexander, and the seventeenth-century audience knew the classics. For example, Juvenal follows the classical tradition of using examples from history and myth to illustrate a moral lesson; Alexander represents boundless ambition. Plutarch's Lives was known to educated men of the seventeenth century, either in the classical languages or in the popular translation by Sir Thomas North, which had proved such a valuable dramatic source book for Shakespeare. North's Plutarch was reprinted in 1657 and again in 1676, the very year in which The Rival Queens was written and produced. Among the books in the library of Sir Charles Sedley, whom his biographer describes as "a man of wide and genuine learning, who appears to have been in touch with most of the important currents of the European thought of his day,"\(^ {17}\)

\(^{16}\) References to Shakespeare's plays are to The Complete Works, ed. George Lyman Kittredge (New York, 1936).

\(^{17}\) V. de Sola Pinto, Sir Charles Sedley 1639-1701 (London, 1927), p. 344.
were a two-volume Latin edition of Plutarch and an Italian translation published in Venice in 1620. Additional evidence of the continued interest in Plutarch throughout the Restoration is the new translation by John Dryden and others which appeared in 1683. The account of Alexander which Plutarch gives presents the ruler as superior in temperament, in intellectual achievement, and in accomplishments to all men of his age. Minimized are his faults, and stressed are his magnanimity of spirit, his desire for action and glory rather than for pleasure or riches, his love of learning, his leniency to the conquered, his remorse for cruelty committed under pressure of battle and because of intrigues at court. In other words, it is Alexander the statesman and leader of men that one sees in Plutarch, rather than the passion-torn lover of Lee's play.

Licensed during Easter Term, 1670, was an English translation, The Life and Death of Alexander the Great, King of Macedon, by Quintus Curtius Rufus, in a ten-volume octavo edition. Published during Hilary Term, 1673, was a new edition of Quintus Curtius in Latin, De Rebus Gesti, Alexandri Magni. Another edition of the 1670 ten-volume English translation was licensed on November 24, 1673, for a different printer. These editions seem to indicate that, like Plutarch, Quintus Curtius was a familiar book in the seventeenth century. Its use as source material


by such popular writers as the French La Calprenède, who mentions it as a source for Cassandre, and Nat Lee, who drew upon it for The Rival Queens, is further evidence that this account of Alexander and his wars was not "caviare to the general."

Undoubtedly both classical historians and biographers and the spinners of romance idealized Alexander; yet there appears to be an underlying element of truth in the various versions, if one matches them against the barest and earliest records.

But in the sense in which we usually intend the words, Alexander was most clearly a Romantic Character, save for the apparent want of the love-motive, and that is not really an essential to romance as rightly understood, while it was easily supplied by those who desired it. Travel, adventure, invincibility, chivalrous sentiment, looked at through the sunset mists of the past, these make Romance, in its simple but adequate sense. Alexander was made for Romance. His brief career, his early death, his triumphant successes, and yet his obvious failure, his position as centre of the known world, and yet isolated in a Promethean loneliness — all this was good matter for Romance. And the accessories or "accidents" of his career; his hell-cat mother, his quarrel with the King his father; his supposed divinity, his likeness in achievement to Dionysus, Heracles, and Achilles; his fevers, his wounds; the odd creatures he met, or must have met; the odd people he met, Amazons perhaps, and Brahmans; the whole scenic setting: all these made of Alexander a character of Romance beyond the utmost invention even of a Sir Walter Scott. Popular imagination forgot, or almost forgot, massacres; forgot murders or judicial murders; forgot the "toil and work but half-achieved," and took Alexander to its heart as seldom -- perhaps as never -- it took any other.

Important as are the medieval romances and the works of classical

historians in establishing the familiarity of the English audience with Alexander, they must yield in importance, during the Restoration, to popular literature. And foremost in this category are the contemporary French heroic romances: La Calprenède's Cassandre, Pharamond, and Cléopâtre, Gomberville's Polexandre, and Scudéry's Ibrahim and Le Grand Cyrus. Their popularity was doubtless responsible for the English imitative works: Boyle's Parthenissa (1654) and Crowne's Pandion and Amphi- genia (1665). There are numerous references to the French romances in English letters, memoirs, plays. For example, in her letters to William Temple, Dorothy Osborne comments repeatedly on her interest in reading Cléopâtre and Cyrus; she notes the fact that she has sent Sir William various "tomes" as she has finished them; she expresses her belief that he will enjoy the stories; she declares her impatience with the translators of the French romances who make the characters largely unrecognizable even to an "old acquaintance" like her.  

During the greater part of the century French romances were in England the main reading of people who had leisure. They were read in the original, for French was a current language in society at that time, and they were read in translations both by society and by the ordinary public. Most of them were rendered into English, and so important were these works considered that sometimes several translators tried their skill at the same romance, and published independently the result of their labours, as if their author had been Virgil or Ariosto, or any classical writer.  


La Calprenède's **Cassandre** (1612-50) is the story of Oroondates and Statira, Alexander's widow, of various claimants to Alexander's throne, and of his loyal followers; all this is heavily interlarded with tales of Alexander's accomplishments. There had been a partial translation of this romance in 1652, only the first three books, poorly printed and bound. Sir Charles Cotterell's complete translation, an impressive folio edition, was licensed November 24, 1675, for publication during Michaelmas Term. It was dated 1676. 23 Charlanne notes the significance of such an edition: "Cette fois, en ouvrant l'énorme in-folio, on a tout de suite l'impression d'un ouvrage de grande importance, d'une œuvre en très grande faveur. . . . Le luxe de cette gravure et de l'impression elle-même indique assez la vogue de Cassandre... 24

Nowhere was the influence of this genre more conspicuous than in the serious drama of the Restoration, and Dryden and Lee seemed to be the chief borrowers of settings, situations, characters, and sentiments from the French heroic romances. More will be said later about specific uses of the various romances in the plays under discussion; at this point it is necessary only to emphasize the fact that the heroes and heroines of the romances were apparently entirely familiar to the English reading public by the time that Nat Lee wrote, and that Alexander, Statira, and Roxana were numbered among them.

23. Term Catalogues, I, 224.

The prominence of Alexander and other classical heroes is further reflected in the publication of what was presumably a moral treatise, licensed on May 6, 1673, and entered in the Term Catalogue as follows:

"The Mirrour which flatters not, concerning the contempt of the world; or the Meditations of Death of Philip, King of Macedon, Saladine, Adrian, and Alexander the Great. By le Sieur (Jean) Puget de la Serre. Eng­lished by T. Cary, Esquire." 25

It is interesting to note that the Restoration Englishman would have been very unlikely to know Alexander through English drama. Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline playwrights ignored Alexander with the following minor exceptions. In 1583 John Lyly's Campaspe was presented at Blackfriars; on New Year's night it was given before Queen Elizabeth at Court. In this witty court comedy, a chivalrous Alexander yields the Theban captive, Campaspe, to the artist, Apelles. All is lightly, even elaborately handled. The conflict between love and duty or honor is no conflict in the idealized realm of the court comedy, and the characters who bear familiar names are only gentlemanly mouthpieces for the fluent language of Lyly.

The Alexandraean Tragedy by William Alexander, Earl of Sterling, was published in 1605, one of his Four Monarchic Tragedies, all of which show him to be an English imitator of French Senecan tragedy as written by Robert Garnier and others. The Alexandraean Tragedy is actually closet drama; as its editors point out, the English imitators of French Seneca had a contempt for the popular stage, and their tragedies were not even

intended for a private or academic theatre. The Earl of Sterling uses his historical material for political purposes: the entire play is a static presentation of the principles of kingship as the rival claimants for the throne of the dead Alexander speak at length.

In Goffe's *The Couragious Turke, or, Amurath the First* (1632) there is a masque, in one scene of which Alexander is featured. Here he is an example of a military leader and warrior used to warn an erring and weak ruler.

*Alexandre le Grand* by Racine made its appearance in Paris in 1665. In Racine's tragedy Alexander is primarily a just, valorous, and invincible military leader rather than a passionate lover. He shares the spotlight with Porus, another noble warrior. The plot incidents are not found in the French romances nor in the later English Alexander plays. The first English translation of a Racine tragedy is apparently the *Alexandre* in 1714. Another French play, the tragi-comedy *Roxane* by Desmaretz (sometimes Desmarets) apparently achieved considerable popularity on the French stage before the middle of the seventeenth century. Printed probably no later than 1640, its theme is the union of Alexander and Roxane. There is no record of its being known in England.

In addition to these plays in which Alexander has a part, the *Biographia Dramatica* lists *Alexander and Lodowyke*, a play by Martin

---


Slaughter, acted in 1598.28

The first Restoration play about Alexander was John Weston's The Amazon Queen; or, The Amours of Thalestris to Alexander the Great, printed in quarto in 1667 but apparently unacted. The quarto contains no dedication, prologue, epilogue, nor actors' names -- the usual adjuncts to plays which had been performed. The preface indicates that Weston relied on the printed version to win friends for his play, rather than "the applause of a Theatre," the "rugged ways of envied honour, where many faults are really found" (Quarto, 1667). Since Lee very likely knew Weston's play, some comparison between the two dramas will be suggested later.

Summarizing this information about the earlier stage history of Alexander, one notes that the theatre audience for which Nat Lee wrote during the Restoration would have had no opportunity to see any of these plays presented on an English stage. These people might well have read Lyly's Campaspe, the Earl of Sterling's Alexandraean Tragedy, and Weston's The Amazon Queen; those who read French might have enjoyed Racine's Alexandre le Grand. The fact remains that when Nat Lee chose to make Alexander his dramatic hero, he selected a figure whose exploits and achievements, actual or idealized, were familiar to literate Englishmen, but who was a virtual stranger to the English theatre.

A play which featured Alexander the Great would capitalize upon the

widespread interest in the East, an interest which was especially apparent during the reign of Charles II. It is first necessary to determine the meaning of the word "East" or "Orient" in the Restoration. In his study of the Oriental in the plays of the Restoration, Louis Wann calls attention to the fact that there were actually three Orient in literature and history: the Biblical Orient, the Classical Orient, and the "Orient proper" or eastern Europe (the Balkan States, Greece, European Turkey), Africa (all lands bordering the southern shore of the Mediterranean), and Asia (from the Mediterranean to the Pacific, including the Pacific islands) since the rise of Mohammedanism in the sixth century. However, such a classification is chronological rather than geographical; all three epochs share some of the same settings. Consequently, when one speaks broadly of an interest in the East, he indicates a vast area rather than any particular time.

Frequent evidence during the reign of Charles II substantiates the assertion that there was considerable interest in the East. One notes first the dramatic and non-dramatic literature of the Restoration. In Wann's study mentioned above, the writer states that forty-five Restoration plays introduced Oriental characters. Since Wann excludes


30. "The Oriental in Restoration Drama," p. 170. Although Wann finds the same number of Elizabethan plays with Orientals as characters, he believes that the Orient had a more distinct place in Restoration drama, for it attracted "every important writer of heroic and tragic plays except Lee." Here, of course, Wann excludes Lee because he limits the term "Orient" to Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia since the rise of Mohammedanism in the sixth century. He also observes that, while Elizabethan scenes are generally confined to the shores of the
the Biblical and Classical Orient, it is necessary to add to his figures more than forty plays in these categories. Of these, most are Classical rather than Biblical, and prominent among them are Lee's tragedies. Thus one notes the presence of a large number of "Eastern" plays in the Restoration.

Off the stage there were, as has already been mentioned, the popular French romances, especially La Calprenède's *Cassandre* and Cléopâtre and Scudéry's *Le Grand Cyrus* and *Ibrahim*. Valuable testimony regarding the popularity of French romances in England is afforded by the lists of such books on sale, as inserted by English publishers in quarto editions of plays and various other English publications.\(^\text{31}\) Sometimes the interest aroused by the romances apparently led to a demand for non-fictional works about people, lands, or eras depicted in the romances. For instance, the 1676 edition of the English translation of *Cassandre* lists among books advertised for sale the following titles: "Unheard of Curiosities concerning the Talismanical Sculpture of the Persians, the Horoscope of the Patriarchs, and the reading of the Starrs ..."; and "The Key to History or a Most Methodical Abridgement of the four chief Mediterranean, those of the Restoration cover most of Asia. Furthermore, detailed presentation of Oriental customs and practices, unknown in Elizabethan drama, characterizes Restoration plays about the Orient. (pp. 172, 179, 183-86).

\(^\text{30}\) (Cont'd) 30. Alfred H. Upham, *The French Influence in English Literature from the Accession of Elizabeth to the Restoration* (New York, 1908), pp. 397-98. See, for example, the list of books printed and sold by Peter Parker advertised in La Calprenède's *Cassandre*, tr. Sir Charles Cotterell, 1676; five other romances are among the books listed. See also Lee's *The Rival Queens*, 1677 quarto, list of books printed in 1677 for J. Magnus and R. Bentley; here are listed eight French novels and one English translation of a French novel.
Monarchies Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome . . . " Also in the field of
non-fiction, but actually often combining imagination with fact, were
the travel books and letters from those who had made trips to India,
Turkey, China, and other points in the East. Here it is difficult to
separate cause from effect. Certainly the appearance of travel books
was an evidence of interest in the East; just as surely the reports of
travelers were among the reasons for such interest. One writer asserts
that "voyage-accounts were never more plentiful and more eagerly read
than during the Restoration and early eighteenth century. 32 He goes
on to say that Englishmen were aware of a scheme furthered by the Vir­
tuosi, whereby man's intellectual horizon was to be widened and his
conditions improved. "Under the influence of the New Science, the average
voyager -- whether buccaneer, trader, or scientist -- went forth not so
much to startle the world as to enlighten it. In so doing he won the
respect of his time and exerted an influence wide in its compass and
significant in its results." 33

Evidence of increased knowledge about India and China is plentiful.
The growth of Indian trade meant importation of Indian articles; thus
the knowledge of India was not confined to those Britons who were
actively engaged in the trade. Manuscripts of this era in the British
Museum deal with such subjects as Indian commerce and religion. 34 There

32. R. W. Frantz, "The English Traveler and the Movement of Ideas
34. S. A. Khan, The East India Trade in the XVIIth Century (Oxford,
1923), p. 177.
was also more knowledge of Chinese products and customs. Tea came into use, as did the coffee of the nearer East, and porcelain, heretofore a curiosity seen only in palaces, was imported in quantity.\footnote{35}

From 1600, when the British East India Company was organized, England had a direct contact with India, Siam, China, and Japan that, in the course of the century, disseminated greater knowledge of the East, and by importation made Englishmen increasingly familiar with the products of Oriental manufacture.\footnote{36}

Another evidence of interest in the East is the fact that during the Restoration philological studies were broadening out in other directions.

In Oriental languages valuable work was done, especially by the professors of Hebrew and Arabic in Oxford and Cambridge. Edward Po-cocke, the great English orientalist of his time, died in Oxford in 1691 at the age of eighty-six and his collection of Oriental manuscripts went to the Bodleian. Among those who continued his work were one of his sons, and his successor Thomas Hyde. They were gradually working away from the predominantly Biblical interest, though England's increasing contact with the east kept this alive. Oriental chronicles were studied and translated and Hyde's chief work was on ancient Persian religion.\footnote{37}

As early as 1654 John Evelyn, writing of a visit to the Bodleian Library, spoke of seeing no less than 2 thousand manuscripts, especially Oriental.\footnote{38}

\footnotetext{35. George N. Clark, The Later Stuarts 1660-1714 (Oxford, 1940), p. 40.}

\footnotetext{36. B. Sprague Allen, Tides in English Taste (1619-1800) (Cambridge, Mass., 1937), I, 180.}

\footnotetext{37. Clark, p. 367.}

\footnotetext{38. John Evelyn, Diary and Correspondence, ed. William Bray (London, 1906), II, 56.}
Turning from the scholarly to the social, one notes a great flurry of interest in Eastern fashions and entertainments at the court of King Charles. Evelyn describes with satisfaction the first appearance of Charles II on October 13, 1666, in the "Eastern fashion of vest, changeing doublet, stiff collar, bands and cloake, into a comely dress, after the Persian mode," and tells of wagers between the monarch and some of his courtiers who were convinced that the King would not persist in this manner of dress in spite of his resolution "never to alter it." Evelyn's satisfaction stemmed from the fact that he had long encouraged the King to abandon the French fashion, which had hitherto dominated the dress of the court. To urge his point, Evelyn had presented a pamphlet to his Majesty in which he described the "comelinesse and usefulnesse of the Persian clothing."\(^{39}\) Obviously he was delighted to see his advice followed, although apparently Charles soon tired of the Persian dress. On October 30, 1666, Evelyn himself visited his office in London in the "vest and surcoat and tunic as 'twas call'd, after his Majesty had brought the whole Court to it."\(^{40}\)

In 1680 Evelyn records a visit to M. Chardin, who had recently returned from eleven years in the East Indies, Persia, and other remote countries. When Evelyn called upon him in the name of the Royal Society to ask him to address the group, he found the Frenchman attired in "his Eastern habit," which Evelyn found attractive.\(^{41}\) Within the next three

---

40. *Diary and Correspondence*, II, 211.
41. *Diary and Correspondence*, II, 368-69.
years Evelyn entered in his diary accounts of visits to travelers from the East and of entertainments given to honor various Asiatic ambas-
sadors. Always there is a full and detailed account of the exotic ap-
pearance of the individuals; undoubtedly Evelyn’s interest in such dis-
plays of Eastern exoticism was shared by others of his countrymen.

A Londoner of the upper classes, exposed to currents of contem-
porary interest and indeed partly responsible for such currents, would
have been able to note, during the years of the reign of Charles II, con-
spicuous evidences of British interest in lands generally termed the
"East." Books, plays, scholarly studies, and court fashions pointed in
this direction. It remains, then, to determine why this apparent inter-
est in the East was evident at this particular time.

The play-goers of the Restoration were, for the most part, men of
wealth and property; many were members of the old landed aristocracy of
England. In the age of Charles II, however, the economy of the country
was increasingly dependent upon foreign trade, and many members of the
Court, the nobility, and the gentry were stockholders and investors in
the British trading companies. The Earl of Clarendon notes the early
interest of Charles II in the state of English commerce:

> Upon the King's first Arrival in England, He mani-
ifested a very great Desire to improve the general
Traffick and Trade of the Kingdom, and upon all
Occasions conferred with the most active Merchants
upon it, and offered all that He could contribute
to the Advancement thereof.\(^{42}\)

Thus, commerce and industry became the chief ends of foreign policy.

\(^{42}\) Life of Clarendon, 3rd edition (Oxford, 1761), II, 374.
About the success of this commercial emphasis, one historian says: "We have no reason to doubt the belief which was generally held at the time that the period from 1660 to 1688 saw a great increase in shipping and foreign trade."

In order to encourage trade, the government threw its power behind the East India Company to enable it to maintain its rights against the Dutch. Under this sponsorship the growth of the company was phenomenal; its interests were now, to all intents and purposes, those of the state.

Pointing out the importance of this period in the history of the British East India trade, Clark calls the expansion of the Indian trade the "most important single change in English economy."

The Levant Company, another great British trading company, prospered during this period also. From 1661 to 1676 the Turkish government was controlled by the grand Vizier Achmet Kiuprili, a statesman of integrity who protected foreign merchants from unscrupulous local officials. This situation made it possible for the Levant Company to recover trade which before 1661 had been dwindling.

The increase of cloth exports in the 1670's was half as much again as the total of the

---

43. Clark, p. 38.
44. Khan, pp. 96-99
45. The Later Stuarts, p. 45.
In the affairs of the British embassy at Constantinople Charles and the merchants worked hand in hand, thus combining commercial and political interests. From 1672 to 1685 the ambassadorship was held first by Sir John Finch and then by Lord Chandos, both of whom were merchants' candidates for the position and as such had been approved by Charles with the full knowledge that the ambassador was primarily the chief agent of the great trading corporations.

Clarendon rightly assigns the cause of the second Dutch War (1665-67) to the demands of the merchants; the merchants' complaints against Dutch assaults on English trade prevailed, even though Charles himself did not want the war. Almost a decade later, at the outbreak of the third Dutch War (1672-74), the same kind of mercantile interests was again noted. Corbett states that the new war with the Dutch, ill-advised as it was, was at first popular because it seemed to promise the expansion of British commerce. "The great and rising mercantile community no less than the Court was still absorbed in the passion for commercial and imperial expansion, which is the dominant note of the Restoration." The war did not put an end to the operations of the joint stock companies. In fact, "soon after the peace with Holland in February 1674, a period of great activity in trade began, which (with the exception of a small crisis

---

47. Wood, p. 102.


in 1678) lasted until the middle of 1682. During this decade the East India and Africa Companies both made considerable profit.

As the companies prospered, so did their stockholders. "For thirty years after the Restoration the profit on the original stock averaged first 20 and later 40 per cent. per annum. The market price of £100 stock touched £500 in 1685." The great wealth derived from Eastern trade remained in a few hands, chiefly of very rich men. One investor who recorded his delight with his mercantile investment is John Evelyn. In a diary entry for December 18, 1682, he writes: "I sold my East India adventure of £250 principal for £750 to the Royal Society, after I had been in that company 25 years, being extraordinary advantageous, by the blessing of God."

The theatre audience for whom men like Nat Lee wrote was genteel and wealthy. One source of wealth was trade with the East. When business eyes were turned toward the East, it seems to be more than a coincidence that theatrical eyes looked in that direction too. For instance, Agra in India was one of the main trading centers for the East Indian trade. Certainly it is reasonable to infer that Dryden counted on public interest in this area when he wrote Aureng-Zebe in 1675,


53. Diary and Correspondence, II, 399.
following closely the Histoire de la dernière révolution des États du Grand Mogol, by François Bernier, who had been an eye witness to events of the civil war terminating in the supremacy of Aureng-Zebe in 1659. Bernier's book was on sale in translation in London in 1671. The popularity of Dryden's historical play, with its setting in Agra, may be attributed in part to the great interest of the seventeenth century in East Indian trade. Professional playwrights from the time of the Greeks have made use of the dominant interests of their audiences.

