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WOMEN PLAYWRIGHTS DURING THE STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL OF THE LONDON THEATRE, 1695-1710

DISSERTATION

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

By

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1996

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1996
For Carol
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Misfortune Becomes Opportunity

In England at the close of the last decade of the seventeenth century, a second
generation of women dramatists began to have their plays produced on the London stage.
Following the lead of Aphra Behn's successful playwriting career during the 1670s and 1680s,
Delarivier Manley, Catharine Trotter, Mary Pix, and Susanna Centlivre made their way into
a traditionally male-dominated profession. The season of 1695-1696, featuring the premieres
of works by Manley, Pix, and Trotter as well as Aphra Behn's posthumously staged The
Younger Brother and She Ventures and He Wins by the as yet unidentified 'Ariadne,' proved
to be a particular high point in the early history of English women's playwriting. Though
women's ability to earn a living as professional dramatists was proven by Behn, other factors,
some of them unlikely, also prompted these women to write for the theatre.

In a sense, Pix, Trotter, Manley, and Centlivre had the opportunity to see their works
acted because of the dishonesty of Alexander Davenant, one of the heirs to the two
hereditary Patents created by Charles II in 1660 for the legal operation of London's theatres.
In 1687 Alexander bought his older brother Charles Davenant's controlling interest in the
United Company that had held both Patents since the collapse of the King's Company in
1682. Alexander hired his inexperienced younger brother Thomas Davenant to share
management duties with veteran actors Thomas Betterton and William Smith who had run
the business for the Davenant interests since 1677; Betterton along with Smith, who would retire to join the army in 1688, had turned a modest and reasonably steady profit with a policy that emphasized established repertory over the financial risk and extra work of new plays. During their tenure, due to Betterton's life-long interest in operatic spectacles, the United Company was unlikely to experiment with new plays by untried authors and much more prone to invest time and capital in musical productions that took advantage of the Dorset Garden theatre's capacity for elaborate staging.2

Unfortunately for the United Company, but fortunately for fledgling playwrights, Alexander Davenant handled his business affairs with a deplorable combination of bad management and illegality. In the first place, only £400 of the £2400 Alexander used to buy the Patents was his own money. Sir Thomas Skipwith and Christopher Rich, two lawyers who, though they possessed no theatrical experience, had a sure understanding of the money-making possibilities of a theatrical monopoly, had lent Alexander the remaining £2000. Alexander's yearly earnings from his shares turned out to be about £30 less than the amount he needed each year to repay Rich and Skipwith. To make up the difference, Alexander employed a number of crooked techniques. Three of his scams were: collecting money as an "agent" for people who owned shares in the theatre without turning the cash over to the shareholders; pocketing salaries supposedly paid to personnel who were no longer employed at the theatre; and paying himself extra funds illegally as "governour" of the company.3

Alexander's business enterprises continued to deteriorate, however, and by 1690, he had been obliged to sell Rich the remaining one-sixth interest in the company represented by his original £400. At the same time as he was skimming money from the

2 Milhous, Thomas Betterton 43-48.
theatre, Alexander was also guilty of other shady business dealings, including selling the same piece of property to two different investors and borrowing money against property he did not own. Not surprisingly, Alexander soon faced the possibility of criminal prosecution for his misdeeds. Rather than accept arrest and bankruptcy, Davenant fled to the Canary Islands in the fall of 1693 leaving the United Company in debt and in the legal control of Rich and Skipwith. Until December 1693 when the two lawyers made their ownership public, the company members had been unaware that the Davenant family no longer held a controlling interest in the United Company.

Rich quickly emerged as the driving force in the new management. Indeed, when Sir Thomas Skipwith died in 1694, his share in the patents passed to his son, also named Thomas, who was only nominally involved in the company's business and much more interested in making the acquaintance of the women associated with the theatre. Unencumbered by concerns for production values, the well-being of his staff, or English theatrical tradition, Rich managed the company with the single goal of improving his profits. Among other high-handed tactics, he attempted to reduce his expenses by forcing the retirement of top-salaried performers, Thomas Betterton and Elizabeth Barry. To accomplish this end, Rich offered some of their roles to George Powell and Anne Bracegirdle, younger actors who were making considerably less money.