The effect of increased trade, particularly with Asiatic countries, was not limited to politics and economics. Although the following statement concerns seventeenth-century France rather than England, it is logical to assume that the British trading companies had much the same effect in England:

Les grandes compagnies de commerce, qui s'essayent avec des succès divers, dans le dernier tiers du XVIIe siècle et au commencement du XVIIIe, ont eu sur le développement du goût public pour l'Orient une influence qu'il serait difficile d'exagérer. 51

It has been noted that all lands bordering the southern shore of the Mediterranean formed a part of what the seventeenth century knew as the "East." There was a very definite reason why British eyes turned to Africa as well as to Asia in the early days of Charles' reign. By 1674 Tangier was beginning to have real value as a port of refuge and as a naval base. A decade later, partly as a result of internal politics

involving the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Bill, the British withdrew from Tangier, but during the ten year period it was much in the news. This current state of affairs in Northern Africa would very likely, in the British public mind, have been one more chapter in the long history of the Ottoman peril which hung over Europe from the fifteenth until far into the seventeenth century. There was no clear-cut distinction between the Turks and the Moors and the Turks and the Saracens, popularly speaking.

If the first reason for Restoration interest in the East is economic and political, the second could certainly be reportorial: the accounts of returned travelers who, in diaries, memoirs, and letters wrote with truth or with imagination of the lands they had visited. It is evident, of course, that their presence in these lands was very often occasioned by the mercantile or political interests discussed above; thus the second reason is, in effect, subsidiary to the first.

One of the most widely read histories of the early seventeenth century was Richard Knolles' Generall Historie of the Turkes, first published in 1603 and reprinted frequently throughout the century. Sir Paul Rycaut, British consul in Smyrna during part of the seventeenth century, wrote Present State of the Ottoman Empire, printed first in 1667 and reissued five more times in the next twenty years, sometimes separately and sometimes as an appendix or continuation of Knolles' history. Rycaut's major work, History of the Turkish Empire from 1623

to 1677 was not published until 1680 and so is not pertinent to a study of British interests in the decade of the seventies, except as it chronicles events of those years which drew the attention of the British public eastward.

There were numerous books of travel which made the West acquainted with Eastern civilization as a whole. Speaking of the seventeenth century, Allen says, "The number and bulk of these narratives of voyages in the Far East -- the great majority of them were translations of Continental works -- indicate that there existed a large and eager reading public for books of this kind." Representative of the translations of foreign works was that of John Ogilby, Master of His Majesty's Revels in the Kingdom of Ireland, a translation of many massive folios on the East Indies, China, and Japan, well enough known in the Restoration for Dryden to refer to it in MacFlecknoe (l. 102). While travel books about the East had been popular in England since the sixteenth century, the latter part of the seventeenth century apparently was marked by accounts that were more realistic and dependable. "There are some notable exceptions to this rule; but in general it may be said that not until the later seventeenth century did narratives of travel become precise and reliable."57

A third reason for the Restoration interest in the East grows out of the second: the use of Oriental themes and settings in earlier seven-

56. Tides in English Taste, I, 181.
teenth-century literature, dramatic and non-dramatic. Early reports from returned travelers have already been mentioned. In a study of the Oriental in Elizabethan drama, Louis Wann points out the fact that during the period from 1586 to 1611, the high mark of Elizabethan drama, many of the principal playwrights wrote at least one play dealing with Oriental matter, usually a serious treatment of war, conquest, or intrigue. The scene of action was almost every country touching on the Mediterranean, although Turkey was the most frequently used setting, and Turks and Moors predominated among Oriental characters. This emphasis was doubtless due to the power and extent of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the seventeenth century; in fact Wann limits his study to plays in which the events did or could take place since the rise of the Ottoman Empire in the thirteenth century. Indeed, the rest of the Oriental nations, such as Persia, were treated only casually, probably because of a very hazy knowledge about their customs and inhabitants. 58

Another writer states that, generally speaking, the Graeco-Roman school of Elizabethan plays used little local color except that found in Plutarch; the travelers to the classical Orient emphasized the same Oriental splendors and the dramatists took over only a few of their details. 59

Other than travel accounts and drama there was literature dealing


with the Orient before the Restoration. Probably the most extensive and exhaustive bibliography of works printed between 1500 and 1640 concerning the Orient is that by Joseph Von Hammer. Most of Von Hammer's more than three thousand items are histories, but also included are ballads, poems, stories, tracts, and pamphlets. The majority are in Latin, but there are great numbers in German, French, Italian, and Spanish, and some in English. Thus a book dealing with the Orient was certainly no oddity in western Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Finally, a valid reason for interest in the East would undoubtedly be the popularity of the East in French literature and culture, and the consequent influence on France-conscious Restoration England. It is not necessary to repeat here what has already been said about the popularity of the French heroic romances in England, many of them with Eastern settings. In addition to these, France had travel literature, commercial and political accounts of business in the Orient, treatises written by missionaries, especially the Jesuits, and drama. Pierre Martino accounts for the numerous treatments of the Orient in French literature as follows:

Ce fut, comme on l'a vu, dans le dernier tiers du XVIIe siècle que le goût pour l'Orient, déjà apparu par quelques échappées, se développa brusquement ; les voyages, le mouvement colonial, la propagande évangélique, les disputes des missions, l'intervention française dans la guerre autro-turque, tout cela fit, vers 1660, un concours

60. Joseph Von Hammer, Geschichte der osmanischen Reiches (Pest, 1827), ten volumes.
It seems evident that in England among the upper classes and the court circle, where there was great respect for French culture and French taste, a wave of Orientalism in France would have repercussions, particularly since both countries were experiencing similar trends of commercial expansion, which was followed by increased travel to distant lands and numerous accounts written by the travelers.

As Nat Lee came to the writing of his fourth tragedy in 1676, there were, then, a number of circumstances which might have directed his attention toward Alexander the Great and his legendary and historical exploits. One cannot presume to speak positively for a long-dead playwright who has left no records of his thoughts other than the plays and their prefaces, but it is certainly legitimate to examine such evidence as may exist in Lee's plays, in other Restoration drama, and in various facets of Restoration life. The close relationship between the dramatic literature of the period and social, political, economic, and religious ideas has been generally noted by Restoration scholars. The limited and homogeneous world of the theatre during this era is, perhaps, easier to reconstruct and to analyze than that of the truly public theatres of other ages. This, even more than most, seems to reflect the ideas and customs of the fashionable world for which it existed.

Therefore, one can undertake, with some degree of assurance, to advance reasons for Lee's choice of subject: his interests as indicated

61. L'Orient dans la Littérature Française, p. 173.
in his earlier plays, the requirements of heroic or Restoration tragedy, the familiarity of his audience with Alexander, and the Restoration interest in the East. And these reasons, examined and supported by factual evidence, not only reveal the dramatic climate of the late sixteen-seventies and aid the modern reader in approaching a seventeenth-century tragedy from the viewpoint of the audience for which it was written; they also further justify the selection of The Rival Queens as a suitable vantage point from which to examine the dramatic taste and technique of the Restoration.
CHAPTER III

THE RIVAL QUEENS AS TRAGEDY

When the curtain rose on the first performance of Lee's The Rival Queens, or The Death of Alexander the Great at the Theatre Royal on Saturday, March 17, 1676/7, the spectators witnessed scenes of action, spectacle, and stormy declamation entirely to their liking. It is time to turn from a consideration of conditions which may have been responsible for the writing of the play to an examination of the play itself. An analysis of The Rival Queens should assess the merit of the play as dramatic tragedy and determine its relationship to others of its kind.

As a prelude to an analysis one needs to have some information about the serious drama being produced in London during the years in which Lee was learning his craft, writing his three earliest tragedies, and finally producing The Rival Queens.

Exactly when Lee came to London from Cambridge is not certain, but the year was probably 1670 or 1671. His first tragedy, Nero, was produced in May, 1674, by the King's Company at the Theatre Royal. In
between these dates Lee had apparently tried his hand at acting with the Duke's Company. There are records which tell of his playing a minor part in Payne's *Fatal Jealousie* at Dorset Garden in 1672 and of unsuccessfully attempting the part of Duncan in D'Avenant's operatic version of *Macbeth* in February, 1672/3.  

A young man interested in the theatre, acting as a member of one company and eventually writing for the other company, would most certainly have been an observant spectator at theatrical performances during these early London years. Since Lee's talent lay in serious drama, it may be illuminating to note the tragedies that were being presented at this time. At the Theatre Royal during the winter season of 1670-71 Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada* had its premier performance, the first part being presented probably in December and the second in January.  

With its romantic hero and heroine, Almanzor and Almahide, and its high-flown rhetoric, it was a high-water mark in the history of the rhymed heroic play. Lee was to begin working in the same general pattern, although with distinct alterations; he and Dryden were to become friends and collaborators, the poet laureate taking a special interest in the work of Lee; the dates of the first performances of Dryden's play coincide rather closely, so far as one can ascertain, with Lee's coming to London. For these reasons, it seems reasonable to limit attention to the

---


serious plays produced in London between The Conquest of Granada and The Rival Queens in noting the dramatic diet of Lee as he made his own contributions to the theatre. Nicoll lists twenty-five tragedies performed between December, 1670, and March, 1676/7, the date of The Rival Queens.

This period of six acting sessions witnessed several revivals of earlier English plays. Four of Shakespeare's tragedies were presented,

3. Following are the tragedies of this period arranged alphabetically by author. The theatre, month, and year of performance are given in parentheses; the date following is that of the first printed text. Key to abbreviations of theatres: D.G. - Dorset Garden (Duke's Company); L.I.F. - Lincoln's Inn Fields (Duke's Company); T.R. - Theatre Royal (King's Company).


Excluded from this list of twenty-five tragedies but listed by Nicoll are the following: Milton's Samson Agonistes; an alteration of Nero, anonymous play of 1621, called Piso's Conspiracy (D.G., c. Dec. 1675) 1676; two tragedies listed as translations: Horace, English trans. of Corneille, by Charles Cotton, no acting record, printed 1671; Thyestes, trans. of Seneca, by John Wright, no acting record, printed 1674. Excluded also is the dramatic opera Macbeth, D'Avenant's revision of Shakespeare, which hardly seems to be dramatic tragedy in this guise. Of the twenty-five plays listed, only Boyle's Zoroastres has no record of a stage performance.
Othello being given twice; Jonson's Catiline and Beaumont and Fletcher's Rollo, or The Bloody Brother complete the list of Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedies revived during these six years. Since the line between the tragedies and tragi-comedies of Beaumont and Fletcher is admittedly thin, it might be well to note that four Beaumont and Fletcher tragi-comedies were presented at this time. The relatively small number of revivals during the years 1670-1676 is understandable in light of the fact that Restoration dramatists produced a great many new plays during the period. With the prolific Settle turning out five tragedies in six seasons for the Duke's Company, Crowne running him a close second with four plays, three for the Duke's Company and a double feature for the King's, and Lee himself not far behind, there was little need or time for as many revivals as one finds in the previous decade when new plays were not so numerous.

With this background of the serious plays available to Restoration

4. J. H. Wilson, The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Restoration Drama (Columbus, Ohio, 1928), pp. 119-126, lists these revivals: Shakespeare -- Hamlet, 1673, and Henry VIII, 1672, Duke's Company; Othello, 1673, 1675, and Julius Caesar, 1676, King's Company; Jonson -- Catiline, 1675, King's Company; Beaumont and Fletcher -- Rollo, or The Bloody Brother, 1674, 1675, King's Company. Listed also is Behn's Abdelazer, a revision of Marlowe's Lust's Dominion. Since Nicoll includes this revision in his Hand-list, it has been counted above as one of the twenty-five new plays.

5. Wilson lists these revivals as follows: Beggar's Bush, 1674; Island Princess, 1674, 1675; A King and No King, 1675; Philaster, 1673, 1674, 1676. All these revivals were by the King's Company. Sprague lists an additional performance of Philaster at Temple Hall, Nov. 1, 1671. (Arthur C. Sprague, Beaumont and Fletcher on the Restoration Stage, Cambridge, Mass., 1926, p. 41).

6. It is, of course, necessary to keep in mind the fact that the statistics given are limited to those plays designated as tragedies, with the single exception of the Beaumont and Fletcher tragi-comedies (cont'd)
theatre-goers — and to Lee especially — we can turn to The Rival Queens for a more detailed study of that play. A brief summary of the sources which Lee used, and a commentary on the evidence in this tragedy that the audience was familiar with the Alexander story, an assertion developed in Chapter II, above, will introduce an analysis of the play as a whole, a consideration of The Rival Queens as dramatic tragedy. Finally, to round out the picture of The Rival Queens as Restoration tragedy, a comparison of this play with others which Lee must have seen and read and discussed with his contemporaries will be made.

Although the present study is in no sense a source study, it is pertinent at the outset to comment briefly on the sources which Lee used for his tragedy, to indicate those portions of the play which he drew directly from them, and to point out important differences between the play and its major sources.  

6. (cont’d) given above. For a complete picture of the proportion of revivals to new plays one would have to include all types of drama.


For a comparison of treatment of character as well as certain plot incidents, see La Calprenède, Cassandra, tr. Sir Robert Cotterell, 4th ed. (London, 1737). Any edition of Plutarch and of Quintus Curtius would be of value for the same purpose.
Van Lennep believes that Lee used the romance more extensively than any other dramatist of the Restoration. Certainly in *The Rival Queens* his debt to La Calprenède's *Cassandre* is great. From that romance he apparently took the Lysimachus-Parisatis subplot, the rivalry between Statira and Roxana (although in the romance both were in love with Oroondates, Prince of Scythia, not Alexander), Roxana's account of serving Alexander at a banquet and falling in love with him, Alexander's refusal to be seriously disturbed by omens, and certain details about the death of Alexander.

The departures from *Cassandre* are probably more interesting than the borrowings since they show Lee's independent judgment and originality. In the Parisatis-Lysimachus plot the important change is that La Calprenède has Parisatis marry Hephestion and then wed Lysimachus following the early death of her first husband. For the main plot Lee borrowed very little from the French romance as far as actual incident and situation go; his borrowings seem to be rather in characterization and heroic atmosphere. In the first place, *Cassandre* is concerned with events following the death of Alexander; the King's exploits enter the tale only when they are related by his survivors, although throughout the romance

---

Alexander stands as the pattern of valor, generosity, and elegance. Oroondates, Prince of Scythia, is the hero of the romance, a role which Lee, of course, gives to Alexander; and as Alexander takes over the central role he also becomes the reason for the rivalry of the two queens. Since the central situation is vastly different, it goes without saying that subsequent incidents differ widely; for example, in Cassandre Statira marries Alexander because Roxana has made her believe Oroondates is unfaithful, and although she respects Alexander, she retains her love for Oroondates, with whom she is reunited at the end of the book. Also La Calprenède's Alexander falls in love with Roxana after he is married to Statira, but the latter does not become angry with the King nor vow to go into seclusion as she does in Lee's play. Indeed, true to the atmosphere of nobility and unreality that pervades the romance, she and Roxana eventually become friends.

Lee made some use of the historians in writing his play. Langbaine makes the following statement: "For the Plot, as far as the Author has follow'd History, consult Arrian; Q. Curtius; Plutarch's Life of Alexander; Justin lib. 11, 12. Diodorus Siculus, lib. 17. & 18; Josephus lib. 11. cap. 8." Actually there seems to be no evidence that Lee was indebted to any of these except Plutarch and Curtius.


10. Hill believes that Lee used only Plutarch, among the historians. He supports his theory by noting numerous passages in La Calprenède which are almost literal translations of Curtius. Thus, Lee could well (cont'd)
The character of Clytus, the accounts of the deaths of Alexander, Statira, Hephestion, and Clytus, and the historical details which are included in the scenes with the conspirators and in the speeches of Alexander and Clytus come largely from the classical historians.

In this brief treatment of Lee's sources it seems wise to limit the discussion to those books from which the playwright apparently drew incident and character. His possible borrowings of language, tone, spectacle, or handling of action within a scene will be pointed out when the relationship of The Rival Queens to earlier drama is examined. As far as Lee's use of his plot sources is concerned, it seems evident that The Rival Queens is, like most serious drama of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the playwright's own adaptation of incident and character, historical or fictional, to his own purposes. Any source study of this play supports the idea that the dramatist selected, discarded, arranged, and created freely as his play took shape; he was not in any way bound by his source material. Whether or not he was bound by the requirements of the genre, the demands of his audience, and the dramatic successes of preceding seasons -- or whether his particular talent was encouraged by these factors -- will be considered later.

10. (cont'd) have drawn details from Curtius indirectly from the romance, although one cannot be dogmatic about such a matter. See "La Calprenède's Romances and the Restoration Drama," pp. 112-13. On the other hand, Stroup and Cooke suggest that Lee depended more often on Curtius than on Plutarch (I, 214).
In Chapter II, above, the familiarity of Lee's audience with the Alexander story was proposed as one possible reason for the playwright's choice of a subject for his fourth tragedy. In The Rival Queens there is abundant evidence that Lee assumed such knowledge on the part of the audience at the Theatre Royal. The plotting conspirators speak of Pausanias, the youth who did "For a less cause his [Alexander's] Father Philip kill" (I, i, 181). They curse Alexander's torture of Philotas, damn the part played in that bloody incident by Craterus, follower of Alexander, and Hephestion, the favorite, and then recount the tale of Parmenio, murdered in his orchard. The name of Callisthenes is mentioned, and the first of many references to the divinity of Alexander, son of Jupiter Ammon rather than of Philip, is made. As a part of the exposition Cassander refers to the fact that Alexander has come triumphant from the Indies and has lingered at Susa to revel with Roxana before making his way to Babylon (I, i, 201-305, passim).

Statira refers to Alexander's conquest of Darius and to the legend that from the pores of the monarch's skin a perfume was exhaled (I, i, 356-375). Alexander recalls the crossing of the Granicus and praises Clytus' part in the battle there (II, i, 144-162). Later, excusing his infidelity to Statira on the grounds that, his reason gone, Roxana seduced him, Alexander says his grief is as great as "when at Thais suit, enrag'd

11. All quotations from Lee's plays are from the edition of Stroup and Cooke (1954-55).
with Wine, I set the fam'd Persepolis on Fire" (II, i, 343-344). In the banquet scene Alexander and Clytus argue about past military engagements, and Clytus calls the roll of those whom Alexander has had put to death (IV, i, 416-481). And finally as Alexander is out of his mind from the poison, he calls for his horse Bucephalus and lives again his victory over Darius (V, i, 327-353).

It is true that all of these references to history and legend are in Lee's sources, most of them being found in Plutarch. Nevertheless his use of them, without any detailed explanation or identification, indicates that he counted on his audience's ability to recognize the names and incidents; otherwise they would not have been dramatically effective.

iii

The Rival Queens has in Alexander the Great a spectacular and impressive hero. Furthermore both Statira and Roxana are beautiful, picturesque women and splendid foils to one another. The action is constant and dramatic: a conspiracy against the life of the most important man in the ancient world; a contest between a brave soldier and a lion; an encounter between two determined queens for the love of Alexander; a triumphant procession and a banquet with entertainment; Alexander's passionate spearing of his loyal friend; the ruthless murder of Statira by Roxana; and the dying delirium of the vanquished Alexander. These are some of the materials with which Lee works. In order to assess the worth of the play one must note what the playwright does with this abundance of dramatic characters and exciting episodes. What is the theme
of the play? What are the central conflicts? What is its relationship to great tragedy?

The theme of The Rival Queens is the downfall of a once-great man brought to defeat and ultimately to death by his own ungovernable passions, especially by his love. Caught in the net of Alexander's defeats is the gentle Statira, treacherously murdered by the jealous hell-cat, Roxana. Statira, though, is a Desdemona-like heroine whose death is important in the play largely because it becomes the means of bringing Alexander to disaster. The full title of the play serves to emphasize the love triangle as the chief instrument in the downfall of the hero: The Rival Queens, or The Death of Alexander the Great. But in spite of the prominence of the ladies in the plot sequence, this is essentially Alexander's play, and it is his fortunes that one follows throughout. Even when he is not on stage, his actions or emotions are the cause or subject of action and dialogue; he is never far absent. Actually, as the play continued to be acted far into the next century, more often than not it came to be called simply Alexander the Great, an indication of its central attraction.

The success of a tragedy is determined partially by the way in which the author uses character and incident to develop and define the theme. Since there are so many episodes in The Rival Queens Lee must show their relationship to the controlling idea. This he does with considerable success. Alexander's passions have mastered his judgment and made him vulnerable even before the opening of the play. The caustic comments of the loyal but critical Clytus in the first scene attest to
the folly of the great leader who has been overcome by infatuation for Roxana even as he returns to reunion with Statira, whom he really loves. His revels at Susa with Roxana are revealed. The conversation of the conspirators, chief among whom is Cassander, bears witness to the acts of cruelty and passion which have marked Alexander's relations with his subordinates. His arrogance with leaders like Cassander who have dared to question or disagree with him has made them hate him with an intensity that is felt in every speech. They add fuel to their hatred by recalling particularly atrocious acts of Alexander -- the racking of Philotas, the assassination of Parmenio. These, it will be noted, are not the deeds of a great conquering hero but of a tyrant whose power has drowned his judgment. Before the opening of the play Alexander has also used his power to support the weakling Hephestion and has decreed that he shall have Parisatis, daughter of Darius, in marriage, simply because he is the King's favorite. Finally when Alexander enters for the first time he comes triumphantly to Babylon, but this is after his great military victories; nothing lies ahead. When the ruler and his supporters regale each other with tales of victory and accomplishment at the banquet in the palace, their talk is all of what has happened. Always Alexander looks back.

Various episodes of the play show the state to which Alexander has fallen. The excess of passionate anger with which he explodes when Lysimachus pleads for an even chance to try to win Parisatis is a case in point. Alexander's order that Lysimachus be thrown to the lions is due largely to his own violent state of mind because of Statira's refusal
to see him. His arrogance when he hears the omens and auguries that portend dire events is evidence of his excess pride and his conviction of superiority. When finally he is reconciled with Statira his ecstasy is just as superlative as his grief has been, but he has not been humbled by his anguish. When Clytus refuses to indulge in fulsome flattery at the banquet and tries to remind Alexander of his debaucheries and his excesses, Alexander strikes him through with a javelin. Before Clytus dies it is he who asks pardon of Alexander and blames his drunken state for his impertinence to his ruler. Alexander, horror-stricken at his own deed, cries out to Hephestion and Lysimachus, blaming them for not staying his hand and keeping him from committing the murder. After Statira is stabbed by Roxana Alexander alternates between fury and grief, at one moment cursing the physicians who cannot save Statira, at the next welcoming death because Statira is dead. He is not especially convincing in the scene with Roxana when she reveals that she is carrying his child and he changes within an instant from wild wrath to a kind of stern justice. Finally, racked with poison, he receives news of the death of Hephestion who has drunk too much; Alexander's reaction is to order the man who had the care of Hephestion crucified. His delirium as the poison takes hold and he lives again events of earlier conquests is little more excessive than his displays of emotion throughout the play.

Lee has several thematic lines that underscore this picture of the hero. "The headlong Alexander," Cassander calls him, and again, "this Engine of unruly Passion." Alexander prides himself on being "the envy
of the Stars." And Clytus summarizes the entire situation: "This comes of Love, and Women, 'tis all madness." The hero of The Rival Queens is pictured as a victim of his own extravagance and lack of emotional restraint rather than a prey of fate. As in Shakespearean tragedy the hero is defeated by his own weakness and by the evil actions of others; man is undone by man.

Certainly the theme of The Rival Queens is worthy of tragedy; the protagonist has the necessary stature; the actions are of a seriousness and magnitude calculated to arouse deep emotion. Why, then, does it remain only a popular piece of "good theatre"? Perhaps a consideration of the dramatic conflicts in the play will help answer the question. Alexander is never placed in a position from which he must act when action seems impossible; there is no tragic dilemma. Misfortunes happen, but they happen to a singularly passive hero, if one can use a term which seems paradoxical applied to the tempestuous Alexander. To support this assertion one notes that in the main plot of the play -- Alexander's love for Statira and the rivalry between the two queens which grows out of this -- Alexander makes no important decisions. He has indeed acted, as has already been noted, but his decision to linger at Susa with Roxana precedes the opening of the tragedy. It is Statira who vows never to receive her husband again; and when she recants partly because of her love and partly because she is so inflamed by Roxana's taunts that she decides to prevent any chance of the latter's having the King, it is she who brings about the reconciliation. When this short-lived state of happiness ends, it is because Roxana has acted to avenge herself on the man who
has thrust her aside for another.

In the opening scene of the play the lines of Clytus imply that the central conflict is between love and duty -- the same kind of situation that is central to Antony and Cleopatra. Clytus expresses deep scorn for warriors who succumb to love:

The Souls
Of all that whining, smiling, coz'ning Sex
Weigh not one thought of any Man of War (I, i, 34-36.)

And again Clytus bitterly contrasts the conqueror of Darius with the man possessed of two rival queens, "and while each hand do's beauty hold, / Where is there room for glory?" (I, i, 68-69). These lines have a bearing, of course, on the tragic theme, because of the implication that if Alexander had not been so completely dominated by the extremes of passion arising from his love for Statira and the threats to their happiness he would have been able to overcome the conspirators. But in spite of Clytus' speeches which suggest that love ruins a military leader, this play is not another Antony and Cleopatra. Not once in the play does Alexander have to decide between love and duty. Never in the speeches of the conspirators is there the suggestion that they are plotting to murder Alexander for the good of the empire; their sole motivation is hatred and jealousy aroused by the autocratic and tyrannical acts of a proud King. It seems significant that in the last act of The Rival Queens there is no reiteration of Clytus' accusations, no thematic statement that Alexander's downfall at the hands of the conspirators came about because of protest at his neglect of kingly duties for personal amours. Clytus is, in effect, shouted down by the events of the play, a
tragedy of the last hours of a once great and still impressive man, toppled from the pinnacle of achievement by his own excesses; there is no conflict between personal love and public duty.

In the events leading to the murder of Alexander, the hero again has no chance to make a decision which will affect the outcome. He drinks the poisoned cup unsuspectingly at his own table. Alexander, to be sure, makes some decisions in the course of the tragedy, but without exception they do not alter the course of events; they do not hasten nor prevent his downfall. Such decisions are the sentencing and the subsequent pardoning of Lysimachus, the killing of Clytus, and the banishment of Roxana. These are characterizing actions. Alexander has no chance to influence the outcome even when he rushes in to try to save Statira, for word reaches him so late that, although he does not hesitate, Roxana has stabbed her victim by the time he reaches the room. Never is Alexander depicted in the kind of mental torment that comes with the necessity of choosing when choice seems impossible. Perhaps that is why he remains unchanged by the events of the tragedy. An Oedipus or an Othello, misguided as his actions might be, does not emerge unscathed. With tragedy comes enlightenment. With pathos comes a wild profusion of grief. The Rival Queens never goes much below the surface; it shows a man whose passions range from ecstasy to grief and rage, but the emotions leave no noticeable effect on the sufferer.

Before leaving the subject of conflicts in the play, one notes with interest the third-act scene between the rival queens, certainly one of the strongest in the play. Statira and Roxana provide two of the dramatic
crises in the play: this encounter and the murder scene in the fifth act, which again provides the battle of words and wits and the clever character contrast that marks their first duet. As the ladies meet for the first time, the "jealous proud Roxana" sweeps on stage and "a haughty vengeance gathers up her brow" (III, i, 34-35). She directs her passionate anger toward her rival, the "puny" Statira. The scene moves rapidly and well, and Lee is successful in picturing the vivid contrast in appearance and disposition as the two battle in words. Here there is the strongest and best-defined conflict in the play: the rival queens' actions are determined by their conflicting desires. They are required to take stands, to make choices, and to act; these they do. These women are, like Alexander, static characters; they are not changed by the episodes of the play.

The tone of The Rival Queens seems fairly consistent; Lee achieves a good measure of success in this aspect of his work. A swelling passion dominates the play, and if that is a fault it seems to be the effect for which the playwright was consciously striving. The play remains imposing as the scenes progress, and the action is always rapid; often it is as impetuous as the words. Although excess verbiage and high-flown sentiments sound ridiculous on several occasions in the play, Lee never consciously relieves the feeling of high seriousness and pretentiousness with which the play opens. In the matter of unity of tone, his faults appear to lie in execution rather than in intention.

The structure of Lee's tragedy needs to be considered in the light of the foregoing comments about theme, conflicts, and tone. Restoration literary and dramatic critics paid constant lip service to the classical
virtue of unity. In the less important matters of unity of time and place The Rival Queens is very regular. All the action takes place in the palace of Alexander at Babylon or just outside it, and the events are those of a single day. Unity of action is much more significant as far as the structure of a play is concerned. Even with numerous plot episodes and several characters whose importance is only slightly less than that of Alexander, Lee's play scores well here too. Lee's twentieth-century editors state that the plot of The Rival Queens achieves a certain unity by being centered in the character of Alexander. All events relate finally to Alexander, and all are, to some degree at least, the result of a flaw in the character of the hero. 12 This point of view is readily acceptable if one recalls the close relationship between tragedy and epic poetry in the minds of seventeenth-century poets and playwrights. The epic achieves unity by means of the character of the epic hero; it is not unreasonable to find the same principle of organization in a Restoration tragedy. Several of Lee's plays follow the same plan; for example, Nero, his first tragedy, is so unified, as is Mithridates, the play which followed The Rival Queens by a year.

The plot incidents fall into three groups: the main plot -- the rivalry between Roxana and Statira for Alexander's favor; the romantic sub-plot -- the rivalry between Lysimachus and Hephestion for the hand of Parisatis; and the sub-plot involving the conspiracy. The episodes

12 Stroup and Cooke, I, 215.
of the various threads of the story are somewhat loosely woven together; for example, the rivalry of the two queens accounts only by implication for the death of Alexander, and the Lysimachus-Parisatis story is unimportant to the main plot, even though it receives a rather disproportionate amount of emphasis at the outset of the play. It is only when each part of the story is considered as a link in the chain of evidence which reveals the moral collapse of the imperious Alexander that the logical connection becomes apparent and the basic unity of the play is established.

Another aspect of the play's organization which shows the playwright's skill in the handling of material is the principle of contrast which he employs. While dramatic contrast is to some extent very generally used, Lee seems to emphasize this principle throughout The Rival Queens until it assumes major proportions. The characters who are foils to one another are obvious: Alexander-Clytus, Statira-Roxana, and Hephse- tion-Lysimachus. The same principle is found in the arrangement of incident, with the alternation of conspiracy and love scenes, contrast in mood between scenes of wild exultation and deep grief, and spectacle interspersed with dialogue. Largely as a result of this method of arrangement, the tragedy has a steady forward movement; it carries the spectators at a rapid pace through the vicissitudes of Alexander the Great.

Lee's style — his diction, rhetoric, imagery — has been responsible for more unfavorable criticism by his contemporaries and later critics than any other single aspect of his work. Here one needs to
see the play in the light of others of its time. When Alexander boasts extravagantly, he is following the pattern set by Dryden's Almanzor, for one. It was Dryden who said, in "A Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poetry," "I confess my chief endeavors are to delight the age in which I live." What seems distasteful to one age may have been pleasant to another. It should be recognized, however, that in Lee's own time, and in the period immediately following his death, his style was attacked vigorously. Therefore one cannot defend all his extravagance of diction and emotion on the grounds that he was giving the audience what it wanted. It is true, nevertheless, that a recollection of the characteristics of heroic tragedy, discussed below, lightens the charge against Lee.

It is not difficult to find passages which can only be called rant. One example will suffice. Statira has just declared to Alexander her intention of refusing to live with him for the rest of their lives, and he speaks as follows:

Yes, I will shake this Cupid from my arms,
If all the ages of the Earth can fright him;
Drown him in the deep bowl of Hercules;
Make the world drunk, and then like Aeolus,
When he gave passage to the struggling winds,
I'll strike my Spear into the reeling Globe
To let it blow; set Babylon in a blaze,
And drive this God of flames with more consuming fire. (III, i, 376–83)

On the other hand, The Rival Queens marks an advance in technique over Lee's Nero, Gloriana, and Sophonisba because here Lee has written several powerful scenes that are effective because of the playwright's restraint and control over his material. One such scene is that between Clytus and Alexander when the former attacks the King's arrogance
There is emotion in the lines which culminate in Clytus' death at the hands of Alexander, but it is held in check, particularly when Clytus speaks.

Most of The Rival Queens is in blank verse, which seems to be, on the whole, fairly flexible and suitable for the expression of heightened emotions. It is interesting to note that one of the most famous scenes in the play, however, the confrontation scene between Roxana and Statira, is entirely in rhyme (III, i, 179-270). Perhaps Lee was consciously adapting the debate pattern found in many earlier rhymed plays; at least this scene is close in spirit to other debate scenes, although the glamor of the participants and the skill with which the two personalities are distinguished make the scene especially noteworthy.

Since in this study The Rival Queens has been selected as the play by means of which one can observe the taste and technique of audience and playwright in the Restoration, an analysis must examine the tragedy as an example of the genre which it seems to represent. In 1676 the vogue for the rhymed heroic play was not so great as it had been during the previous decade. However, even though the next months were to bring a change of style -- the partial abandonment of rhyme for blank verse -- the chief elements of the heroic play remained current on the Restoration stage for many years. The main characteristics of this genre have already been discussed in some detail, and the assertion has been made that, in rhyme or not, the plays of Lee and his contemporaries
were "heroic" in many respects, fitting Dryden's description of a heroic play "an imitation, in little, of an heroic poem." The term "heroic tragedy" is used here to describe a serious play with the following characteristics: a play about love and valor, with the protagonist a warrior whose exploits in the field are equal to his accomplishments in love; a setting remote in time and place; a background of war and intrigue, vague enough not to bind the playwright too closely; an exaggeration of emotions, speech, and actions; emphasis on a love-honor or passion-reason conflict rather than on affairs of state; the unreality of the world of romance, enhanced with various spectral apparitions; usually two or more principal characters, good or evil, whose actions fit the exaggerated pattern of the play. The plays were usually made more spectacular by the use of dances, songs, processionals, masques, elaborate scenic effects, and ingenious -- but not often realistic -- costumes. Scenes of riotous and often improbable actions were frequently interspersed with long arguments or debates in which two characters would, for many lines, protest their undying friendship or their devotion to honor or their resolution to carry out or to prevent some projected action. As was mentioned above, rhyme was a part of almost all plays of this type written between 1660 and 1676, and in this early period a satisfactory ending was to be expected.

The Rival Queens obviously fulfills many of the qualifications given above; it is necessary to note only the ways in which it differs

---

from the typical heroic tragedy.  First of all, Lee abandons, for the most part, the rhyme that Dryden had as yet only talked about abandoning. Dryden, interested in critical standards and form as Lee gave no evidence of being, has long been hailed as the dramatist who rescued the serious drama of the Restoration from the restricting bonds of rhyme and, in All for Love, returned successfully to the blank verse of earlier English drama. Such recognition is largely due to Dryden's Preface to All for Love (acted first in December, 1677; first quarto, 1678), which calls attention to his change of style and serves as a recantation of his remarks on rhyme in the earlier "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" (1668). The fact remains that Nat Lee wrote a play largely in blank verse, which was being popularly acclaimed even as Dryden was writing his first tragedy in that medium.

The Rival Queens, unlike most earlier heroic plays, ends tragically, and Lee is successful in making the tragic ending appear to be the inevitable outcome of the action. Such an ending was not new for Lee; his three earlier plays end tragically with the deaths of the important characters, Augustus Caesar in Gloriana being the single exception.

14. Critics often use the term "heroic play" to indicate only those rhymed plays of the 1660-1676 period, having a "happy" ending. The term "heroic tragedy" is a broader one, used here to include plays of the former category as well as those which departed from the pattern in some respects but which remained, in spirit and tone, essentially "heroic." Consequently Lee's plays are called "heroic tragedies" throughout this paper, with the term "Restoration tragedy" being used synonymously.

15. Prologue to Aureng-Zebe, Quarto, 1676.
After the appearance of Nero and Sophonisba, other playwrights turned like Lee to tragic endings. For example, in *The Destruction of Jerusalem* (1676/7) Crowne departs from his usual custom and concludes with the deaths of Phraartes and Clarona, the lovers. In *The Siege of Memphis* (1676) D'Urfey spares Moaron, the romantic hero, but presents him with a bleak future since Amasis, his sweetheart, dies. Otway uses tragic endings in both *Alcibiades* (1675) and *Don Carlos* (1676). In both plays the romances are cut off by death, either murder or suicide. These endings are a far cry from the earlier heroic plays in which the villains are killed and the heroes and heroines united. It is tempting to say that Lee's plays started a trend, but it is probably more realistic to recognize here the influence of Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy on the playwrights of the Restoration.  

Although love is the theme of *The Rival Queens*, as it is for practically all plays of this genre, there are none of the extended love and honor debates which are so numerous in the plays of Dryden and others. Lee's lovers are not so gallant, not so addicted to the polite conventions of Platonic love as are the leading characters of many plays. Lee

---

16. One of the few serious plays of the Restoration antedating Lee's tragedies and having a tragic ending is Payne's *The Fatal Jealousie*, presented at Dorset Garden by the Duke's Company in August, 1672. This rhymed play is primarily a drama of domestic jealousy; it contains coarse comic scenes and has such spectacular paraphernalia as a witch, a masque of gypsies, and singing spirits. In spite of spectacle and rhyme, it seems to be more in the tradition of Jacobean tragedy than of the heroic play. Interesting to note is the presence in the case of Lee (his name listed as "Mr. Nath. Leigh"), who played the minor role of Capt. of the Watch. (Quarto, 1673)
substitutes passion and action for debate. Similarly, reason plays no part in *The Rival Queens*; Alexander is never torn between passion and reason. He has given himself over to passion before the play begins. He is in no sense a thinking, reasoning hero; he gives way to his emotions without a struggle. The absence of a love-honor conflict has already been noted.

The domination of the central character, Alexander, and the achievement of unity of action set Lee's play apart from many heroic tragedies. One major criticism of the type has been that the attempt to force romantic material into a classical mold is unsuccessful and unconvincing. Although Lee's incidents are numerous and melodramatic, they are apparently selected to develop the theme; adherence to the unities of time and place helps make the play credible.

In the main, Lee's departures from what had been more or less standard practice for writers of serious plays represent the more successful aspects of his tragedy. At the same time it must be said that his departures have to do with such over-all considerations as structure and theme. Within the play, Lee makes use of techniques found in many other plays of the period. His handling of situation and selection of detail show his adherence to many of the typical features of the tragedy of his own time.

In a popular dramatic success it is often possible to note familiar and accepted formulae for audience appeal. *The Rival Queens* presents
evidence that Lee was greatly influenced in the handling of incidents and the inclusion of certain bits of stage business by plays produced during the five or six years he had been in London. Even though he broke precedent thematically and structurally, as has been noted, he apparently observed shrewdly the techniques and devices which had served his fellow dramatists well.

Ghosts, for example, were a familiar sight to Restoration audiences. In the first act of The Rival Queens, as the conspirators make plans for the murder of Alexander, the Ghost of King Philip walks over the stage "shaking a Trunchean at 'em," according to Lee's stage direction. He is a silent ghost, disappearing as Cassander addresses him. John Crowne was one of Lee's contemporaries who employed ghosts frequently: they walk in Juliana (1671); the ghost of Isabella's late husband prophesies her imminent death in The History of Charles the Eighth of France (1671); and in The Destruction of Jerusalem, Part I (1676/7) the ghost of Herod arises, recalls past crimes, and sets the stage for the ensuing battle. In the spectacular last scene of Settle's Cambyses (1670/1) the ghosts of Cambyses and his brother Smerdis are a part of the tableau. Almanzor, in The Conquest of Granada, Part II (1670/1), is told of his Christian heritage by the ghost of his mother, who then warns him against lawless love. In Otway's Alcibiades (1675) the ghost of Theramnes appears to warn Tissaphernes of his sins and to try to get him to repent. Lee himself made use of spirits in Nero: Gyara's ghost warns the mad Britanicus to beware of Poppea, and Caligula's ghost eggs Nero on. These few

17. For a list of tragedies performed between Dec. 1670 and March 1676/7 see note 3, above.
examples indicate the popularity of the use of ghosts during the era of Lee's play. They may help to explain the further use of spirits in The Rival Queens when at the beginning of the fifth act, Statira's dead parents appear to her in a vision and sing their warning of the danger that confronts the queen.

In the late entrance of Alexander and Roxana and the first-act alternation of love and war episodes Lee seems to be following Sophonisba, the most popular of his earlier plays. In that tragedy Sophonisba does not appear on stage until late in the third act, although Lee begins to build for her appearance early in the play. There, also, Hannibal is introduced as a great general who, by his own admission, lay "Melting at Capua" where for a mistress he "gave the world away" (I, i, 104-05).

These lines recall Clytus' opening description of Alexander.

Lee makes a great deal of the omens and prodigies which the conspirators relate and about which the soothsayer warns the unheeding Alexander. Here too is an echo of an earlier Lee play: in Sophonisba Hannibal, unlike Alexander, is deeply troubled by similar awesome signs, but in both plays Lee spins out the frightening details of demons, thunder-bolts, a monstrous child weeping blood, and all manner of horrible sights. In January 1676/7 when The Destruction of Jerusalem was presented at Dorset Garden with great success, the audience would have noted the warnings of prodigies directed to Phraartes, the Parthian King, and they would have heard Matthias, the High Priest, and his friends discourse of the army in the sky and the phantom troops of iron chariots which presaged defeat for Jerusalem.
In the third act of The Rival Queens Roxana's entrance is the occasion for her tempestuous speech in which she quenches "debate and reason" and lets "passions like the winds / Rise up to Heav'n and put out all the Stars" (III, i, 45-57). Certainly this is a sentiment that is repeated in many serious plays of this era. Crowne said in the Epistle to the Reader which prefaces The Destruction of Jerusalem, Part I, "But perhaps a man ought not to talk Reason in Love: I confess since Love has got the sole possession of the Stage, Reason has had little to do there." He had ample grounds for such a statement. For example, the villainous Zulema in The Conquest of Granada, Part I, spurns reason and honor when they stand in his way (II, i), and later in the same play Lyndaraxa, Zulema's passionate, ambitious sister, scoffs at reason as she encourages Abdalla to murder the King (IV, ii). The hero of Otway's Don Carlos (1676) is a slave to passion; reason has little part in his actions. These examples could be multiplied, but they serve to illustrate the truth of Lee's own description of his age as "a tearing Thund'ring age," and show Roxana's fierceness and passion and Alexander's excess of emotion as entirely typical. Perhaps the advice of one of Dryden's critics needs to be kept in mind for readers of Restoration tragedy in general, including The Rival Queens: "The enjoyment of Dryden's plays demands a willingness to be pleased in spite of

18. Quarto, 1677.

19. Prologue to Nero, 1. 22.
Plot episodes which parallel those in *The Rival Queens* are found in several contemporary plays. Statira vows never to share again the bed of Alexander which Roxana has defiled, a decision which is responsible for the passionate scene ending in reconciliation between her and Alexander. In *The Conquest of Granada, Part II*, Almahide makes a resolution similar to Statira's and, like the latter, decides to retire to a religious retreat.