In this era, to replace an actor in a role involved more than simple demotion. In fact, Rich was violating his employees' property rights in two ways. First, an actor's status within the company was based in part on the number and size of the roles he or she performed. When an actor originated a role, that actor retained the exclusive right to perform the part

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5 Milhous, *Thomas Betterton* 59-60.

whenever the play was revived. Second, during the 1690s a play’s publication usually followed its initial performance by about a month. Therefore, the scripts from which the actors worked were merely transcribed sides containing only their characters’ cues and lines; these sides were also regarded as personal property by the actors. Secure in his belief that the Patent monopoly prohibited his employees from acting in London without his permission, Rich was seeking to publicly demote his star actors as well as force them to give up their ownership to scripts and performance rights.

At this point, Rich found that he had miscalculated the resources of his employees; because many of the actors, Betterton and Barry in particular, had been the theatrical idols and friends of some of England’s most influential citizens for more than a generation. Rich probably hoped that Betterton would retire, but the actor was in considerable financial need. In 1692 Betterton had lost the £2000 that he had invested in a shipping venture to the East Indies when a French privateer captured the ship in the Irish Sea. Rather than retire, leave London, or accept Rich’s dictates, the senior actors in the United Company rebelled. The Rebels sought the intervention of Sir Robert Howard and Betterton’s long-time friend, the Earl of Dorset, whose duties as Lord Chamberlain of the king’s household included supervision of the theatres. With their help, William III was persuaded that a previous monarch’s hereditary grants did not preclude a subsequent monarch from temporarily licensing another company of performers. Armed with their new license, Betterton, Barry, Bracegirdle, Edward Kynaston, Cave Underhill, and other top London actors set about the

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9 Philip H. Highfill, Jr., Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhans, ed. A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800, vol. 2 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1973-1993) 84. All subsequent references to this work will be listed as: Highfill, BD.
10 Milhous, Thomas Betterton 66-68.
arduous task of renovating the old Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre that had been reconverted to a tennis court in 1674.11

As they struggled to assemble the resources to compete with the Patent Company, the Rebels found themselves helped by the unexpected misfortune of the royal family; Queen Mary's death at the end of 1694 occasioned an official mourning period which closed the theatres until 1 April 1695.12 The Rebels used this crucial interlude to outfit Lincoln's Inn Fields, while Rich lost the chance to operate without competition in the hopes of improving his remnant of a company and using his two good theatre buildings to gain a head start on his opponents. Thus, the chicanery of Alexander Davenant, the unscrupulous management of Christopher Rich, the financial woes of Thomas Betterton, and the unlooked-for death of Queen Mary, all contributed to the re-opening of theatrical competition in London that made the playwriting careers of Pix, Manley, Trotter, and Centlivre possible. The women's theatrical lives were punctuated by many such unexpected chances, though not all of the events were to prove as beneficial as those listed above.

As both companies scrambled for the patronage of the London theatre audience, new plays were suddenly in great demand, giving the new group of women playwrights their chance. The generation of writers led by Dryden, Wycherley, Etherege, Otway, Shadwell, and Behn, which had so distinguished itself during the reign of Charles II (1660-1685) was silent or deceased. The leading playwrights of the 1690s, Southerne, Congreve, and (a little later) Vanbrugh and Farquhar, were by no means prolific enough to supply the sudden voracious need of the two companies for new works. Quite logically, then, Pix, Manley, and Trotter in 1696, followed four years later by Centlivre, would be able, along with other

newcomers, to take advantage of the shortage of new plays and the volatile theatrical situation to bring their works to the stage. At first glance, the prospects for new London playwrights at the end of the seventeenth century were the brightest since the heyday of healthy rivalry between the King's and Duke's Companies in the 1670s. As matters developed, vicious competition between the two companies, management instability, prejudice against women writers, personality conflicts, political differences, theatre reformers, and fickle audiences were to make the ensuing fifteen years anything but smooth sailing for the four new women playwrights.

Adverse Criticism Stimulates Reevaluation

The same kind of topsy-turvy fortune that created playwriting opportunities for Pix, Manley, Trotter, and Centlivre out of the mismanagement of a London theatre and the death of Queen Mary has also been at work in the evolution of their reputations. Many of the derogatory evaluations of the women sporadically written since the beginning of their careers have actually worked to call attention to the special obstacles that women faced in the 1690s if they wrote for the theatre. Of course, some balanced commentary occurred even among their contemporaries, good examples including the terse evaluations along strictly commercial lines in long-time prompter John Downes's Roscius Anglicanus (1708) and Giles Jacob's generally favorable biographical sketches in The Poetical Register (1719). The three quotes that follow, however, indicate the entrenched animosity that the women playwrights faced. Grub Street journalist Tom Brown suggested that

\[\ldots\text{some Ladies, when they have past all the Stages of Lewdness, finding their faces grow stale in all the Brothels in Town, or else out of Hopes to do better, have transplanted themselves to the Theatre, either as Poetesses, or Actresses.}\ldots^{13}\]