Lee's scene between the two rival queens, certainly one of the strongest in the play, is not the first of its kind in Restoration tragedy. Payne's *The Siege of Constantinople* (1674) has a similar encounter between Irene, the heroine, and Calisto, the wicked woman, although the characterization is not well done and the scene lacks conviction and real emotion. D'Urfey's *The Siege of Memphis* (1676) contains a meeting between Zelmura and Amasis, sisters but rivals in love; the incident is brief and lacking in the vivid character contrast of Lee's scene. The third act of Settle's *The Conquest of China* (1675) offers an interesting parallel to *The Rival Queens*. Here the rival women are Orunda and Alcinda, and their contest over the love of Quitazo contains some of the same ideas as those expressed in this third-act episode of Lee's and the fifth-act scene in *The Rival Queens* where the rivals again hold the center of the stage. Again, though, Settle's handling of the scene is mechanical and unconvincing, and he is not successful in creating two distinct personalities. The only scene

actually worth comparing with Lee's is one which may have been suggested by his: that between Octavia and Cleopatra in Dryden's All for Love, which was produced the next year and about which more will be said later.

The scene in which Roxana stabs Statira and wounds her fatally allows the gentle and virtuous Statira to display, before her death, enough courage and fire to win the grudging admiration of Roxana, who offers Statira's life in exchange for possession of Alexander. Statira's scornful offer to Roxana of a kind word, a kiss, perhaps an embrace from Alexander is effective. The same idea is found in two earlier plays. In The Conquest of Granada, Part I, Almanzor spurns Almahide's offer of a sisterly love, although here the offer is made in good faith. In The Conquest of China, Settle's scene between Orunda and Alcinda is more nearly in the spirit of Lee's: Alcinda offers her rival the love and favors of Quitazo, but the catch is that "you shall enjoy these charms, / To Love him -- and admire him -- in my Arms" (Quarto, 1676; III, i).

The year before the presentation of The Rival Queens two tragedies were acted which contained scenes of murder or attempted murder with women as both victims and murderers. In Otway's Alcibiades Timandra is poisoned by Queen Deidamia, and in Dryden's Aureng-Zebe Nourmahal tries to stab Indemora but is prevented by the severely wounded Morat.

Like all tragedies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, The Rival Queens has a final act dominated by death. Following the death of Statira, there are successive reports of the deaths of Sysigambis and Hephestion, and then, fittingly enough, the final episode is the death-bed scene of the great Alexander. Deaths from the effect of the
"poyson'd bowl" (a theatrical euphemism for goblet) are so numerous in Restoration tragedy that they must rank second only to those caused by the fatal stab of the dagger. In the plays presented during the seasons preceding The Rival Queens, audiences saw the Cardinal poison himself in Crowne's Juliana; Timandra, the heroine of Otway's Alcibiades, drink the poisoned bowl given her by Queen Deidamia; the Queen in Otway's Don Carlos die in slow agony after the same kind of draught; and both actual and simulated poisonings in Payne's The Siege of Constantinople.

Lee himself had employed this manner of death in two earlier plays. In Nero the first scene has the impressive sight which Lee describes as follows: "Agrippina, led by two Virgins all in white, a Dagger, and bowl of Poyson carry'd before her" (I, i). Nero's mother uses both the dagger and the poison, but her death takes place off-stage. Nero ends his life by poison, and Britannicus dies in a like manner. In Sophonisba Massinissa and Sophonisba drink from two poisoned cups in a double suicide pact.

The death of Britannicus in Nero further resembles that of Alexander because in both cases the victim of poisoning becomes maddened by pain. When Britannicus takes poison, he is, however, already a madman, demented with grief over his loved one. Alexander, on the other hand, goes out of his mind as the poison works, talks to his horse Bucephalus, sees again his murdered comrades, and fights once more with Darius. The speeches of Alexander and Britannicus as they describe the torments of poison bear some resemblance:
Britannicus: Fire, fire, I'm all one flame, fly, my friends fly,
Or I shall blast you; O my breath is Brimstone,
My Lungs are Sulphur, my hot brains boil over;
I burn, I burn
(Nero, V, i, 1-7)

Alexander: I am all Hell, I burn, I burn again.
The War grows wondrous hot, hey for the Tygris
(Rival Queens, V, i, 325-26)

Both remind one of Nourmahal in Dryden's Aureng-Zebe, as she enters "distracted" after swallowing poison:

I burn, I more than burn; I am all fire.
See how my mouth and nostrils flame expire!
Now I'm a burning lake, it rolls and flows (V, i)

There is also a brief mad scene in Crowne's Destruction of Jerusalem, Part II, when the death of Clarone so affects Phraartes that he grows mad and, in his delirium, sees his loved one mounting to the sun.

Many of the similarities in technique and episode between The Rival Queens and plays appearing shortly before would seem to represent the playwright's adherence to stage conventions of his own period; they emphasize again his keen sense of what passed for "good theatre" in the days of King Charles, and they reveal his evident awareness of all the tricks of his trade and his closeness to the stage itself.

On the Restoration stage, though, Lee would have seen not only plays written by his contemporaries but also Elizabethan and Jacobean revivals. Is it possible to note any influences of this older drama on Lee's play? Twentieth-century scholars speak of Lee as "the child of the late Renaissance" and note in his tragedy, as in that of Otway,
a "mixture of heroic attributes and Elizabethan and Jacobean qualities." They find in his works passages "which can remind us only of the best of the later Elizabethans -- of Webster and of Ford -- and sometimes even of Shakespeare himself." They claim for him the distinction of being "perhaps the first of his generation to turn back to the older tradition of English tragedy," and of maintaining "something of a balance between the heroic and the Jacobean traditions." Even a French critic of seventeenth-century English drama cites passages from Lee's tragedies -- including the farewell of Statira and Alexander -- that are admirable, even brilliant, "offrent les beautés de premier ordre du grand art de Shakespeare." If one considers the revivals which were presented on the Restoration stage in the few seasons preceding The Rival Queens, one sees that Lee apparently -- and naturally -- studied them with the same keen actor-playwright's eye that he directed toward the plays of his own contemporaries.

It will be recalled that a revival of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar was presented at the Theatre Royal in 1676. Charles II is said to have

22. Nicoll, p. 121.
25. For a list of revivals of earlier tragedies produced from Dec. 1670 to March 1676/7 see notes 4 and 5 above.
see its performance on Monday, December 4. Downes gives the cast for *Julius Caesar*, a list which includes Hart as Brutus, Mohun as Cassius, and Kynaston as Antony. Hart's Brutus and Mohun's Cassius are included in Downes' list of roles in which the actors excelled. Thus while Lee was writing *The Rival Queens* he must have seen the successful Shakespearean production starring the same actors for whom he was writing.

And certainly there are some interesting parallels between the two plays. In the first place there is the extensive use of prodigies, portents, and omens found in both plays. While it is true -- and it has already been noted above -- that many Restoration plays contain such signs, *Julius Caesar* and *The Rival Queens* make similar use of them. In both plays the stormy heavens indicate to the conspirators the displeasure of the gods (*Julius Caesar*, i, iii, 4-13; *Rival Queens*, i, 133-142). In both the plans of the conspirators are prefaced by descriptions of the frightening signs. The Soothsayer's warning to Julius Caesar at the height of his triumph reminds one of Aristander's warning to Alexander as he too comes triumphantly into the city. Caesar brushes off the warning with the words, "He is a dreamer" (I, ii, 24); Alexander likewise asks the soothsayer who warns him, "Or dost thou from some Dream of horror wake?" (II, i, 171). When Calpurnia pleads with him, Caesar listens momentarily and then goes to the Senate House. Just before Alexander's banquet of celebration he too ponders for a moment the troublesome visions which have appeared to him, and then he banishes all "boding dreams" to


27. Downes, pp. 8, 16-17.
anticipate his reunion with Statira.

The conspirators' description of Caesar, especially the words of Cassius, is comparable to that which Cassander and his confederates give of Alexander. In speaking of Caesar, Cassius says:

Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus

(I, ii, 135-36)

Cassander speaks of Alexander in this fashion:

Why am I slow then? if I rode on Thunder
I must a moment have to fall from Heaven,
E're I could blast the growth of this Colossus.

(I, i, 161-63)

In attempting to emphasize the human weakness of the man who has now "become a god", Cassius relates the story of his rescue of the tired Caesar from the "troubled Tiber," and then speaks of Caesar's illness in Spain as evidence that the man is mortal (I, ii, 100-31). Still later Casca reports Caesar's attack of "falling sickness" at the time he was offered the crown (I, ii, 249-56). Cassander tries to encourage his co-conspirators in this manner:

Remember he's a Man, his flesh as soft
And penetrable as a Girls: we have seen him wounded,
A Stone has struck him, yet no Thunderbolt:
A Pebble fell'd this Jupiter along,
A Sword has cut him, a Javelin pierc'd him,
Water will drown him, Fire burn him,
A Surfeit, nay a Fit of Common-sickness
Brings this Immortal to the Gate of Death.

(I, i, 266-73)

The exalted position of the conquerors and the servility of the rest of the world are set forth in similar terms (Julius Caesar I, ii, 115-18, 135-38; Rival Queens I, i, 185-95). Finally, when Brutus quarrels with Cassius he reminds him that they "struck the foremost man of all this world" (IV, iii, 22). When Cassander learns that Alexander is dying he
describes him as "the greatest man that ever was" (V, i, 312). It is evident from these selected passages that the resemblance between the two plays is found in the sub-plot of The Rival Queens; the portrayal of Alexander as a passionate lover has no parallel in Shakespeare's tragedy of a political conspiracy.

There is no record of a Restoration revival of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra before Lee wrote The Rival Queens, yet Lee undoubtedly knew the play well. His latest editors present some evidence that he drew upon Antony and Cleopatra for several elements in Sophonisba, a play written almost two years before The Rival Queens. The comparison between the love-racked Alexander, especially as described by blunt Clytus, and that of Antony, so besotted by love that he loses his share of the greatest empire in the world, is obvious. In both plays the weakness of the hero is presented at the outset, although in Shakespeare's play love as the debilitating force which interferes with duty is underscored throughout; in Lee's play, as was observed above, there is no real conflict between love and duty. The Enobarbus of Antony and Cleopatra seems to be a prototype of the Clytus of The Rival Queens. The loyalty, bluntness, and concern of both men are evident whenever they are on stage in their respective plays. It has been suggested that Clytus was probably the prototype for Dryden's Ventidius in All for Love. Probably Dryden was influenced by watching Mohun play Clytus only a few months before the performance of All for Love, in which the same actor was to play Ventidius, but there is, perhaps, more reason to

28. Stroup and Cooke, I, 76.
29. Stroup and Cooke, I, 216.
believe that Enobarbus was a model for both playwrights.

The parallels between Lee and Shakespeare given here are highly selective; only the most obvious and most important have been indicated. In these, however, there seems to be some support for the critical comments given above that Lee knew Shakespeare; Lee probably turned to him in the writing of The Rival Queens. One query, unanswerable but interesting, might be propounded: might Lee's knowledge of and interest in Elizabethan tragedy explain why, having been attracted to his subject probably very largely because of the popularity of the French romance, Cassandre, he chose the historical figure of Alexander the Great for his hero instead of the Scythian prince Oroondates, the romantic hero of the French work? Shakespeare found dramatic riches in classical history; Lee went to the same storehouse.

It is unrewarding to search for direct parallels of technique and episode between The Rival Queens and Jacobean drama, especially in those plays revived during the period under discussion. A recent study states that there is slight evidence that Lee composed tragedy with Jacobean drama before him, as he did with the French romances. In the dedicatory epistle to Mithridates, written about a year after The Rival Queens, Lee says that he has tried in this tragedy to "mix Shakespear with Fletcher; the thoughts of the former, for Majesty and true Roman Greatness, and the softness and passionate expressions of the latter." As far as The Rival Queens is concerned, the death-filled ending seems in the tradition of the earlier tragedy of blood, as has already been

indicated. *A King and No King* was revived by the King's Company in 1675; in that production Downes tells us that Mohun played Mardonius, the man who is not afraid to rebuke his sovereign much as Clytus rebukes Alexander. One is tempted to find here evidence of definite influence, but it is unwise to be dogmatic when similar characters are found in many other plays. In Webster's *The White Devil*, which Lee probably knew only from reading it, since there is no evidence that he could have seen a revival before *The Rival Queens*, Brachiano dies a slow death inflicted by a poisoned helmet; in his prolonged agony he sees a succession of visions. There is, of course, a possibility that knowledge of this scene influenced the writing of the scene of Alexander's dying delirium. On the other hand, it is more logical to go to the plays performed during Lee's own time, and among those, parallels for this scene have already been indicated.

In conclusion, then, one finds many comparisons between the dramatic technique of Lee and his contemporaries and several rather striking similarities in incident and wording between *The Rival Queens* and *Julius Caesar*, which, because of its revival in 1676, was also part of the theatrical bill of fare of the Restoration. These resemblances

31. Bonamy Dobrée suggests what seems to be a most unlikely parallel between the final scenes of *The White Devil* and *The Rival Queens*. He says that when the dying Alexander shouts "Victoria, Victoria," "There seems to be no earthly reason for his doing so but that Brachiano in *The White Devil* shouts 'Vittoria! Vittoria!' when he is done to death." (Restoration Tragedy 1660-1720, Oxford, 1929, pp. 123-24). A much more reasonable parallel is that in the final scene of *The Conquest of Granada*, Part II. As King Ferdinand leaves to fight there are shouts from off stage: "Vittoria! Vittoria! / But these loud clamors better news presage." Alexander in his delirium is victorious again over Darius; thus the cry of victory used at the exit of Dryden's king may have come to Lee's mind. Brachiano's shout is but a cry for Vittoria, the "white devil."
are not particularly important in a consideration of *The Rival Queens* as tragedy or in an analysis of the theme and structure of the play. They are more illuminating for their revelation of Lee as a dramatic craftsman working in the theatre of his own day, and for the light they throw on other plays of the same period. The critics who comment on Lee's resemblance to Elizabethan and Jacobean drama doubtless focus on tone, theme, structure, and characterization, rather than on handling of episode or dialogue.

As a tragedy, then, *The Rival Queens* is a skilfully constructed play which presents in a compelling and entertaining manner characters who are renowned, impressive, and spectacular and action that is rapid and varied. The author employs to good advantage techniques used by his contemporaries, just as he apparently counted on an extremely popular French romance and general interest in plays with heroic characteristics to help make the drama succeed. Lee had a knowledge of play construction and an awareness of the kinds of tragedy which preceded the Restoration; he was thus able to select, change, adapt, or reject characteristics of the "typical" heroic play which lesser contemporaries were inclined to follow blindly. His changes in theme and structure strengthen his play. What he was not able to do, however, was to go below the surface, to probe the minds of his characters, to make them appear to succeeding ages as men wrestling with universal issues. Alexander and those who surround him remain two-dimensional stage creations, good for an evening's entertainment but inadequate when measured
against great tragic figures. The absence of real conflict and the substitution of sensational incident for thought and feeling make the play shallow. It merits the phrase "good theatre," but it does not exceed it. An examination of The Rival Queens as a theatrical production written for a special acting group in a special theatre is needed to complement the analysis of the play as tragedy and to account for its great success on the boards.
Nat Lee wrote plays with an eye on the theatre where they were to be produced. His evident awareness of the manner in which his dramatic predecessors and contemporaries successfully handled action and dialogue, and his skill in manipulating and unifying his tragic materials have been noted in the preceding chapter. Such matters are discernible in a careful reading of the plays of Lee and other dramatists of the seventeenth century. If one turns from the printed pages of Restoration tragedies and directs his attention to the theatre itself -- the style of acting, the actors who were in the King's Company for which Lee wrote, the scenery, spectacles, and elaborate costumes designed to please the eye of the spectator -- he finds evidence that the popularity of *The Rival Queens* stems in large measure from the fact that Lee had a sense of the dramatic and a knowledge of what the audience at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane liked to see and what facilities the Theatre Royal could provide for the playwright. Thus Lee's play was
shaped in part by the theatre for which it was written. Its long stage
history attests to the dramatist's awareness of what constitutes good
theatre. Dramatic critics from the late Restoration to the nineteenth
century, whether they attack the play or praise it, reveal by their
attention the popularity of The Rival Queens on the stage.

In creating his characters and composing the dialogue for The
Rival Queens Lee was working with one controlling idea: to entertain
the audience at the Theatre Royal by writing a play which could be
acted successfully by those who composed the King's Company in 1676/7.
Lee, of course, knew the special techniques of seventeenth-century act-
ing style, partly from his own brief acting experience and largely from
observation of the great and popular actors and actresses at the two
houses.

From contemporary accounts of Restoration acting, one can learn a
great deal about acting conventions of that day, and acting styles in
themselves illustrate the taste of the age.1 There were definite
formulae for the acting of tragedy or heroic drama, and these were
understood by both actor and audience. Ham refers to the "vicious
circle" in which the audience demanded bombastic lines, the lines tolera-
ted only one kind of actor, and the actor, in turn, aimed at one sort of

---

1. Colley Cibber in his Apology comments on the general principles
 in his tribute to Betterton (Everyman's Library, London, 1911, Chap. IV,
passin). See also Thomas Betterton, The History of the English Stage
 From the Restauration to the Present Time (London, 1741), passim. Al-
though the title page gives Betterton as the author, the book is (cont'd)
Surrounded upon three sides by unruly spectators, the actor began to partake of the qualities of the platform demagogue. He was the moving statue, not yet the moving picture, depending for his effects upon the force of broad movement, of posture, and of compelling accent to ravish away his audience. To what extent mere rhetoric and formal elocution ruled the stage may be deduced from any description of the great artists of the period. It should be obvious, therefore, that Lee and his contemporaries wrote dialogue and invented situations for the style of acting which was then in vogue, and it is necessary to remember the artificialities of the Restoration stage if one would understand the effect of a tragedy like The Rival Queens. It seems evident that the sonorous line, the bombastic effect, the turgid eloquence which offend more sensitive and restrained modern ears were the popularly esteemed qualities of Lee's age. It was Dryden who said:

They, who have best succeeded on the stage,  
Have still conformed their genius to their age.

In his style Lee conformed, he succeeded, and his plays stand as typical vehicles for Restoration acting.

The actors and actresses who were members of the King's Company must have influenced to a great extent the handling of characterization and perhaps even the selection of subjects for a playwright like Lee. Nicoll says that in the theatre of 1660 to 1700, dramatists were much

1. (cont'd) usually ascribed to William Oldys or to Edmund Curll, the publisher. Here there are pages of gestures and attitudes with an explanation of what each was to convey.


3. Epilogue to The Conquest of Granada, Part II.
more nearly related to the stage than in later times.

[Particular players] had become the familiar spectacles of audiences at the Duke's and King's houses, and spectators and dramatists alike had come to know their little idiosyncrasies and mannerisms. . . . The majority of Restoration actors took up one line, and aided thus in establishing those "stock" characters which appear in comedy after comedy, in tragedy after tragedy, during those forty years.4

It is fitting to look first at the figure of Alexander the Great as Lee has portrayed him in The Rival Queens, examining the total effect of the character in the light of knowledge about the actor who created the part on the stage. The dominant characteristics of Lee's Alexander were, of course, determined by the accounts in Plutarch and Quintus Curtius, the playwright's historical sources, and by the accepted conception of the legendary Alexander as a figure of extraordinary achievements and colorful romance. The action of the play, as discussed above, determined the selection of incidents and qualities appearing on the stage; the terms in which Alexander is described by other characters fill out the picture. He is to Clytus the "hot Master, that wou'l tire the World, / Outride the lab'ring Sun, and tread the Stars" (I, i, 42-43), the mighty ruler who had hurled to earth the great Darius. To the conspirators Alexander is all-powerful also, but he is the intemperate, cruel, proud leader before whom the "Earth's Commanders fawn, and follow him" (I, i, 190-91). To Statira, Alexander is admittedly a cruel victor but an irresistible

lover and an eloquent one:

Then he will talk, good Gods how he will talk!
Even when the joy he sigh'd for is possesst,
He speaks the kindest words and looks such things,
Vows with such Passion, swears with so much grace,
That 'tis a kind of Heaven to be deluded by him.

(I, i, 379-83)

When Alexander strides on stage his own comments intensify all that has been said about him. He belongs to the stage tradition of boasting heroes, and to the boasters of epic poetry. It is entirely suitable for such a man to say that "never mortal Man arriv'd to such / A height as I" (II, i, 117-18). His first words in the play, an overly effusice speech of welcome to Hephestion, stamp him as a passionate man and aid in underscoring the role that Alexander is to play in this drama where he is the lover -- anticipating, frustrated, rejoicing, and despairing -- rather than the triumphant military leader in control of himself.

The role of this Alexander was created by Charles Hart, about whom Rymer said: "The eyes of the audience are prepossessed and charmed by his Action, before aught of the Poet can approach their ears; and to the most wretched character he gives a lustre which so dazzles the sight, that the deformities of the poet cannot be perceived." Hart was a product of the boy-actress school of training; he had been an apprentice at the old Blackfriars Theatre where he had acted feminine roles long

5. Quoted by John Genest, Some Account of the English Stage from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830 (Bath, 1832), I, 374.
before the Civil War, in which he had served the Royalists as a captain. He had been known as an important Shakespearean.

When he [Hart] came, on the Restoration stage, into the full maturity of his powers, he assumed a long series of great characters which he seems to have acted with uniform dignity and force. If his range was less extensive than Betterton’s, within it he was till his retirement recognized as the first actor of his time.

By the time he retired from the stage when the companies joined in 1682, he had enacted an impressive list of roles. Downes lists those in which he excelled, a list which includes revivals and new plays.

About his success as Alexander in The Rival Queens, Downes says "he Acting that with such Grandeur and Agreeable Majesty, that one of the Court was pleas’d to Honour him with this Commendation; that Hart might Teach any King on Earth how to Comport himself."

Genest lists eighteen leading roles which Hart carried, fifteen of which he acted originally. Hart had starred in all three of Lee’s


tragedies which preceded The Rival Queens, and he followed his role in
the latter with still another of Lee's tragic heroes, five in all.
Certainly Lee as a practical playwright would make use of the talents
of Hart, an experienced and popular actor, and he would be aware of the
kind of scenes which the great actor had carried off particularly well.
There are in The Rival Queens a good number of "purple passages," speeches
which would call forth the formal, highly stylized mannerisms and the
rhetorical thundering and bellowing of the tall, handsome actor. From
his spectacular entrance in the second act to his dramatic death when
he mentally mounts Bucephalus, conquers Darius (certainly all this ac-
companied by extravagant gesturing), and then expires with the dignified
words of a ruler, Lee's Alexander dominates the stage in every scene in
which he appears. Lee could know that Hart would respond magnificently;
there was never the risk that the hero would become ridiculous or un-
believable. By March 1676/7 Hart had proved his mettle, and the team
of Hart and Lee had already been well tested and apparently well re-
ceived.

The part of Clytus was first acted by Michael Mohun, who, like
Hart, had been trained as a boy-actor before the Wars (in which he bore
the King's commission as major), but he had probably graduated to male
roles by 1642. An accomplished actor, he was a great favorite with
Charles II. 10 Nicoll says that Mohun appears to have been a slightly
heavier actor than Hart, who shone in roles of the gay or romantic
gentleman. 11 Downes praised him highly, and Genest says that he was

"an able second to Hart, and equally admired for his great and profound skill in his profession."\textsuperscript{12} Lee is reportedly the "eminent poet" about whom Downes relates the following:

\begin{quote}
An Eminent Poet seeing him [Mohun] Act this last [Mithridates], vented suddenly this Saying; Oh Mohun, Mohun! Thou little Man of Mettle, if I should Write a 100 Plays, I'd Write a Part for thy Mouth; in short, in all his Parts, he was most Accurate and Correct.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

Genest reports the anecdote and attributes the words to Lee. He gives a list of twenty roles for which Mohun was known, seventeen of which he acted originally. Among these are three in Lee's earlier plays:

Britannicus in \textit{Nero}, Augustus Caesar in \textit{Gloriana}, and Hannibal in \textit{Sophonisba}; after his role as Clytus he performed Mithridates in Lee's later tragedy.\textsuperscript{14}

Here, then, was an actor who could well hold the center of the stage at the opening of the curtain, dramatically bait Alexander and taunt him with his mortality when others were treating him as the god he claimed to be, and act throughout as an honest, loyal, but level-headed follower of Alexander, unwilling to forget that men were made for war, and distrustful of any romantic entanglements. The contrast between the two roles is dramatic and effective; the same kind of contrast had been used successfully in \textit{Nero}, \textit{Gloriana}, and \textit{Sophonisba}. The same two actors had

\textsuperscript{12} Some Account of the English Stage, I, 376.

\textsuperscript{13} Roscius Anglicanus, p. 17. Betterton, History of the English Stage (1741), attributes the remark definitely to Lee (p. 90).

\textsuperscript{14} Some Account of the English Stage, I, 376-78.
already been typed by the audience. Lee continued his typecasting in *The Rival Queens* and provided scenes where it would be most apparent.

Another actor whose work on the stage apparently followed a pattern is Edward Kynaston, the Cassander of *The Rival Queens*. A very handsome young man, Kynaston used to play women's roles immediately after the Restoration. At that stage of his life Cibber describes him as follows: "Kynaston, at that time, was so beautiful a youth, that the ladies of quality prided themselves in taking him with them in their coaches, to Hyde Park, in his theatrical habit, after the play. . . . And indeed, to the last of him, his handsome was very little abated." Cibber adds that there was something of a formal gravity in his mien. "He had a piercing eye, and in characters of heroick life, a quick imperious vivacity, in his tone of voice, that painted the tyrant truly terrible." In *Aureng-Zebe* he had played the part of Morat, a conspirator who plots to get rid of Aureng-Zebe, his older brother and heir to the throne. Cibber tells of his "fierce, lion-like majesty in his port and utterance that gave the spectator a kind of trembling admiration."

For this actor Lee had a role in *The Rival Queens* that would enable him to arouse the audience by his daring to rise against Alexander, his outspokenness in his scenes with Roxana, his righteous wrath as he recollected Alexander's cruelty towards subordinates, and his craftiness as he planned to use Alexander's love for Statira for his own purposes. Lee


elevates Cassander among the group of conspirators so that he stands out as an individual. For Kynaston this was his third role in a Lee play: Scipio in Sophonisba and Marcellus in Gloriana preceded his Cassander.

Griffin, who played Lysimachus, and Clarke, who played Hephhestion, had both appeared in other tragedies by Lee. The weak Hephhestion bears some resemblance to Ovid, Clarke's role in Gloriana, in that both exist largely to praise the King and to show a contrast to military figures, and both speak in effusive, richly-embroidered language. Clarke was a young actor, much admired for his handsome face. 17

Lysimachus was Griffin's first important part in a Lee tragedy, but Griffin had joined the King's Company only in 1674 and by the time he left in 1688 he was listed among the actors who excelled on the stage and were at the same time irreproachable in personal morals and behavior, a mark of some distinction on the Restoration stage. 18

For his title roles, the two rival queens, Lee seemed to write with the actresses who would play the parts constantly in mind. For example, Rebecca Marshall, Lee's Roxana, was for many years the principal actress in the King's Company. 19 Genest lists the characters

18. Cibber, Apology, p. 149.
19. There were two Marshall sisters among Restoration actresses. Anne has long been identified as the principal actress in the King's Company, but recent investigation by Prof. John Harold Wilson indicates that Rebecca was almost certainly the leading lady. See forthcoming article in Notes and Queries, "Anne Quin née Marshall."
she played from 1664 to 1677, some fifteen in number and almost all played first by Mrs. Marshall. A tall, handsome brunette, this actress achieved success in fiery, passionate roles; Lyndaraxa in The Conquest of Granada, Poppea in Nero, Nourmahal in Aureng-Zebe are typical parts for her. On the other hand, blonde Elizabeth Boutel, Lee's Statira, was a foil to Mrs. Marshall in her off-stage appearance and manner as well as in her role in The Rival Queens.

Mrs. Boutel was likewise a very considerable Actress; she was low of Stature, had very agreeable Features, a good Complexion, but a Childish Look. Her Voice was weak, tho' very mellow; she generally acted the young Innocent Lady whom all the Heroes are mad in Love with; she was a Favourite of the Town. 20

Doran, relating an incident that occurred when Mrs. Boutel was playing Statira to Mrs. Barry's Roxana, describes the former as "the little, flute-voiced Boutell." 21 The actress was noted for her blue eyes and lovely hair. 22 She had already acted the part of Cyara in Lee's Nero; Mrs. Marshall was Poppea in the same play. Shortly after her first entrance in The Rival Queens, Roxana refers to Statira as "that puny Girl" (III, 1, 119). In the scene between the two queens Lee's dialogue refers time and time again to the physical contrast between the two actresses who were to play the parts. Statira addresses Roxana as "tow'ring proud Roxana," and the latter replies, "I tower indeed o're
thee" (III, i, 257-58). Statira, before aroused by Roxana, is consistently frail, weak, gentle soul, and Roxana is always "jealous, bloody, and ambitious." Earlier they have been described as "two Rival Queens of different humours" (II, i, 67); now they are shown to be different in appearance. When Roxana calls Statira "sickly Virtue," the phrase conjures up a picture of physical fragility as well as gentleness in character. The same is true of Statira's description of herself as she tells Roxana, "like an Ivy I will curl thee round, / Thy sapless Trunk of all its pride confound" (III, i, 261-62). Roxana makes the following contrast between herself and Statira:

Like a fair Wood, the shade of Kings I stand,
While thou, sick Weed, dost but infect the land.

(III, i, 259-60)

When Roxana enters the Bower of Semiramis to kill Statira, the latter asks,

And what is she who with such Tow'ring pride
Wou'd awe a Princess that is born above her?

(V, i, 53-54)

It is unlikely that Lee would be this definite about a difference in physical appearance if he had not had in mind the actual persons who were to carry the roles.

A third actress is cast in a typical part in the tragedy: Mrs. Corey, the Sysigambis of The Rival Queens, acted in a number of plays and in her own line, the portrayal of old women, was regarded as unapproachable. 23 Lee had seen her play the small but effective role of

Agrippina, mother of Nero, in his first tragedy. As mother of Darius, Mrs. Corey was performing a characteristic role.

Any information about actors -- their interpretation and manner of acting or their appearance -- and about acting styles of the Restoration sheds light on the interpretation of a play that was written for a particular acting company in a particular season. The original cast needs to be considered as one comments on the characters, for both actors and actresses presented to the theatre a series of stock types and helped to keep alive heroic tragedy. 25

Just as knowledge of acting conventions and of individual actors and actresses aids in reconstructing the effect of The Rival Queens as it was first presented and in accounting for certain elements of structure and style, so does the staging of the tragedy, including scenery, spectacle, and costume, play an important part in an understanding of the drama. In this matter, too, it is important to note the practices and customs in effect at the time of the play's composition, and to look for similar techniques in plays presented before 1677. As the characters

24. It is interesting to note that the type-casting of these actresses was carried over into their roles in comedy. For example, Wycherley's The Plain-Dealer opened at the Theatre Royal in December, 1676, with Mrs. Marshall as Olivia, the coarse, worldly, scheming mistress; Mrs. Boutel as Fidelia, the gentle, innocent, romantic young girl; and Mrs. Corey as Widow Blackacre, the rich old woman.

were frequently designed to suit actors, so were plots written around "stock" scenery.

Scenery and spectacle seemed to play an increasingly important part in the success or popularity of plays as the years of the Restoration went by.

Reading one spectacular piece after another, we come to realise that the machinist's art in Restoration times had reached a very high pitch of perfection, that one theatre vied with another in producing more and more gorgeous shows, and that often the poet had to be subordinated to the scene shifter. 26

The painted backgrounds were often elaborate, and scene-painters were admired and their names noted by contemporary writers like Downes, Pepys, and Evelyn. 27 It goes without saying that each dramatic company, having built up a supply of painted scenes, would try to find uses for them in other plays. In The Rival Queens most of the scenes are located simply within a royal palace, a setting repeated in a host of other plays of the period. The last act opens in the Bower of Semiramis; probably the scene used to depict the Bower of Gloriana, the setting for Act III, scene ii of Lee's Gloriana, could be used quite successfully. Pictorial splendor came to be demanded by the Restoration audience, but the companies must have found it necessary to use over and over certain conventional backgrounds in order to pay for the spectacular effects which dotted the plays. Although the larger Duke's Theatre in Dorset Garden was the home of operatic activities and of plays that depended to


27. For an account of the work of some well known Restoration scene-painters see Montague Summers, The Restoration Theatre (New York, 1934), pp. 218-23.
a great extent on bizarre scenes — Settle's *Empress of Morocco*, for example — the King's Company followed the trend toward elaborate presentations even while they ridiculed the extravaganzas of the rival house.

In *The Rival Queens* Lee gave to a spectacle-loving audience several scenes which must have been to its liking. The second act begins with stage directions for a scene representing the prodigies that agitated the conspirators: "The Scene draws, and discovers a Battel of Crows, or Ravens, in the Air; an Eagle and a Dragon meet and fight; the Eagle drops down with all the rest of the Birds, and the Dragon flies away. Soulciers walk off, shaking their Heads. The Conspirators come forward." Soon after this, Alexander the Great makes the kind of entrance that would delight an audience: trumpets sound, the crowd presses around, Chaldean priests appear in their Eastern robes waving white wands, and Alexander himself is splendidly attired in Persian robes, looking every inch the "Master of the World," which Clytus terms him. This entrance, of course, introduced not only Alexander the Great but also Charles Hart, the leading man. Probably to a Restoration audience the reputation of Hart enhanced that of Alexander, and vice versa; Lee arranged the scene to build up this moment for his hero and for his leading actor.

The next spectacular scene in *The Rival Queens* is the fourth act banquet at which Alexander celebrates reunion with Statira and unknowingly drinks from the poisoned cup. As the scene draws Alexander is standing on a throne in the center of the stage with all his court ranged round him. As they drink, the peal of silver trumpets fills the theatre. Into
the midst of the celebration comes the bloody Lysimachus, his disheveled appearance forming a fine contrast with the rich regalia of the others. Before the scene ends the audience witnesses "an Entertainment of Indian Singers and Dancers; The Musick flourishes." Then the exchange between Clytus and Alexander leads to the King's pelting his soldier with fruit, and finally, tried beyond endurance, striking him through with a javelin. Finally as Alexander lies prostrate on the body of Clytus, the cries of treason ring out, and the entrance of a bloody warrior terminates a stirring act.

Almost every play in which a great conqueror appears provides, like The Rival Queens, for an impressive entrance. Lee was not making any unusual arrangements here. Similarly, masques and entertainments abound in serious plays of the Restoration. For example, Payne's Fatal Jealousie (the play in which Lee acted) and Siege of Constantinople contain, respectively, a masque of gypsies and a masque with allegorical figures. Settle's Cambyses has two masques, one in the second act and one in the fifth, and his Empress of Morocco also has a masque.

The most elaborate spectacle in The Rival Queens is that at the opening of Act V. The directions read as follows: "Statira is discover'd sleeping in the Bower of Semiramis. The Spirits of Queen Statira her Mother, and Darius, appear standing on each side of her, with Daggers threatening her. They sing." Here Lee employs the kind of vision scene that had already proved successful on the stage. Otway's Alcibiades in Act V has a similar spectacle: as Timandra is sleeping, a spirit comes and sings and other spirits appear. In the song they warn Timandra of imminent danger, just as the spirits of her parents warn
Statira in their song. When Timandra awakes she, like Statira, disregards the warning. The spirits may be paralleled in many plays; probably the best known vision scene is in Dryden's *Tyrannik Love*, IV, i, where two genii descend in clouds and sing and presently "A Scene of Paradise" is discovered. The fame of this scene is partially dependent on its burlesque in *The Rehearsal*, where the two Kings of Brentford descend from the clouds. Satire did not in the least dull the appetite of the audience for like spectacles; vision scenes were just as numerous after *The Rehearsal* as before.

Lee did not go to extremes in the matter of spectacle in his tragedy. The elaborate paraphernalia for *The Destruction of Jerusalem*, *Zoroastres*, and *The Empress of Morocco*, to name but three outstanding examples, make the scenery of *The Rival Queens* seem commonplace enough. However, Lee did follow the taste of the audience and include enough eye-filling scenes so that his play might compete in an age when great attention was given to the visual effect of tragedies. Perhaps the fact that Lee managed to incorporate these spectacles without distorting or detracting from his plot or destroying the tone of his play is evidence that he was a better craftsman than most of his contemporaries.

Contributing to the effectiveness of Restoration tragedy, in the eyes of the spectators, was the matter of costume. Nicoll suggests that in costume the theatre must have presented the same kind of incongruities as it did in scenery, with modern and ancient meeting on the same platform. He continues:

The theatres must have presented a mass of conflicting garments, Elizabethan meeting
with Eastern, Roman with American Indian. As we have seen, what the managers most thought about was show and novelty: nor was there a body of critical opinion in the audience which was likely to force a change of orientation.28

There are scattered references in Downes and Gildon to the effect that costuming received some attention during the Restoration, for these writers speak of the expense of clothing for various productions and refer to the fact that the King and nobles sometimes gave or lent garments to favored actors and actresses. Commenting on references to costume found in contemporary accounts, Lily B. Campbell says:

The significance of these accounts, however, lies not in the fact of the prevailing meagerness and inappropriateness which they reveal as having characterized stage dress during the century after the Restoration, but in the fact of the utter failure of critics and actors alike to recognize aesthetic principles upon the basis of which theatrical costumes might be chosen. The individual taste of the actor was the only artistic law known. The expense incurred was the only managerial consideration.29

Montague Summers states that although the costumes in most cases were not exact, the principal characters wore finery of considerable richness, and the ornate sumptuousness satisfied the taste of the audience probably more effectively than historical accuracy in detail would have done.30 The same writer further illustrates the apparent satisfaction of audience and actors with the system of costuming:

28. Nicoll, p. 51


The dresses worn by the actresses in classical or exotic dramas made not the faintest pretence to accuracy. So long as they glistened rich and jewelled the ladies and the audience were amply content. Antony and Nero may have been garbed "like Romans very well" but Cleopatra and Poppea donned silken petticoats of the fashion that the Duchess of Cleveland or the Duchess of Portsmouth were at the moment displaying in the royal box.\textsuperscript{31}

With these matters in mind, it is possible to visualize the production of The Rival Queens in 1677 and subsequent years. Lee's stage directions and dialogue provide very little guidance in the costuming of the principal actors and actresses. These is reference to the Persian robes worn by Alexander and members of his court and to the Eastern robes of the Chaldean priests; in the fourth act the Macedonian attire of Clytus is the subject of his remarks as he comes on stage (IV, i, 1-9); Statira and Sysigambis are in mourning, according to Lee's directions, as they make their first appearance in Act III. Other than these, there is nothing. The words "Persian," "Eastern," and "Macedonian," which Lee uses in his descriptions of costumes are no evidence that the actors wore authentic costumes for the indicated regions in the time of Alexander the Great. Certainly there would have been a clear contrast between the attire of Clytus and the rest of the group surrounding Alexander; but it was, in all probability, a contrast between a plain military costume and ornate robes. Such a distinction was employed at the beginning of the seventeenth century in plays like Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra, where the difference between the dress of Roman and

\textsuperscript{31} Restoration Theatre, p. 280.
Egyptian soldiers was sharp enough to distinguish participants on each side in the numerous battle scenes. Miss Campbell points out that interest in the East during the Restoration did not secure scientific accuracy in portrayal of dress or customs. A knowledge of ancient and foreign costumes was necessary for correctness, and this did not come until the eighteenth century. 32

Just as there were certain stylized gestures which indicated to the audience definite emotional states and attitudes, so were there prevailing traditions regarding costumes, some of which would inevitably have been followed in The Rival Queens. Since characters of heroism and dignity wore plumes, one might picture the conquering Alexander so attired. Em­presses and queens were often clad in black velvet, perhaps the indicated dress for the mourning Statira and Sysigambis. Cassander, as the arch conspirator, may very well have appeared in a black wig, the badge of a stage villain. Probably, too, Hart and Mohun would have been better dressed than other men in the company, as befitted their status as leading actors. One can imagine also that the encounters of the two rival queens would have brought together two sumptuously attired actresses clad in costumes which not only indicated their importance but which also were distinctive enough to heighten the contrast between Statira and Roxana.

Since The Rival Queens has been designated above as one of a large number of plays about the East, it seems pertinent to note the degree to

which this play, and others like it, succeed in depicting authentically
the Eastern setting. In the matter of costume, the lack of historical
accuracy has been pointed out. On the other hand, the use of actual
names of historical persons and places figuring in the exploits of
Alexander has likewise been mentioned. Lee made some attempt to include
references to Persian customs and beliefs in the dialogue of his
tragedy. For example, the sun worship of the Persians is mentioned
several times by different speakers, and the Chaldean priests bear the
"sacred fire" as they enter with their white wands (II, i, 90-3). But
the gods on whom various characters call are seldom identified as
Macedonian or Persian, no matter who is speaking; indeed, the only
direct reference to a Persian deity is made by Statira, who swears "by
Orosmades" as she bids Alexander goodbye on her deathbed. Although the
action takes place in Babylon, there is nothing to distinguish this
location from any other; doubtless the same flats were used for Alex­
ander's palace as for the palace of any other ruler, real or imaginary.
In short, the drama is historical in that there is sufficient founda­
tion on fact to determine the approximate time and place of action, but
that is about the extent of historical authenticity. Discussing the
characteristics of heroic drama, Chase says:

Notwithstanding the fact that many of the
characters bear historical names, and their
country is nominally mentioned, the absence of
scenery, character delineation, or diction,
whereby to connect any drama with the soil of
its scene of action is well-nigh complete.
The reason for this is not far to seek. The
poet's aim was to paint a hero. And his con­
ception of a hero was arrived at from the
prevailing fashionable literary tradition
of love and honor, and it was conceived without
any regard to race whatsoever. . . . There is no local color -- nothing but nomenclatures.\footnote{Lewis N. Chase, \textit{The English Heroic Play} (New York, 1903), pp. 157-58.}

And Nicoll is in general agreement with this opinion:

In this wise, the Oriental settings given to many a tragedy may be taken as indicating a desire to escape from conventional surroundings to a world of unrestrained bustle and turmoil and impossible romance. These scenes most frequently had some vague historical basis, but truth to history and truth to local customs was never insisted upon. To fit them in with the prevailing temper of the time, the characters, were they Romans, Arabians, Mexicans, Chinamen, even Englishmen of the earlier Tudor periods, were all warped out of their national characteristics and made to live in the one world -- the world of heroic ardour and of dauntless courage. Even Orrery, with his historical tragedies, has not more truth to nature than Dryden or Nat Lee has.\footnote{Nicoll, p. 131.}

Such comments show the tradition under which Lee wrote. And while it is true that the statements apply very largely to \textit{The Rival Queens} -- the leading characters, for example, display qualities common to typical heroes and heroines rather than those found in members of a particular society at a particular time -- Lee does not exhibit the inconsistency which called forth unfavorable comment about some contemporary plays. \textit{The Conquest of Granada} reveals little attempt at inclusion of local color; Moors invoke the saints, observe knightly customs and manners, and even sing of "Phyllis." Genest criticizes Otway's \textit{Alcibiades} because in it the author exhibits his ignorance of Spartan manners and is improper.
in his use of "sir" and "madam." The same critic notes that Orpheus and Eurydice are introduced "with much impropriety" at Morocco in Settle's *The Empress of Morocco*. In Sir Roger Boyle's unacted *Zoroastres* there are scattered references to Orasmades, the Persian god, but there are also a number of anachronisms. The most interesting of these is an allusion to Alexander the Great by Zoroastres, who had been dead for centuries by the time Alexander was born. Summers points to this inaccuracy and to similar ones as evidence of Boyle's inattention to historical fact.