In 1698 the anonymous author of Animadversions on Mr. Congreve’s Late Answer to Mr. Collier composed these verses that refer first to Pix and then go on to include other women playwrights:

But when she offers at our Sex thus Fair,
With four fine Copies to her Play, — O rare!
If she feels Manhood shoot — 'tis I know where.
Let them scrawl on, and Loll, and Wish at ease,
(A Feather oft does Woman’s Fancy please.)
Till by their Muse (more jilt than they) accurst,
We know (if possible) which writes the worst.¹⁴

In 1702, the anonymous, backward-looking writer of A Comparison Between the Two Stages damned all newcomers, particularly women, in the interest of a return to a one-theatre London. In the middle of the following dialogue, the author introduces Ramble’s faint chastisement in order for Critick to play on words and expand his point:

Critick: What a Pox have the Women to do with the Muses? I grant you the Poets call the Nine Muses by the Names of Women, but why so? not because the Sex had any thing to do with Poetry, but because in that Sex they’re much fitter for prostitution.

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

Critick: Sir I tell you we are abus’d: I hate these Petticoat-Authors; ‘tis false Grammar, there’s no Feminine for the Latin word, ‘tis entirely of the Masculine Gender, and the Language won’t bear such a thing as a She-Author.¹⁵

At their simplest, these accusations crudely associate women’s playwriting with promiscuity, self-titillation, prostitution, and the distribution of sexual favors in order to get a play produced. On a more insidious level, the quote from Animadversions suggests amused contempt as the proper attitude towards women playwrights, while the excerpt from A Comparison relies on the unquestioned assumption that language reflects the natural order of existence and therefore mandates the exclusion of women from the theatre.

¹⁴ “Dedication,” Animadversions on Mr. Congreve’s Late Answer to Mr. Collier (London, 1698) n. pag.
Manley's preface to her first play *The Lost Lover* shows that the women were aware of these extra obstacles to their careers. In an attempt to dismiss criticism of women as playwrights, she echoes the charges quoted above. Concerning the means by which a woman's play could reach the stage, she says there will be men

> Who if our Play succeeds, will sorely say,  
> Some Private Lover helpt her on her Way  
> As Female Wit were barren like the Moon,  
> That borrows all her influence from the Sun.

Manley also acknowledges that some people believe that literary women are out of their proper sphere, perhaps even biologically unsuited to write plays:

> The Curtain's draw n now by a Lady's Hand  
> The very Nature you'll cry boads Impotence,  
> To fringe and tea they shou'd confine their Sense.\(^1\)

Though Manley can be accused of trying to deflect attention away from her play's poor showing, women playwrights in London clearly found themselves judged by unscrupulous and extraordinary standards at the turn of the eighteenth century.

As successive generations of commentators have encountered the four women's works, both positive and negative partisanship has led to continued misunderstanding of their achievements. In 1751 Trotter's first biographer, Thomas Birch, was most impressed by her religious and philosophical writings after her marriage and retirement from the theatre. Therefore, Birch downplayed her playwriting accomplishments in the sketch of Trotter's life that he appended to his edition of *The Works of Catharine Cockburn*. Though Birch's veneration has the opposite purpose of the denunciations of Tom Brown or *A Comparison*, his

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emphasis on Trotter's pious, theatrically silent, later life has contributed to her continued obscurity as a playwright by influencing the evaluations of subsequent commentators. As their titles indicate, some later writers, like Edmund Gosse in "Catharine Trotter, The Precursor of the Blue-Stockings" (1916) or Gwendolyn Needham in "Delariviere Manley, An Eighteenth-Century Wife of Bath" (1950), have shown a tendency to define these writers by comparison to more familiar literary or even fictional figures. Seven German dissertations written from 1900 to 1905 have questioned Centlivre's originality as a playwright by minutely attempting to discover the source materials for each of her plays. Some twentieth-century reactions have been nearly as rancorous as those in Animadversions and A Comparison: these range from the disdain for Pix shown in Willard Connely's biography Young George Farquhar (1949) to Winston Churchill's hostility towards Manley in Marlborough, His Life and Times (1933) because of her all-too-effective satirical portraits of Sir Winston's illustrious ancestors, the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough. In more recent commentary, the pendulum can swing in the other direction; the desire to find appropriate historical role models for the modern women's movement sometimes plays too large a role in Kathryn Kendall’s 1986 dissertation, “Theatre, Society, and Women Playwrights in London from 1695 Through the Queen Anne Era.”