Settle's *The Conquest of China* does not even have Chinese names for Chinese characters. "Like all the heroic plays, whether Roman, Egyptian, Spanish, or Mexican in setting, *The Conquest of China* suffers from a total lack of either the historic or the geographical sense. In defiance of their national psychology, the characters all talk the swelling language of love and honor." On the other hand, Settle's earlier tragedy, *Cambyses King of Persia*, is sprinkled with allusions to Persian religion and laws, especially as they differ from those of other nations; this local color is, however, found in a play that, like others by Settle, is devoid of any real characterization and is marked by the kind of language described by Allen. In fact, the speeches of all the characters sound alike.

---

35. *Some Account of the English Stage*, I, 177, 155.


The Rival Queens is one of a large group of plays set in the classical or Biblical Orient. For these, the texts of the ancients determined in large part the degree of authenticity found in the dramas. Pierre Martino, explaining his exclusion of the Holy Land and the classical Orient from his study of the Orient in French literature, says of plays with classical settings that --

"elles avaient reçu, si l'on peut dire, une naturalisation gréco-latine, et personne ne songeait à leur restituer l'apparence originelle. . . . Vraiment les sujets de cette nature ne sont orientaux que par les rares indications géographiques qu'ils enferment; mais ils sont, pour tout le reste, traités d'après l'idéal antique cher à l'époque classique." 38

One may conclude, then, that The Rival Queens shows much of the unconcern with historical accuracy in setting, costume, and customs that marks other plays of its era. In its favor, however, are its clear-cut delineations of character, which make the principals seem more believable in any setting than those of many other plays, and its accuracy and consistency in the use of the few historical terms and allusions which it employs.

Scenery, spectacle, costume, and treatment of setting account for some elements of structure and style in Lee's play -- or in any play of the Restoration. The expectation of the audience in these matters, and the accepted practices of the playwrights need to be considered in an

analysis of the play, just as the conventional style of acting and the identity of the original cast of characters do. Nicoll's statement expresses this interdependence very clearly:

Creation of characters, then, whether male or female, use of scenery, structure of dramas, management of plot, dialogue and aim -- all these we find, in this narrow little playhouse world where one class ruled and a king's laugh was the cue for applause, more intimately connected with the stage than in almost any other period of our dramatic history. For the Restoration, we have always to think of the particular Duke's theatre and Theatre Royal for which the plays were written. The basis of the dramas, their structure, their aim, their very being, is to be explained only by a reference to the playhouse itself, the actors and actresses on the stage, and the audience, which sat gallantly indifferent and cynical in pit and side-box and galleries.39

iii

A consideration of The Rival Queens as a theatrical production must take into account its success with theatre audiences of its own and subsequent eras. Lee's tragedy has an impressive record in this respect, as has been briefly indicated earlier in this study.40 In addition to the six quarto editions and the frequent performances,

39. Nicoll, p. 73.

40. For evidences of the popularity of The Rival Queens, see Chap. I, pp. 5-7, above.
several of which were attended by royalty, before the close of the seventeenth century, the acting record of the play in the London theatres of the eighteenth century is a notable one. From 1703 to 1712 there were thirteen performances recorded by Genest at the several play-houses; the only seasons with no performance listed are 1704-05 and 1710-11. Then there is a lapse of six theatrical seasons with the next production coming at the beginning of the 1718-19 season. After what was apparently a single performance there was another fairly long interval when, according to Genest, The Rival Queens was not acted in London. From 1722 to 1740, however, there seemed to be renewed interest in the play; in that period Genest lists thirty-three performances with only three seasons not witnessing at least one revival. There were some fairly long runs at this time too: six performances beginning on December 1, 1722; eight successive times beginning on November 29, 1733; three successive times beginning on October 25, 1735, and three times within the week of November 22, 1736. Again there is an interval when Genest records no production except one in January, 1743. In January, 1756, however, the tragedy was revived "with great pomp, and drew crowded audiences for several nights." There are eight revivals listed within the next five theatrical seasons. From 1762

---

41. *Some Account of the English Stage*, II, passim.
42. *Some Account of the English Stage*, III, passim.
43. *Some Account of the English Stage*, IV, passim.
to 1777, the centenary of the play, Genest gives thirty-six more re-

citals. Relying solely on Genest, one finds more than ninety re-
vivals of The Rival Queens in London from the close of the seventeenth
century to the date that marks the hundredth anniversary of the
premiere of the play.

Further evidence of the continuing popularity of the tragedy is
found in the calendar of performances of the Theatre Royal in Drury
Lane during the period from 1747 to 1776, when David Garrick was one of
the managers. According to this record, The Rival Queens, billed fre-
quently as Alexander the Great, was played thirty-one times from March 20,
1764, to March 28, 1776. 45

The Rival Queens easily outstripped Lee's other tragedies in this
three-quarters of the eighteenth century. Genest records performances
of Sophonisba, Mithridates, and Theodosius, but there are fewer than
twenty revivals of the first two, and thirty-six of the last. The
Drury Lane Calendar lists six revivals of Theodosius (all of which Genest
mentions), the only other Lee tragedy given in its records. At Drury
Lane, Otway stood out as the most popular Restoration dramatist during
the thirty years from 1747 to 1776, with sixty-three performances of
Venice Preserv'd and seventy-seven of The Orphan. These figures contrast
markedly with the eleven times Dryden's All for Love, which the twentieth
century is likely to put at the top of Restoration tragedies, was revived.

44. Some Account of the English Stage, V, passim.

45. Drury Lane Calendar 1747-1776, ed. Dougald MacMillan (Oxford,
1938), p. 316. This figure includes fifteen performances also listed
by Genest.
MacMillan notes that the strongly pathetic qualities of Otway's tragedies explain why they were particularly congenial to the eighteenth century, and he adds that Lee was next to Otway in popularity.

In the eighteenth century the popularity of The Rival Queens spread from London to the provincial theatres. For example, of forty-one performances of Restoration plays in Norwich from 1710 to 1750, nine were The Rival Queens; seven of these nine were consecutive. From 1750 to 1758 The Rival Queens was acted five times in Norwich; in this period there are records of only twenty-four performances of all Restoration plays. York, Kent, and Greenwich saw the play during the first half of this century. The performances in 1723 on the Kentish circuit was distinguished for the "rich Persian Habits" of the actors. In 1760 the production at York introduced, among other attractions, "a grand procession to attend the entry of Alexander into Babylon, with a magnificent triumphal car drawn by four captive kings." 47

These selected records are sufficient to attest to the drawing power of Lee's tragedy with theatre audiences for a hundred years. Similar records show that its popularity extended for another century and spread to the American stage.

46. Drury Lane Calendar, pp. 333, 299-300, 338-39, 204, 40.

47. Sybil Rosenfeld, Strolling Players and Drama in the Provinces 1660-1765 (Cambridge, 1939), pp. 72, 94, 217, 151.
While audiences were apparently finding The Rival Queens good entertainment, and actors delighted in the meaty roles, the critics had their say. When Dryden wrote the complimentary lines that preface the play, he took note of its success:

So has the mighty Merit of your Play
Extorted praise, and forc'd it self a Way.

In the same set of verse, however, Dryden concedes that Lee's play was meeting with a mixed critical reception. He admonishes those who think Lee animates his theme with "too much fire" and who ascribe to his youthful muse "too much vigour." Apparently there existed a situation found more often than not in a great popular literary or dramatic success. Time and again critics deplore the weaknesses of a work that catches the public fancy and show that it has serious defects as lasting literature or drama; at the same time the public accepts and enjoys it uncritically.

Of the critics who have commented on Lee's tragedy, Langbaine is one of the earliest. Writing toward the end of the seventeenth century, he speaks of the appeal of the play for spectators; he mentions the favor in which Lee's plays were held by "those who call themselves The Wits"; and he states that several of his tragedies "have forc'd tears from the fairest Eyes in the World: his Muse indeed seem'd destin'd for the Diversion of the Fair Sex; so soft and passionately moving, are his Scenes of Love written." 48

Cibber's commentary mixes faint praise with sweeping condemnation. "In what raptures," he writes, "have I seen an audience, at the furious fustian and turgid rants in Nat. Lee's Alexander the Great! For though I can allow this play a few great beauties, yet it is not without its extravagant blemishes. Every play of the same author has more or less of them." He condemns the extravagances of Alexander's speech in which the hero "falls into a rhapsody of vain-glory" as he recalls his own great military deeds (II, i, 156-62).

Eighteenth-century writers contribute many critical opinions about The Rival Queens. An anonymous prose miscellany contains a discussion of Lee's dramatic technique. The quality responsible for the success of Alexander the Great is said to be the "perpetual succession of passion." John Dennis praised Lee's talents as a tragic poet, but he found weaknesses in the individual plays. The Rival Queens seemed to him to be marred by "false fury and fustian." He thought Lee's very considerable abilities were manifest in occasional flashes rather than in the sustained power of an entire play, an opinion with which most modern critics would agree. One quality which Dennis found admirable was Lee's fire and enthusiasm, and he paid him the compliment of saying that Lee's gifts for tragedy were as natural and unmistakable as were Etherege's for comedy. And, one might add, this comparison is particularly apt since both writers excelled in genres typical of their era;

49. Apology, pp. 59-60.


neither possessed the universal qualities associated with lasting literary greatness.

Addison wrote in two successive *Spectators* of Lee's strengths and weaknesses as a tragic dramatist. He stated that Lee was preeminent among modern English poets for tragedy, "if, instead of favouring the impetuosity of his genius, he had restrained it, and kept it within its proper bounds." He continues:

> His thoughts are wonderfully suited to tragedy, but frequently lost in such a cloud of words, that it is hard to see the beauty of them: there is an infinite fire in his works, but so involved in smoke, that it does not appear in half its lustre. He frequently succeeds in the passionate parts of the tragedy, but more particularly where he slackens his efforts, and eases the style of those epithets and metaphors, in which he so much abounds. What can be more natural, more soft, or more passionate, than that line in Statira's speech, where she describes the charms of Alexander's conversation?

> Then he would talk: -- Good God! how he would talk!

That unexpected break in the line, and turning the description of his manner of talking into an admiration of it, is inexpressibly beautiful, and wonderfully suited to the fond character of the person that speaks it. There is a simplicity in the words, that outshines the utmost pride of expression.

In the next number of the *Spectator* Addison, in a discussion of the qualities of English tragedy, says that more English tragedies have succeeded in which the "favorites of the audience sink under their calamities, than those in which they recover themselves out of them."

---

52. *Spectator*, No. 39, Saturday, April 11, 1711.
In his opinion, crosses and disappointments in the body of a tragedy
do not make much impression if the audience knows that all is to be re-
solved in the end. On his list of the best plays is Alexander the
Great; Lee's Theodosius is also included.53

The following year Steele referred to The Rival Queens in an es-
say on anger: "If you would see passion in its purity, without mix-
ture of reason, behold it represented in a mad hero, drawn by a mad
poet." He then quotes Roxana's speech of fury when she learns of Alex-
ander's devotion to Statira (III, i, 45-55), but he attributes the
speech to Alexander.54 A few years later, in a Prologue written for
Mrs. Manley's Lucius King of Britain (1717), Steele gives what he
calls Lee's "receipt" for tragedy:

Take me, said He [Lee], a Princess Young and Fair,
Then take a Blooming Victor flush'd with War;
Let him not owe, to vain Report, Renown,
But in the Lady's Sight cut Squadrons down;
Let him whom they themselves saw win the Field,
Him to whose Sword they saw whole Armies yield,
Approach the Heroine with dread Surprize,
And own no Valour Proof against bright Eyes:
The Boxes are Your own -- the Thing is hit;
And Ladies, as they near each other sit,
Cry Ah, How movingly that Scene is writ!

For all the Rest, with Ease, Delights you'll shape,
Write for the Heroes in the Pit -- a Rape:
Give the First Gallery a Ghost -- on th'Upper,
Bestow, tho at this distance, a good Supper.
Thus, all their Fancies, working their own Way,
They're Pleas'd, and think they owe it to the Play.55

---

53. Spectator, No. 40, April 16, 1711.
55. Quoted in The Occasional Verse of Richard Steele, ed. Rae
On November 22, 1736, there appeared in the Daily Journal a discussion of The Rival Queens, which was that day to be revived at Drury Lane. The discussion was in the Prompter, an early newspaper commentary on plays and players.

The best of William Popple's critiques is an essay on Lee's The Rival Queens," which he found full of rant, vainglory, and lewdness, and without a properly inspiring moral."56

There appeared in March, 1761, in the St. James's Chronicle, a paper issued three times a week, a discussion of The Rival Queens as it was then being produced at Drury Lane. This article also attacks the bombast in the play. And some years later Bell's British Theatre prefaced its reprinting of The Rival Queens with this account:

Alexander the Great; or, The Rival Queens a great and glorious flight of a bold, but frenzied imagination; having as much absurdity as sublimity, and as much extravagance as passion -- The Poet, the genius, and the scholar, are everywhere visible. This Play acts well, and is still frequently performed.

Another late eighteenth-century criticism of Lee is that appearing in Davies' Dramatic Miscellanies. The Rival Queens is discussed at some length. In Lee's style the critic finds merit somewhat obscured by fault; for example, he speaks of the playwright's "absurdity in sentiment and solescism in expression," and declares that "blunder and beauty

57. Gray, p. 96.
are so blended together, you know not how to separate them." He criticizes the excess of passion in Lee's tragedies, but when he turns specifically to The Rival Queens Davies testifies to the popularity of the tragedy: "As long as the stage will be able to furnish good actors for his Alexander, it will draw together all ranks of people, from the heroic lover, and the lady of high rank, to the lowest of the people."\textsuperscript{60}

The Rival Queens maintained its stage popularity for almost two hundred years. And as long as the play was being presented with any degree of frequency, it continued to figure in dramatic criticism. A few representative comments by early nineteenth-century critics will serve to illustrate the tenor of the criticism of this period.

When Mrs. Elizabeth Inchbald included The Rival Queens in the twenty-five volume British Theatre, of which she was the editor, she called it the most popular of all Lee's plays, with even its "high-sounding title" having a part in its popularity. She adds: "This tragedy is calculated for representation rather than the amusement of the closet; for, though it is graced with some beautiful poetry, it is likewise deformed by an extravagance, both in thought and in language, that at times verges upon the ludicrous."\textsuperscript{61}

The Biographia Dramatica praises Lee for ability to describe the passion of love with truth and tenderness, adding, however, that the

\textsuperscript{60} Thomas Davies, \textit{Dramatic Miscellaneies} (London, 1784), III, 256-57.

\textsuperscript{61} The British Theatre, ed. Mrs. Elizabeth Inchbald (London, 1808), VI, 4.
poet's imagination sometimes ran away with his reason. Of *The Rival Queens*, which was still being acted occasionally, the critic says: "It must be confessed, that there is much bombast and extravagance in some parts of it; yet in others there is so much real dignity, with such beautiful flights of imagination and fancy, as render even the madness of the true genius more enchanting than even the more regular and finished works of the cold laborious playwright of some periods since his time." He then praises the character contrasts which Lee includes in his play. 62

An unsigned review of Lee's plays in the *Retrospective Review* takes note of the fact that Lee's contemporaries gave him a bad name, and the reviewer believes it has stuck to him, largely because of his "rant and fustian." Of all his plays, only *Alexander* is still acted, and it is, "by its extravagances, as much adapted to keep alive the prejudice against him as any which could be selected." In spite of these harsh strictures, the reviewer commends Lee for having genuine passion in his work. Further testimony to the continuing popularity of *The Rival Queens* is given when he says: "We pass over, as sufficiently known, *Alexander the Great*, a play which has monstrous blemishes, and yet in which elements of dramatic poetry, of a high order, are to be found." The concluding paragraphs of the review discuss Lee's ability

to portray characters of charm and individuality, mentioning his dignified heroes, his excellent old soldiers, with Clytus as an example, and his lovers.

Genest notes that Lee's play is now with propriety called by its second title, "as the love concerns are the worst part of it." Several of the critics quoted above have so referred to it. Genest calls attention to the banquet scene and the mad scene, which he believes have great merit in this best of Lee's tragedies. Attacking the playwright for making his characters occasionally speak out of character, Genest also corrects errors in history which Lee has included. His comments on the play tend to be more detailed and specific than most of the other treatments.

Dunham's remarks on The Rival Queens emphasize the changes that had been made in the presentation of the play since it was first produced, although the critic includes praise for the strongly drawn and boldly contrasted characters of Statira and Roxana and Alexander and Clytus. Dunham thinks that neither poetry, plot, characters, nor power of exciting wonder would be enough to recommend the tragedy to an audience of his day if it were not for the spectacular effects and outward aids; he believes that it is "as a vehicle for splendour and show, and display of horses, elephants, gilded cars, and tinsel finery, that the play of Alexander the Great is suffered to remain upon the

---

63. Review of Plays written by Mr. Nathaniel Lee, Retrospective Review, III (1821), 240-68, passim.

64. Some Account of the English Stage, I, 198-200.
This last nineteenth-century commentary throws light on what happens to a popular play as it is presented over more than a century in the public theatre. Other writers give additional changes which were made over the years. Genest thinks the modern alteration is an improvement, as the Ghost of King Philip and some extravagant passages have been omitted and "many speeches improved." 66 The article in the *Biographia Dramatica* refers to the "alterations from what Mr. Lee left it," and describes the performance at Drury Lane, November 23, 1795, as being "in a style of great splendour and magnificence, with Bucephalus, Amazons, elephants, cars, bridges, battles, banquets, and processions," as Mr. Kemble played Alexander superbly. 67 One concludes that Lee's play must have suffered a fate at the hands of eighteenth and nineteenth-century producers similar to that which Shakespeare's works endured in the Restoration. Apparently the most startling changes in *The Rival Queens* came toward the end of the eighteenth century. Of the performance at Drury Lane in 1764, the critic notes only that the decoration was extremely elegant and the "Triumphal Entry into Babylon conducted with great Propriety and Magnificence." 68 Later versions of the play had inserted in Act II the song, "See the conquering hero comes," set

---


67. *Biographia Dramatica*, III, 211.

68. Gray, p. 167.
to the music from Handel's *Joshua*, and in addition many speeches were variously curtailed or "improved."

It is amusing to note that, although critics were almost unanimous in condemning the extravagances and bombast of Lee's tragedy, theatrical producers added, over the years, spectacular elements far more extreme than those designed by Lee. Here again the taste of the spectators seems to be more powerful than the voice of the critics.

Throughout its long stage history *The Rival Queens* was known as an actor's play, a drama which contained roles that exhibited to the best advantage the talents for which an actor or actress was noted. Gildon says that it was economically as well as artistically profitable for an actor to play a leading role in this tragedy: "Whereas Otway, Lee and Dryden could never attain more for one piece than one hundred Pounds, I believe by a fair Computation, that Mithridates, Theodosius, Alexander the Great, and Hannibal, have gain'd the several actors that have succeeded each other not less than fifty thousand pounds, and yet the author scarce got one hundred pounds a piece for his labour." 69

The success of Hart, Mohun, Kynaston, Mrs. Marshall, and Mrs. Poutel in the roles which they acted originally has already been discussed. After the retirement of Charles Hart, Alexander was performed by both Goodman and Mountfort before Thomas Betterton became identified with the role which he played many times. Indeed Cibber finds in Betterton's

acting of Alexander the only reason for the success of what he thought was a poorly written play. He says that when passages of "vain-glory" and "flowing numbers" came from the mouth of a Betterton, "the multitude no more desired sense to them, than our musical connoisseurs think it essential in the celebrated airs of an Italian opera." Speaking of the fact that Alexander stood in higher favor with the town for many years than any other tragedy, he asks to what one must impute this admiration; then he answers his question by saying "not to its intrinsic merit, surely, if it swarms with passages like this I have shown you" . . . . but "in the grace and harmony of the actor's utterance." Cibber recalls the fact that when Betterton took over the role upon the death of Mountfort, the town was satiated with the play because it had been acted so frequently. But Betterton immediately revived it "with so new a lustre, that for three days together it fill'd the house." 70

Other actors gained fame as the stage Alexander. George Powell performed the role around 1700. Wilks played Alexander at Drury Lane in 1704 and Verbruggen in 1706. After the play had lain dormant for some years it was revived in 1733 with Mr. Delane, an actor from Dublin, playing Alexander with "uncommon success." 71 An actor named Charles Hulet achieved success as Clytus in the same performance. Davies has great praise for Spranger Barry, who succeeded to the role of Alexander

70. Apology, 60-61.
71. Davies, III, 273.
after the death of Delane. Barry "looked, moved, and acted, the hero and the lover, in a manner so superior and elevated, that he charmed every audience that saw him; he gave new life and vigor to a play which had not been seen since the death of Delane." Davies heaps words of praise upon Barry's love scenes with Statira and his scene of rage with Clytus. As extravagant as the performance he was describing is the critic's final sentence: "In his last distracting agony, his delirious laugh was wild and frantic, and his dying groan affecting." 72 The compiler of Biographia Dramatica also comments on Barry's "particularly fortunate" portrayal of Alexander. 73 As late as 1823 the play was acclaimed with Edmund Kean as Alexander and Mrs. Glover as Roxana. This version was known as Alexander the Great, a title which shows the shift of interpretation and which had been used frequently in the eighteenth century; this nineteenth-century production had been altered in the manner described above, with the omission of the Ghost of Philip, the changing of speeches, and the inclusion of the music by Handel. 74 Charles Kemble and Kean were other notable stage Alexanders. 75

The actresses who played Roxana and Statira were just as outstanding as their leading men. Mrs. Barry succeeded Mrs. Marshall as Roxana. The vigor with which she interpreted the part is illustrated by the anecdote repeated by early commentators. In the scene where she stabbed

72. Dramatic Miscellanies, III, 276-77.
73. Biographia Dramatica, I, 449.
Statira, so strongly did she thrust that the dagger pierced Mrs. Boutel, who was still playing Statira. According to theatrical gossip, jealousy arising over a matter of costume gave added fire to the ladies' acting. Mrs. Bracegirdle followed Mrs. Boutel in the part of Statira, and, like Cibber, Betterton attributes the success of the play to the acting, only Betterton heaps praise on the performance of the actresses, saying that Mrs. Barry and Mrs. Bracegirdle made unbelievable characters human and aroused the emotions of the audience with the intensity of their passion. His supreme tribute to Mrs. Barry is that just after the audience had seen her commit a bloody murder, she was so pathetic in her appeal to Alexander that she drew tears from the greatest part of the audience. Cibber says that if anything could excuse that "desperate extravagance of love, that almost frantic passion of Lee's Alexander the Great, it must have been when Mrs. Bracegirdle was his Statira." Probably the greatest name among later actresses playing in this tragedy is that of Mrs. Siddons.

It has been noted that throughout the years of its popularity critics took issue with certain aspects of The Rival Queens. A perusal of criticism from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries shows a rather astonishing degree of conformity among critics, no matter whether they represent a neo-classical or a romantic period of criticism: attacks on Lee's rant, extravagance, and excess of passion. And those who

77. Betterton, pp. 19-23.
78. Apology, p. 92.
praise Lee generally agree that his depth of feeling, his creation of memorable contrasting characters, his handling of important scenes, and his ability to write occasional passages of really good poetry are his strong points. Those who knew Lee's play on the stage as well as in printed form seem to be aware of its greater strength as a stage play than as closet drama, an opinion that is consistent with what has been said about Lee's awareness of what makes good theatre. The eagerness of leading actors and actresses of several generations to fill roles in the tragedy further attests to its appeal on the boards.

This study of The Rival Queens in its dramatic milieu and the summary of both audience and critical reaction over a long span of years justifies the choice of the play as a representative tragedy of its age. A sound sense of the theatre permitted Lee to use his own particular interests and talents to hold the audience with a dramatic form that met in general its expectations while at the same time it introduced -- or re-introduced -- ideas, language, and methods that seemed new. Only a dramatist who was wholly a part of the theatrical world of his day could select, adapt, and discard elements of popular appeal; only such a playwright could so adapt his play to actors and acting conventions that it seemed to be strengthened rather than confined by elements which the writer could not change had he wished to do so.
CHAPTER V

THE DRAMATIC INFLUENCE OF THE RIVAL QUEENS

The mark made by Lee's The Rival Queens is measured not only by popular and critical response to the play and by its long stage history, but also by the degree to which it influenced subsequent drama. Having seen the play in relationship to those which preceded it, and having noted the typical and unique features of the tragedy, we must turn to plays written and produced after March 1676/7 to find parallels in subject or technique -- elements used, in all probability, because of the fact that Nat Lee had successfully used similar ideas and methods.

The Rival Queens, or The Death of Alexander the Great started a vogue for "Alexander" plays on the seventeenth-century English stage. It has already been demonstrated that, familiar as Alexander might be as a legendary or historical figure, he was virtually unknown to British stage patrons until Lee used him as his protagonist. But after that...

event, the deeds of the Macedonian conqueror and his family and associates were the subject of three other plays in a period of little more than a year. Before an examination of these three plays it is necessary to look briefly at the first Restoration play about Alexander, an unacted tragi-comedy by John Weston, The Amazon Queen; or, The Amours of Thalestris to Alexander the Great. This play was licensed for printing on February 11, 1666/7, by Roger L'Estrange, but there is no record of any performance and the published play contains no dedication, prologue, epilogue, or actors' names. Moreover, Weston's preface states that the author decided against trying to win applause in the theatre, largely because of two other plays which he terms "competitors", and resolved to let his work be known in the less rugged and more friendly realm of the press. In a discussion of the plays influenced by The Rival Queens, there seems to be no logical place, at first glance, for mention of a play which antedated Lee's by ten years. In justification let it be said that Weston's play must be considered and disposed of before a case can be made for The Rival Queens as the raison d'être of the vogue for dramatized versions of various parts of the Alexander story.

Langbaine states that Weston's play was never acted "by reason of the author's hearing of two plays besides on the same subject intended for the stage." A twentieth-century critic similarly paraphrases

Weston's preface and adds: "It is a little difficult to identify these two tragedies, which were then in preparation, since it would appear that the immense vogue of Lee's The Rival Queens first turned the attention of playwrights to the Alexander romance." Actually both critics appear to have mis-read Weston's words. There is nothing in the preface to tell the reader that the subject of the two plays mentioned is the Alexander story; although such an assumption is a logical one, it is possible that the untried playwright was timid about the competition presented by any plays of similar type, regardless of the subject matter. In the absence of further evidence, it seems safe to state categorically that Weston's play is the only Alexander play antedating Lee's in the Restoration.

In Lee's Gloriana there is a reference to Thalestris: "Fierce as Thalestris Alexander fought" (V, i, 129). While it is barely possible that this line may indicate a knowledge of The Amazon Queen, it seems unlikely. The Thalestris story is found in Cassandre, a book with which Lee was almost certainly familiar by the time he wrote Gloriana, as well as in Quintus Curtius, a historian whom Lee did not use for Gloriana but upon whom he drew for material for other plays.


4. The first paragraph of Weston's preface, which contains the puzzling reference, follows: "Since this Queen of Amazons was new raised from the dead, the flatteries of her pretended friends inclined her to have aspired to a Crown of Bays, with the applause of a Theatre: But a principal Elector having owned, that he had a child of his own family who pretended to the same Crown, she thought it fit to decline importuning a man to be a friend to her fame, against her own interest: And hearing of a third Competitor, who perhaps lay another way in ambush for her, she resolved to quit the rugged ways of envied honour, (cont'd)
Nothing in Weston's play could have provided Lee with material for _The Rival Queens_. The drama is filled with unmotivated action, love-and-honour passages, and unrealistic characters. Furthermore, the entire play abounds in anti-Petrarchan sentiment. One feels that Weston was probably writing in imitation of witty, sophisticated Restoration comedy, even though his attempt falls short of wit and sophistication and manages only to be unconvincing and coarse. If Lee knew this play, he certainly did not draw from it any valuable suggestion, and since it was never acted it could not have been influential in stage history. Thus it is possible to return to the earlier assertion that _The Rival Queens_ was responsible for the series of Alexander plays on the Restoration stage.

About three months after the opening of _The Rival Queens_ the King's Company presented a new tragedy by John Banks, _The Rival Kings: or The Loves of Oroondates and Statira_ (c. June, 1677). The prologue and epilogue of Banks' play, his first dramatic work incidentally, provide some interesting information. In the prologue Banks addresses himself to the ladies, "For chiefly he design'd this Play for you." He asks them to recall

How with Cassandra's fam'd Romance ye were pleas'd;
How many nights 't has kept you long awake
Nay and have wept for Oroondates sake.

---

1. (Cont'd) where many faults are really found, and more made by ingenious and interested detractors." Quarto, 1666/7.

5. All quotations from _The Rival Kings_ are from the Quarto, 1677.
Here he is admittedly counting on the popularity of the romance to insure a favorable audience for the play he has based very largely upon it. In the epilogue Banks speaks of his temerity in bringing to the stage a new play which would be compared with the "lov'd Alexander" of the audience, certainly a definite reference to Lee's popular Rival Queens. Banks describes the other Alexander play as follows:

A play with Scenes and Acting so admir'd,
As if the Souls they play'd had them inspir'd.

He then appends this interesting comment:

Yet this excuse upon the Authors score,
This [The Rival Kings] though come last, was writ a year before.
Lik't as you please, the great Dons of our House, Themselves would fain have had the play from us, But frankly & generously our Author stakes His purse & credit rather for our sakes.

Here one receives the impression of an unfortunate young playwright who, having written a tragedy based on a popular romance, withheld it from the theatre for a year, only to see another play on the same general subject attain great success in the interim. Genest interprets this passage as meaning that Banks' play was acted by younger members of the King's Company. Names of performers are not given in the 1677 quarto, and there is apparently no record of the cast. Genest mentions the considerable resemblance between Banks' play and Lee's, and an examination of the tragedies proves the truth of his statement.

---

6. Langbaine gives "Cassandra, a famed Romance in Fol." as the chief source and adds, "As to what concerns Alexander I refer you to Curtius, and Justin." (p. 8)

7. Some Account of the English Stage, I, 200-01.
Before citing parallel scenes and techniques, however, it is well to have in mind the broad outlines of Banks’ plot. In this tragedy Alexander and Oroondates are rivals for the hand of Statira, but the Scythian prince, whom Statira loves, is at the mercy of his powerful conqueror. The rivalry of Lysimachus and Ephestion for the hand of Parisatis, with the blessing of Alexander going to Ephestion, forms the romantic sub-plot as it does in Lee’s play. Banks’ Ephestion dies as the result of a duel with Lysimachus, but, noble to the last, he secures Alexander’s promise not to kill Lysimachus. Cassander is the resentful and villainous murderer of Alexander, as he is in The Rival Queens, working with his brother Philip to administer the poison to Alexander but dying at the hand of the man he poisons. Alexander’s conquest of Darius is the reason that Statira and Parisatis refuse favors from the conqueror. Noble in his love, Alexander spares Oroondates’ life and returns his kingdom to him. The Scythian bows to the inevitable and goes to seek greater fame in war so that he will be a more worthy rival of Alexander. The intended double wedding of Alexander and Statira and Ephestion and Parisatis is stopped by the deaths of the two men, and the play concludes with the true lovers united, Statira and Oroondates to rule in Scythia, and Lysimachus and Parisatis to occupy the throne of Persia. Throughout the play the main characters are the epitome of nobility and all except Cassander are in the throes of love.

The foregoing summary makes evident the major differences in theme and tone between the tragedies, but a comparison of specific scenes reveals striking resemblances which could scarcely be coincidental. For
example, Banks' opening scene of dissatisfaction among Alexander's generals is the same in content and method as the scene with the generals in Lee's first act. Cassander takes the lead in setting forth grievances in both scenes, and Alexander's treatment of Philotas and Parmenio as well as his high-handedness toward Cassander is the subject of comment in both. The chief difference is that the incidents in Banks' play take place after the death of Clytus, who is a principal character in Lee's play until his fourth-act murder. Even the phrasing is identical when Cassander relates how Alexander struck him in the face. The detail that Parmenio was stabbed in his orchard is used by Lee, although this information is not given in Plutarch or La Calprenède; Banks has a longer description of Parmenio but also mentions specifically that he was killed as he sat in his garden. In both plays the duel of Lysimachus and Hephestion is interrupted, although the timing and situation are not the same.

The use of spectacle in the two plays is similar. In both there is Alexander's grand entrance in the second act. The scenes wherein Alexander drinks the poison are both spectacular. In The Rival Queens the fatal draught is consumed at the banquet; in The Rival Kings the important persons are arranged before an altar ornamented with the statue of Jupiter Hamon. "While Alexander drinks, the Statue of Jupiter Hamon falls down, with thunder, and lightning and kills the Priests. Alexander lets fall the Bowl" (IV). Although Lee makes greater use of omens than Banks, in the latter's play the priests tell of bad omens which presage the death of Alexander, as in Lee's tragedy. Both playwrights
show Alexander's torment and delirium after he drinks the poison; here
there is even similarity in phrasing:

Rival Queens: the sad Venom flies
Like Lightning through my flesh, my blood, my marrow.
(V, i, 316-7)

Rival Kings: But this like lightening parches every vein.
(V, i)

Rival Queens: Hal what a change of Torments I endure? (V, i, 319)
Rival Kings: Ah the Torment that I feel. (V, i)
Rival Queens: I am all Hell, I burn, I burn again. (V, i, 325)
Rival Kings: Statira! Oh Ephestion, how I burn! (V, i)

In both plays Alexander in his delirium calls for Bucephalus and sees
again his murdered generals. Lee's Alexander tells Lysimachus that the
crown shall go "To him that is most worthy." Banks' Alexander replies
to Lysimachus as follows: "The worthiest man amongst you shall be King."
And both plays end with similar statements wherein Lysimachus pays
tribute to Alexander.

It seems reasonable to believe that Banks borrowed from Lee. There
is no evidence that Lee saw Banks' play before writing his own, but
Banks in his epilogue admits knowledge of Lee's tragedy before publish-
ing his. Hill suggests that Banks was evidently dazzled by the success
of The Rival Queens; if he did not write the play under Lee's inspiration
he must have revised it after Lee's tragedy appeared. Since there is

similarity in method, phrasing, and selection of incidents, Hill's theory seems logical. Banks' claim of earlier authorship appears to be only a feeble gesture to avoid the charge of copying Lee. The title that Banks chose for his tragedy is added evidence of his desire to profit by the popularity of *The Rival Queens*.

Aside from parallels in plot and technique, *The Rival Kings* is a very different kind of play from *The Rival Queens*. Banks has written a rhymed heroic play. There is line after line of love and honor dialogue, and the speeches of almost all the major characters are effusive to a degree not found even in the bombast of Lee. For example, the relationship between Alexander and Hephestion is extravagant enough in *The Rival Queens*, but in Banks' play the dialogue between the dying Alexander and Ephestion consists of a piling up of cloying effusiveness until the reader is exhausted by the time they finally kiss and die together. Again, Oroondates and Alexander outdo one another in nobility as they meet as rivals for Statira's hand. In the second place, the pairing off of lovers at the end of *The Rival Kings* is consistent with the ending of the earlier heroic plays, except for the death of Alexander who dominates the stage in Banks' play, perhaps even more completely than he does in Lee's.

Banks evidently tried to build up the character of Alexander; there are numerous lines throughout the play in which various people characterize him. The central conflict is between Alexander and Oroondates, and this conflict is resolved in Alexander's favor before he is removed by the poison of Cassander. In spite of the glowing terms in which he
is presented and his dominance of almost every scene, he, like the rest
of the characters in the play, remains only a figure-head, perhaps
largely because Banks relies too much on telling about rather than
showing his strengths, because the poetry of the play is so weak that
it impedes action and feeling, and because Banks does not seem to have
a sense of what makes good theater -- of knowing where to stop and
where to start an effective scene. One can readily understand why
there is no evidence that this play found any favor with its audience
or its readers. And, one concludes, there would in all probability
have been no Rival Kings had it not been for Lee's great stage success.

When Samuel Pordage dedicated The Siege of Babylon to the Duchess
of York, he commented on the new twist he had given to a familiar plot:
"I have saved the Persian Princesses from the cruelty of Roxana." And
in the epilogue, spoken by Statira, the playwright notes the difference
between his play and a recent success at a rival house:

Poets, like Gods, Create, what forms they please,
Monarchs, and flighty Heroes, kill with Ease,
And Murder'd Princes too, from Death, can raise.
We Live, and Dye, as pleaseth Mr. Bays.
At one House, I am, by Roxana, slain,
But see, at this, I am alive again,
And spite, of all her Cruelty, and rage,
I Live, am Queen, and Triumph, on the Stage.

The Siege of Babylon was first presented late in 1677, probably Septem-
ber, by the Duke's players at Dorset Garden; the reference to Statira's
fate at the other theatre must be to Lee's Rival Queens. Like Banks'
tragedy, this one by Pordage is based almost entirely on La Calprenède's

9. Quotations from The Siege of Babylon are from the Quarto, 1678.
Cassandre; and like Banks, Pordage was probably influenced not only by the popularity of the French romance but also by the success of another play about Alexander's circle.

The Siege of Babylon opens with a conventional love and honour debate between Ptolomy and Lysimachus, rivals for the hand of Parisatis. The first line of the play is thematic: "Now, my brave Friend, both Love, and Honour calls." And as the play progresses the long discussions of love and honour and love and friendship, particularly between these two young men, slow the action markedly. Furthermore, Pordage's play is a rhymed heroic play in which a series of actions terminate in happiness for the good characters and death for the evil.

The action takes place in Babylon immediately following the death of Alexander the Great. There are only scattered casual references to the conqueror. Statira and Roxana, the widows of Alexander, are here, as in Lee's play, the rival queens, and the main plot centers in Roxana's efforts to put Statira to death so that she can have the love of Orontes, Prince of Scythia, who is devoted to Statira and whom the latter has loved since before she yielded to Alexander. The sub-plots in Pordage's drama are similar to those in Lee's: there is the contest between Lysimachus and Ptolomy for the hand of Parisatis, and the evil machinations of Cassander, greedy for power and eager to possess Roxana. In addition there is the wooing of Thalestris, Queen of the Amazons, by Eumenes, an ally of Orontes and Lysimachus, and a disguise plot to save the Persian princesses' lives in which the hero is one Araxis, servant to
Orontes. A mere citation of the number of conflicts serves to illustrate the fact that the play abounds in incident. Unfortunately, however, the perpetrators of those incidents are only puppets or, at best, types of good and evil. There is no real characterization in the play, and there is lacking the complexity of personality and the thematic unity which make The Rival Queens more than a succession of extravagant incidents.

To show a definite influence of Lee's play in The Siege of Babylon one must note particularly specific scenes and characters. Pordage, perhaps thinking of the successful confrontation scene between Statira and Roxana in Lee's play, also has a scene between the two queens. It is short, however, and in it Roxana accosts the imprisoned Statira in the presence of minor characters. Although Statira's sentiments are brave, the poetry is wooden, and the entire scene lacks drama. As in Lee's play the difference between Roxana's passion, which is destructive, and Statira's love, which is gentle and self-sacrificing, is emphasized. In Pordage's characters the contrast is less convincing because the women are almost caricatures of good and evil; there is no evidence of struggle or of conflicting emotions within either one.

In The Siege of Babylon Parisatis soliloquizes on the changing fortune of great princes in a speech similar to that of Alexander in The Rival Queens:

Seige of Babylon: (Parisatis speaking)

Happy are they, who in poor Cabbins dwell,
And there content, rest on their humble Beds,
Great Joys, nor Griefs, enter their homely Cell,
Nor Cares, Distrusts, nor Fears, disturb their Heads:
Their pleasures small, but natural, and true:
Happy! if their own happiness they knew (III, iii).

Rival Queens: (Alexander speaking)

Why was I born a Prince, proclaim'd a God?
Yet have no liberty to look abroad?
Thus Palaces in prospect barr the Eye,
Which pleas'd, and free, wou'd o're the Cottage fly;
O're flow'ry Lands to the gay distant Skie.
Farewell then Empire, and the Racks of Love;
By all the Gods, I will to wilds remove,
Stretch'd like a Sylvan God on Grass lye down,
And quite forget that e're I wore a Crown (II, i, 420-28).

The last scenes of the two plays provide another comparison and contrast. That of The Siege of Babylon is extremely wordy. Roxana speaks at great length as she prepares to stab herself. The Rival Queens moves at a more rapid pace. After Roxana has stabbed herself, her raving as she is carried from the stage is reminiscent of Alexander's dying rants.

There are many more differences than similarities between the two plays. Perhaps the most notable is Pordage's inclusion of a great many long, highly conventional dialogues in the manner of the earlier heroic plays. The opening love and honour debate has been mentioned. Another example is the dialogue between Statira and Orontes in the third act; here the lovers declare their love and their resolve to die to save the other in an interminably long passage reminiscent of earlier plays like Dryden's Indian Queen or Tyrannick Love. The final speech of Roxana in this act, in which she banishes the gods and calls on power as her only deity, is likewise in the tone and phrasing of the earlier drama.

It is interesting to note that Pordage has used almost the same cast
of characters as appeared in Weston's The Amazon Queen. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that both writers followed very closely La Calprenède's romance. Pordage's main plot is, in all essential details, the plot of Cassandre. One unfamiliar with the French romance would perhaps have some difficulty in keeping track of the sub-plots involving Lysimachus, Ptolomy, Cassander, Orontes, Eumenes, Perdicas, Cleone, and Thalestris; especially difficult is this task because these characters are not drawn with any distinct characteristics; one speech might be given with equal appropriateness to any one of a number of different people.

Beginning in action where The Rival Queens ends, The Siege of Babylon is, as Pordage suggests in the prologue, a woman's play. It starts and ends with love; military deeds remain in the background in spite of the military title, in itself an echo of the "Sieges" of the 1660's. There is no hero who dominates the play as does Alexander in Lee's tragedy; Orontes shares the stage with Lysimachus and Perdicas, and it is often hard to distinguish one from the other. Only Roxana remains revengeful in the aura of happiness with which the play closes; even Cassander displays a tender heart. Thalestris is so convinced by the nobility of Eumenes that men are desirable that she foreswears chastity for herself and all her Amazonian subjects.