18 Kathryn McQueen Kendall, “Theatre, Society, and Women Playwrights in London From 1695 Through the Queen Anne Era,” diss., U of Texas, 1986, 11. The women are discussed in this work "as a phenomenon of the period from the death of Queen Mary in 1695 to soon after the death of Queen Anne in 1714: a period significant for the influence of a woman, Queen Anne, whose decisions brought about the political and military dominance of Great Britain in Europe, a woman whose personal example emboldened feminists and women writers to claim parity with their male colleagues, a woman who would in our own time be described as a lesbian and, in terms of her reliance on female advisers for the determination of public policy, a feminist. The period in which women's golden age in playwriting occurred is referred to as the Queen Anne era, . . ."
The growing interest in women in history has also generated a great deal of valuable work in this area since the 1970s. One of the motivating reasons for this project, however, is that recent advances in theatrical scholarship concerning this period, which include the publication of Highfill, Burnim, and Langhans's *Biographical Dictionary* as well as the writings generated by Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume as they revise the first two volumes of *The London Stage*, have yet to be sufficiently applied to the four women's careers. Though the negative critics have unwittingly alerted successive generations of historians to the special circumstances under which the four women wrote, room still exists for more impartial consideration of their achievements.

**Placing The Playwrights In Their Historical Context**

This study of Centlivre and the "Female Wits," as Pix, Manley, and Trotter were dubbed in an anonymous satire performed at Drury Lane in 1696, investigates the circumstances under which these four women dramatists made a living. The topics examined are: how the shifting fortunes of the two rival companies affected women's playwriting opportunities and how party politics, patronage, and publication practices helped or hindered their ability to earn a living. These spheres of activity were selected because they are where the women functioned as working playwrights in the world outside of the sitting room, coffee house, or country retreat where their plays were written.

Any attempt to examine the means by which women playwrights managed their careers in the post-Restoration era must proceed from an understanding of theatrical, political, and publishing contexts which were different from our own. As Michel Foucault has noted in his essay "What is an Author?", the meaning of the term author itself has altered

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19 Van Lennep, *The London Stage*, vol. 1, 467.
significantly throughout history. In the past, a few of the possible historical meanings of author have been the anonymous medieval writer, the gentleman amateur of the Renaissance, the early nineteenth-century melodrama hack, and the more recent professional who venerates publication and carefully guards copyrights, royalties, and the definitive text. The functions attributed to the author have also varied widely. As Foucault notes, among the purposes that the term has served are to provide standards of quality and style for a certain body of work, to explain development of works in terms of influence and maturation, and to exist in worldly events as an historical figure.

This study explores where Pix, Manley, Trotter, and Centlivre fall on the shifting continuum of authorship that Foucault outlines. What specific obstacles or advantages did the women playwrights encounter as they tried to stage and market their works in post-Restoration London? How did they become playwrights? Why and at what point did some of them stop writing for the theatre? Did their political allegiances affect their playwriting careers? Were they able to supplement their incomes with gifts or sinecures acquired through the patronage system? Were their earnings from the publication of their works significant? What were the women’s relationships with the various theatrical companies and managements they encountered? How did the changing theatrical situation affect their careers? Did the women’s careers affect theatrical circumstances in return?

Organizing Principles

Any effort to explain the career activities of women dramatists in this era must contend with the nearly continual alterations in the theatrical working environment between

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21 Foucault 144.
1695 and 1710. Remarkably, during these fifteen turbulent years, the two London theatre companies staged thirty-two plays by Pix, Trotter, Manley, and Centlivre. In Thomas Betterton and the Management of Lincoln’s Inn Fields, Judith Milhous has divided the period into four useful sections that were determined in relation to the fortunes of the two companies: 1) The Success of the Rebels, 1695-1698; 2) Cutthroat Competition, 1698-1702; 3) The Years of Uncertainty, 1702-1705; and 4) The Haymarket Years and the Union of 1708. This study adopts Milhous’s four subdivisions of the period in order to place the four women’s careers in the changing theatrical contexts of those complicated years.

Following Chapter Two, which deals with the beginnings of Pix, Trotter, and Manley’s careers and the production of The Female Wits (1696), Chapter Three concentrates upon the women’s theatrical activities from 1695 to 1698 when the Rebel Company at Lincoln’s Inn Fields held the advantage over the Patent Company at Drury Lane, while Chapter Four concerns the years of Drury Lane’s resurgence from 1698 to 1702. Chapter Five examines the women’s careers during the last seasons of the Lincoln’s Inn Fields collective from 1702 to 1705.

With the accession of Queen Anne in 1702, party politics began to dominate patronage practices as never before. Especially after the hard-fought Parliamentary elections of 1705, political activity and the quest for patronage played increasing roles in the four women’s lives. Therefore, Chapter Six, a discussion of the effects of politics, patronage, and publication on the women’s careers, interrupts the chronological account of their work in the theatre to add supplemental details about how they earned their livings. Though this information is placed two-thirds of the way through the fifteen years under consideration here, much of the chapter concerns Trotter’s activities after 1706, Manley’s career after 1709, and Centlivre’s support of the Hanoverian succession in 1712 and 1714. Admittedly the

chapter also contains introductory material concerning political, patronage, and publication practices of the period, but even these discussions are often dependent upon Whig and Tory partisanship after 1705. Consequently, placing a discussion of these three interrelated topics at the point where they are most applicable to the women’s careers, is preferable to introducing the topics gradually into the theatrical chapters.

Resuming Milhous’s chronology, Chapter Seven recounts the women’s participation in the final years of the two company system in London before opera was established at the Queen’s Theatre in the Haymarket and plays were relegated exclusively to Drury Lane. To reach an appropriate turning point in Centlivre’s career, this study goes slightly beyond the close of Betterton’s career (and Milhous’s book) to include the end of Christopher Rich’s active management tenure, Aaron Hill’s stormy season at Drury Lane, and the return to the one-company system under Swiney, Cibber, Wilks, and Dogget.

The fact that the occupation of woman playwright in turn-of-the-eighteenth-century London was inextricably linked to the relatively small theatrical community made up of the personnel and management of the two companies is a central idea in this study. A twentieth-century playwright might offer her script to New York or West End agents, Los Angeles film or TV studios, regional theatre literary managers, or produce the play herself. Between 1695 and 1710, however, Drury Lane, Lincoln’s Inn Fields, and (after 1705) the Haymarket were virtually the only markets available to Pix, Trotter, Manley, and Centlivre; hence, their professional relationships with those two companies were nearly as important to their careers as their writing skills or their ability to appeal to the London audience. The women’s careers will be evaluated in terms of how well they succeeded with the two companies and their audiences.

The attempt to depict the profession of female playwright between 1695 and 1710 raises a number of questions which require answers before an account of the four women’s
careers can proceed. First, after their plays were accepted for production, what were the playwrights' rehearsal responsibilities? Second, having already noted the shifting complexities of the theatrical situation between 1695 and 1710, were there any obstacles to the acceptance of new works for production that remained relatively constant throughout the period? Third, since the reception the women's works received in the theatres is of central importance to an examination of their careers, what criteria should be used to evaluate the success or failure of their plays?

Playwrights' Rehearsal Duties Circa 1700

Turn of the eighteenth-century playwrights could be aristocratic amateurs like Etherege and Buckingham, contracted to a particular theatre as Dryden and Settle had been and Cibber would become, or free-lance professionals. The advantageous social position of the first category and the staff status of the second made both acceptance of a new play and conscientious presentation of the script on the stage more likely. Unfortunately, at the beginning of their careers, Pix, Trotter, Manley, and Centlivre fell into a third category: those who had to hustle to get their works read and staged and could only hope for good production values. Even though he was a junior member of the Patent company, Cibber still had to seek experienced playwright Thomas Southerne's intercession to bring about the staging of *Love's Last Shift* (1696). Furthermore, once a play was accepted, the theatre management might, wisely or unwisely, demand significant revisions. During rehearsals for *The Man's bewitch'd* (1709), Centlivre was in a strong enough position to accept what she felt were judicious cuts proposed by Colley Cibber and to override Richard Estcourt's wholesale

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23 Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *Producible Interpretation: Eight English Plays 1675-1707* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1985) 35-69. Unless otherwise noted, the material in this section is drawn from this source.
deletions from the same scene, but in 1696 Manley found herself forced to accept the excision of nearly half of The Lost Lover.