Genest calls The Siege of Babylon a "wretched tragedy in rhyme." Apparentlv it did not meet with any success on the boards or in print; there is no record of further performances or of later editions. Its

10. Some Account of the English Stage, I, 214.
appearance seems to be due directly to the popularity of La Calprenède's Cassandre and of Lee's Rival Queens. Since Pordage did not draw upon the French romance until Lee had done so with great dramatic success, one may assume that the tragedy which preceded it on the London stage by only six months was the real raison d'être for its existence. Pordage had access to the same sources; he had the example of Lee whose Rival Queens is good theatre. But Pordage made of all this a poor play that is neither good drama nor good poetry.

In 1678 there was published a tragedy by Edward Cooke, Love's Triumph, or, The Royal Union. Dedicated to the Princess of Orange, the play as printed has no prologue, epilogue, or actors' names. Langbaine states that the play, based on part V, book 4 of Cassandre, never appeared on the stage. A more recent critic believes that Cooke's tragedy must have been designed as a complimentary tribute to the royal bride whose wedding took place in November, 1677, and was not apparently intended for the stage. The entry in the Term Catalogues is May 1678. There is no record of any other work by Cooke; he is known only as the author of this rhymed heroic play. Love's Triumph has its scene in Babylon immediately after the death of Alexander; it opens with Roxana's discovery that Statira still lives. The plot follows that part of La Calprenède's Cassandre which was dramatized by Pordage. Only the subplot is changed: instead of the Thalestris incidents there is

substituted the Artaxerxes-Berenice plot, which comes directly from the romance. Hill shows that the play contains scarcely a speech of any length that is not a paraphrase of La Calprenède; sometimes Cooke follows his source word for word. He seems to take it for granted that his audience (if he had one in mind) or his readers would be familiar with the romance.\(^\text{13}\) The dedication to Princess Mary recognizes the fact that the characters of the drama had been used previously. Cooke speaks of "Oroondates and Statira, who now being forc'd again from the peaceful Shades of their happy Retirement, do throw themselves at Your Princely Feet."

Cooke's play is a suitable wedding tribute in that it is entirely about love. The military action remains so far in the background that it never intrudes on the affairs of passion. Even Cassander appears to be motivated only by his desire for Roxana. Like Pordage's, this play gives Roxana much more attention than Statira. The passionate and revengeful queen dominates the action. There is little beyond surface characterization. Roxana storms through her lines fulfilling what Oroondates says about her as she dies:

Unbridled passion did her Life betray,  
And hopeless Love her Reason did o'resway (V, xv).

The passion is directed toward Oroondates, for it is he who is responsible for the rivalry between Roxana and Statira. Their sharing of Alexander does not figure in the play. The same thing is true in The

\(^{13}\) "La Calprenede's Romances and the Restoration Drama," p. 128.

\(^{11}\) References to Love's Triumph are to the 1678 Quarto.
Siege of Babylon, in which Oroondates is given the name of Orontes. Cooke's Statira is innocent, put-upon, and loyal. There is no more complexity in her character than in Roxana's. Cooke has one scene with the two queens, but it is weakened, like Pordage's, because other characters are present and the dialogue does not create a striking character contrast. Like Pordage, Cooke includes Roxana's unsuccessful attempt to stab Statira (IV, ix). At the end of the play Statira is magnanimous in her victory, begging Roxana not to kill herself. The death of Roxana puts no damper on the wedding plans of three sets of royal lovers. Cooke ends the play with these lines:

The High Transports and Extasies of Love,
Are the next Pleasures to the Joys above.

Lewis Chase, noting that there is little rant and fustian in Love's Triumph, says that in spite of this more subdued manner the play is broadly characteristic of the heroic mind:

No play more distinctly shows French influence in method of construction. There is much dialogue of a sort that does not advance the action; the situation is revealed in the first act, and there is no perceptible progress or change until the last, when one of the possible alternatives takes place.\footnote{The English Heroic Play (New York, 1903), pp. 34-35.}

It seems clear that Banks, Pordage, and Cooke wrote plays about Alexander and his successors because Lee's Rival Queens was so popular on the stage that it showed Cassandre to be a gold mine of theatrical material. Only Banks' tragedy reveals an apparent attempt to imitate
scenes, incidents, and techniques of the Lee play. Pordage and Cooke appear to have turned more directly to the French romance and to have written in the heroic style which is more characteristic of English drama of the preceding decade. Banks made of Alexander a dramatic character; Pordage and Cooke followed La Calprenède in using incidents after Alexander's death, and there are only casual references to the conqueror in both plays. If Lee chose the subject for The Rival Queens partly because Alexander, as he was known through history and legend, seemed eminently suitable for the kind of hero the Restoration demanded, the writers of the other plays about Alexander were not so motivated. Even Banks detracts from Alexander's greatness by giving him a rather effective rival.

Lee's tragedy, as has been pointed out above, breaks with the heroic plays and incorporates many characteristics of Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy. The passion of love in The Rival Queens does not have the ennobling effect it appears to have on characters in the heroic plays, including those by Pordage and Cooke. Although there are structural weaknesses in The Rival Queens, Lee is more successful in making the actions grow logically out of the characteristics of the people involved and in making each incident bear some causal relation to the preceding ones. With Banks, Pordage, and Cooke serious drama seems to be taking a backward step. Those elements which make of Lee's play an arresting and moving stage presentation were not used. The conventional, stylized dialogue of the heroic plays -- and of the French romances -- abounds in the dramas, and the characters remain as uncompli-
cated and unconvincing as those in the original romance. Perhaps the most significant thing about an examination of the Alexander plays following The Rival Queens is the attention it draws to the degree to which Lee's skill in handling source material and his knowledge of dramatic technique excelled that of run-of-the-mill playwrights of his day.

Only a popular play can be parodied, burlesqued, or altered for special occasions, for the original characters and plot must be known if the take-off is to have any meaning. The Rival Queens provided material for humour from the latter part of the seventeenth century until well into the eighteenth, and although it was sharply ridiculed on several occasions, this unflattering attention testifies to its dramatic influence. In 1693 Thomas D'Urfey's comedy, The Richmond Heiress, was performed at Drury Lane, and in the same year the play appeared in print. In this edition, as a prefix to the play, was a poem by D'Urfey under the heading of "Song by way of Dialogue between a Mad-man and a Mad-woman." The poem is a burlesque of Alexander's speech in the closing scene of The Rival Queens, when, just before he dies he addresses his imaginary troops: "Sound, sound, keep your Ranks close --" (V, i, 342-53).

Twenty-three years after the first production of Lee's tragedy Colley Cibber wrote a parody, The Rival Queens, with the Humours of Alexander the Great (1710). This piece, which is called a comical tragedy, parodies almost every scene of The Rival Queens, "with a good deal
of humour," as the editor of *Biographia Dramatica* states. He adds that the burlesque was not printed until 1729 and then only in Dublin, yet before its printing it had been popular in Dublin and had had some success in London.

Differing from parodies of the play are two entertainments presented late in the eighteenth century. Before the theatrical season of 1794-5, some improvements were made to Covent Garden. To celebrate the opening of the refurbished theatre, Thomas Holcroft wrote a Prelude acted at the first performance of the season. This piece was called *The Rival Queens*, apparently still a meaningful title, but the queens were Empress Drury and Queen Covent Garden. The prelude is unprinted.

At Drury Lane in 1795 there was performed a heroic pantomime by J. D'Egville, *Alexander the Great; or, The Conquest of Persia*. It combined music and a ballet with scenes from Alexander's life, including several outstanding military victories, his alliance with the Amazon, his treatment of Darius and his family, the entrance into Babylon, and his marriage to Statira. "The scenery of this performance surpassed every thing before exhibited on the English stage. The history of the action of this pantomime was written by Mr. Kemble, and distributed gratis at the theatre."

Although Racine's *Alexandre le Grand* was first produced in December, 1665, there was no English translation until that by Thomas Ozell

---

16. *Biographia Dramatica* (1812), III, 211.
in 1714. It does not seem unreasonable to assume that the popularity of the English Alexander play caused Ozell to translate the French tragedy, which dramatizes adventures of Alexander in India and has no plot resemblance to Lee's play. In 1715 the opera Alexander the Great was performed at Lincoln's Inn Fields. An unfinished opera called Alexander, which was to have been set to music by Purcell, was the work of Anthony Henley, according to his biographer.19

Finally, there is a listing of a tragedy with an intriguing subtitle: Alexander and Statira; or, The Death of Bucephalus, written by Dr. George Wallis and acted at York, Leeds, and Edinburgh. It is further described as a "Tragedy for warm Weather." There is no date and no record that it was ever printed.

These curious entertainments all came in a century when The Rival Queens was often acted. Certainly Lee's play must have been the reason for such an extensive use of the Alexander story, which had appeared rarely in any form on the English stage until 1676.

iii

A less direct influence of The Rival Queens may be seen in the plays with Persian settings or with characters only mentioned in Lee's tragedy. With the exception of Weston's Amazon Queen there is only one Restoration tragedy with a Persian or Macedonian setting which antedates

Lee's play. This is Settle's Cambyses King of Persia (c. Jan. 1670/1), a tragedy which takes place in the sixth century, B.C. and includes, along with a romance, intrigue for the crown of the Persian Empire.

Lee himself followed The Rival Queens with Mithridates King of Pontus (March 1677/8), a tragedy involving the fall of a great ruler who had been as much a despot as Alexander. Synope, a city on the Black Sea, is the setting, and the play interweaves some historical details about the Roman Empire with a fictitious plot. Theodosius: or The Force of Love (c. Sept. 1680) is set in Constantinople. In this tragedy of a weak, love-sick emperor whose empire suffers because of his neglect, the tragic Varanes, heir to the Persian throne, is an important character. These two later plays by Lee are mentioned here only to indicate Lee's continued interest in the eastern lands; neither bears any direct or indirect relation to The Rival Queens insofar as the actions and characters are concerned.

There are, however, some plays, the writers of which may have been influenced by the success of The Rival Queens to use settings and characters, albeit in a minor capacity, made familiar by Lee. Thomas Southerne's The Loyal Brother; or, The Persian Prince (Feb. 1681/2) takes place in Persia, but the characters reflect the political situation in England during the time of the Shaftesbury-York intrigues. Sir Francis Fane's The Sacrifice (1686) is a retelling of Tamerlane's conquest over Bajazet. Tamerlane at the beginning of the play compares himself to Alexander, to the detriment of the latter. The Tartar conqueror sets out to conquer
China, a deed which Alexander left undone. Later in the play he is called "A double Caesar, triple Alexander." Doubtless Fane counted upon knowledge of the powerful stage Alexander to give point to the extravagance of Tamerlane's claims. Settle's Distress'd Innocence; or, The Princess of Persia (c. Oct. 1690) takes place in Persia during the Christian era. Much of the conflict is due to the strife between Persians and Christians. The play includes several casual references to Alexander or to events of his reign.

The Ghost of Alexander the Great comes to inspire and to praise Pyrrhus in Charles Hopkins' tragedy, Pyrrhus King of Epirus (c. 1695). In the first act as Pyrrhus grieves over his son killed in battle before Argos, he gives orders for the Athenian minstrel to sing the song made at the royal banquet in Babylon, the last great feast of Alexander. The name of Alexander figures in discussions of victories and defeats. Throughout the play Pyrrhus strives to conduct himself as a worthy successor to Alexander, and when he loses the battle and dies, his bravery wins tribute from his enemies, the Macedonians.

John Banks turns for the second time to a French romance for tragic material in Cyrus the Great (c. Dec. 1695), a dramatization of parts of Scudéry's Le Grand Cyrus. Apparently a fairly successful play, its run was cut short when Mr. Smith, an actor of one of the leading roles, died on the fourth day of performances.\(^21\) Events are those of the sixth century B.C. in Persia; consequently there is no connection with the

Alexander story. One wonders whether Banks, whose *Rival Kings* had apparently made little dramatic stir, made a second excursion into the ancient East in an attempt to capitalize on the popularity of *The Rival Queens* almost twenty years later.

At the close of the seventeenth century Colley Cibber wrote *Xerxes* (c. Feb. 1698/9), a tragedy taking place in Persia more than a century before Alexander's conquest of Darius. In this bloody tragedy, the ruler's madness permits Cibber to pile up rant, cruelty, and extravagance. This last Persian play in the period is violent and spectacular; Tamara, the heroine, who loved not wisely but too well, endures one torment after another until her death.

Although the plays mentioned above have had slight connection with *The Rival Queens*, John Crowne's *Darius King of Persia* (April 1688) is, in some respects, just as much an "Alexander" play as the dramas of Pordage and Cooke. Crowne has gone to Quintus Curtius for his material, according to his dedication, although many passages are very close to parts of La Calprenède's *Cassandre*. Crowne's dedicatory epistle speaks of his reason for choosing to write of Darius, who even in adversity never parted with his virtues. Comparing him to Alexander, Crowne continues: "Darius, of the two, seems the greater Conqueror, and in a common Waggon gor'd in his Blood, appears a more Glorious Prince, than Alexander in his Chariot triumphing over the Indians."

Crowne includes in the dedication an apology for not taking "the whole story", and his explanation doubtless refers to the appearance

---

22. References to *Darius King of Persia* are to the 1688 Quarto.
of the Persian princesses in the plays of Lee, Banks, and Fording.

He states: "But when I first contriv'd and writ this Play, my Judg­
ment was overborn by some I much regard; who told me, those Princesses
had been already seen very often, their Beauties wou'd now seem stale,
and a new Face be more agreeable." The new face is that of Barzana,
a Persian princess married to Bessus, the Viceroy of Bactria, who hopes
to gain power when Darius falls. Throughout the play the bravery and
patriotism of Darius are contrasted with the treachery of some of his
allies and with the cowardice of the Persian soldiers. Darius, know­
ing he will be defeated, wishes his kingdom to fall to Alexander,
whose honor and strength he admires. His respect for Alexander is in­
creased when news comes that the Macedonian conqueror, captor of
Darius' queen, has treated her honorably. Alexander is not seen on
the stage in Crowne's tragedy, but his name is heard constantly through­
out the dialogue. Even by Darius, Alexander is termed "so Brave, so
Just, and Glorious Prince," whose virtues "make Captivity a Joy." And
as Darius, wounded by his own men, dies he says:

I beg the Gods, for Universal Good
To make him Monarch o' the Universe (V, iv).

In Crowne's play the love plot is pushed from the center of the
stage by the events of war. The tragic love of Barzana for Memnon,
Bessus' love for and jealousy of his wife, and the deaths of both Barzana
and Memnon dominate scenes in the second, third, and fourth acts, but
even in those scenes given over to the pathos of unfulfilled love, there
are echoes of the battle and of the conduct of the Persian soldiers. The
play opens and closes with Darius and his nobility in defeat. Thus this tragedy, though it is concerned with the same period of history, presents a protagonist whose bravery does not diminish throughout the play. His attention never strays from affairs of his kingdom as Alexander's does in The Rival Queens. Darius is a king but not a lover. It is interesting that Crowne, undoubtedly drawn to the characters and events of this play by the vogue for the Alexander story, should produce a tragedy quite different in theme from the others. It does, however, resemble Lee's tragedy in its concentration on the downfall of a once-great leader, but the causes of the ruin of Alexander and Darius are very different. As tragedy, Darius lacks unity, and the dialogue has a monotony unrelieved by the action of such earlier tragedies as Lee's.

The influence of The Rival Queens is, of course, most evident in the three Alexander plays which immediately followed it. Its popularity is further attested by the adaptations, parodies, and various entertainments drawn from the play or based on audience familiarity with it. It may have caused other Restoration playwrights to turn to the East, and especially to Persia, for scenes and plots suitable for tragedy.

Beyond the sphere of more or less tangible influence -- similarity in characters, plot, and setting -- lies the less easily demonstrated
but possibly more important area of influence in tone, theme, and technique. For example, the fact that Dryden wrote for *All for Love*, which had its first performance only about nine months after that of *The Rival Queens*, a confrontation scene between Cleopatra and Octavia, the rival queens of his tragedy, has been noted in passing. Also mentioned has been Dryden's notice to his public of his break with rhyme and his return to the blank verse of earlier English tragedy for his Shakespeare alteration. At this point, perhaps these two features of Dryden's play deserve some emphasis. His interest in Lee during the latter's early career is known; his particular praise for *The Rival Queens* is on record in the commendatory verses he wrote for the first quarto in 1677; his later confidence in Lee's ability as a playwright seems to be indicated by the collaboration of the two men in the writing of *Oedipus* (1678 or 1679) and *The Duke of Grisè* (1682). Dryden wrote *All for Love* for the same acting company that performed Lee's play. It seems highly probable that the success of *The Rival Queens* was influential in shaping Dryden's tragedy; at least, perhaps the example afforded by Lee's *Rival Queens* made Dryden decide to make the change in style that he had already been contemplating.

The tremendous popularity of Otway from the 1680's throughout the eighteenth century is a matter of record. In form and theme his tragedies show a return to Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. Lee's propensity to break with the more rigid demands of the heroic play of the 1660-1676 period and to return to elements of structure and style found
in Shakespeare and his successors has been noted. Whether the success of The Rival Queens was in any way instrumental in confirming Otway's decision to write tragedy in the early seventeenth-century sense is highly conjectural. That they knew each other's plays well cannot be doubted. They were, before 1682, in a sense dramatic rivals, Lee writing mainly for the King's Company and Otway for the Duke's. Lee was the first of the two to return to tragic endings. Lee drew upon Shakespeare's Julius Caesar for certain incidents in the writing of The Rival Queens. Otway's dependence upon the same Shakespearean tragedy is more noteworthy in the theme and technique of Venice Preserv'd (1681/2). The matter of influence here cannot be pressed. After all, the plays of Shakespeare and the Jacobean were available to both men in the theatre and the library.

Although it is virtually impossible to trace definite influence of one play on others in an age when most playwrights turned to readily available source material and when many plays resembled one another in the handling of scenes or the staging of action, it seems almost certain that, just as Lee drew upon those plays which preceded his on the Restoration stage, so must his successors have made some use of one of the most spectacular dramatic hits of the period.

Ironically, Colley Cibber, who disliked Lee's play intensely, makes a strong case for its influence:

And I am of the opinion, that to the extraordinary success of this very play, we may impute the corruption of so many actors, and tragick writers, as were immediately misled by it. . . . Thus equally misguided too, many a barren-brained author has stream'd into a frothy flowing style, pompously rolling into sounding periods, signifying -- roundly
nothing; of which number, in some of my former labours, I am something more than suspicious, that I may myself have made one. 23

A more temperate critic may be less sure that all the turgid language -- including that of Cibber -- in Restoration plays after The Rival Queens is due to Lee's example. But he would certainly not doubt that a play which pleased many audiences for many years would, in the small world of the Restoration theatre, leave a very real imprint on subsequent drama.

A close study of The Rival Queens and its dramatic milieu justifies the choice of Lee's play as a representative tragedy of its age. On the one hand, in source, structure, and style it reflects interests and technique which had met with the approval of the reading and theatre-going public of the Restoration. On the other hand, it further captivated its audiences over a long period of time by making some notable breaks with its immediate stage predecessors. If a single play is to become the focal point from which one examines the dramatic taste and technique of an age, that play must show as clearly as possible the real nature of the genre it represents. In its adherence to many elements of the earlier Restoration heroic plays, in its return to dramatic practices of preceding eras, and in its successful arrangement of such material into a play that is impressively actable, The Rival Queens il-

---

illustrates the nature of Restoration tragedy much more successfully than other plays which conform more rigidly to only one dominant dramatic influence of those years. Restoration tragedy is, one concludes, atypical; within this classification are plays differing as widely as Dryden's *Conquest of Granada*, Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*, and Southerne's *The Loyal Brother*. Only a tragedy which illustrates the elasticity of the term "Restoration tragedy" can adequately represent it.

Nicolle's estimate of Lee's importance in any study of late seventeenth-century tragedy bears out the foregoing statements:

Lee is of inestimable importance in any attempt to divine the quality of the tragedy of his age. He was not only one of the chief of the rimed-heroic dramatists, but he carried on the heroic tradition into his blank verse plays. He not only felt the touch of the classical movement, but went back for inspiration to Webster and to Ford and to Shakespeare. Above all we must bear in mind that his dramas were among the most popular of the time. Most of them were reprinted frequently, and, if we may judge by the numbers of copies now in existence, in fairly large editions. Next to Dryden, possibly, he was the most influential man of his age.

Nicolle's comments are directed to Lee's work as a whole. Of all his plays, *The Rival Queens*, for reasons advanced in this study, most clearly reveals its age.

---

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


Wilson, John Harold. The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Restoration Drama. Columbus, Ohio, 1928.
I, Nancy Eloise Lewis, was born in Covington, Kentucky, December 10, 1910. After a public school education I graduated from McKinley High School, Canton, Ohio. In 1932 I received the Bachelor of Arts degree from Denison University. From 1932 to 1946 I taught in the public schools of Canton, Ohio. From Duke University I received the Master of Arts degree in 1945. In 1946 I was appointed an instructor in English at Denison University, and in 1954 I became an assistant professor of English at Denison, the position which I now hold. I completed two quarters of graduate work in English at the University of North Carolina in the summers of 1949 and 1950. In the summer of 1951 I began work on my doctorate at Ohio State University. During a sabbatical leave from Denison in 1952-53 I completed residence requirements at Ohio State, where I was an assistant instructor, part time, in the Department of English. In 1957 I received from Ohio State University the degree Doctor of Philosophy.