Once a play was chosen for production, the author usually read it out loud to the actors. Because the scripts that actors received contained only their written lines and immediate cues, this and any subsequent authorial readings would be the performers' only access to the whole play until run-throughs began. How casting took place is unknown, but actors were most often cast according to type or ‘line.’ Casting was probably done by the managers in consultation with the playwrights, who often designed their characters for the particular skills of the actors in the company for which they wrote.

Playwrights at this time assumed a double authority: they were responsible both for the writing and the stage presentation of the script. In the absence of a director in the modern sense, authors, perhaps aided by senior actors or managers, supervised rehearsals. Since rehearsal time was brief and the performers' knowledge of the script was limited to their sides and the author's reading, handling of rehearsals entailed a great deal of work. Using The Rehearsal (1671) and The Female Wits (1696), the two backstage satires of the period, as sources and allowing for satiric exaggeration, Milhous and Hume have compiled the following list of authorial rehearsal duties: working with blocking, stage business, line readings, emotional content, movement, dance, special effects, and making choices from among the stock scenery or, if they were lucky, approving new sets. In this sense, the women playwrights were encroaching publicly on the masculine preserves of both authorship and supervision. With all these responsibilities and, except for Centlivre, little theatre training,
the four women were brave to venture into the theatrical arena and susceptible to the satirical hits that followed.

Limitations On The Market For New Plays

Though productions of plays by the Female Wits and other beginners were made possible by the sudden advent of a second theatre company in 1695, a number of forces worked to make the years around 1700 less than ideal for new writers to develop their talents. No longer influenced by Charles II and his erudite courtiers, the post-Restoration audience was making its dislike of many new comedies and nearly all new tragedies painfully evident while not giving clear indications of what types of plays best suited its tastes. During the 1697-1698 season alone, Scouen and Hume count fifteen of the seventeen new plays mounted by both companies as failures. With the 1698 publication of Jeremy Collier's anti-stage *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, the outcry for theatrical reform reached its most strident pitch since the Interregnum. Inside the theatres, as J. H. Smith points out, 'the Ladies,' "the respectable female patrons of the theater," had been protesting the racier components of comedies with increasing regularity since *The Country Wife* in 1675. Unfortunately, though they disapproved of double-entendre, coquetry, cuckoldling, et cetera, this "moral element in the audience" refrained from active support of writers like Trotter who sought to please them.

The clamor for reform put an extra burden on writers to simply reward their virtuous characters while insuring that the reprehensible ones were duly punished. This emphasis on

\[\text{\textsuperscript{26}}\text{ Arthur H. Scouen and Robert D. Hume, "Restoration Comedy' and its Audiences, 1660-1776," *The Rakish Stage* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1983) 64-66.} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{27}}\text{ John Harrington Smith, "Shadwell, the Ladies, and the Change in Comedy," *Modern Philology* 46 (1948): 22-33.} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{28}}\text{ Scouen and Hume 64-66.} \]
poetic justice nearly enervates the tragedy of the period; in fact, no new tragedy truly succeeded between Congreve’s *The Mourning Bride* (1697) and Philips’s *The Distrest Mother* (1712). The same pressures pushed comic writing away from the skepticism of the Restoration heyday towards the less harsh “Humane Comedy” with its reclaimable heroes and more positive view of human nature. The sparse audiences also caused theatre managers to experiment with curtain times and fill out their playbills with ladder dancers, imported singers, and the like, thereby making the playwright’s work merely the centerpiece of a program of variety entertainments. Writing in 1699, Tom Brown had no difficulty comparing the theatres with Bartholomew Fair:

Poetry is so little regarded there [at the playhouses], and the Audience so taken up with show and sight, that an author will not much trouble himself with his thoughts and language, so he is but in fee with the dancing-masters, and has a few luscious songs to lard his dry composition.

After 1696 writers also had to work within the increasingly codified actor benefit system. Depending on contractual arrangements, this custom mandated that one or several company members could choose the theatrical fare for an evening and receive the proceeds as part of their salaries, minus the operating costs or house charges. Hoping to exhibit their talents to remunerative advantage, performers usually opted for plays from the established repertory over untried new works. With seasons during this period averaging between 180 and 200 playing days, benefits for actors and other theatre personnel occupied much of the last

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29 Scouten and Hume 67.
34 Milhous and Hume, *Producible Interpretation* 39.
three months before summer and sometimes early dates in the fall as well; the practice of scheduling all benefits after 1 March did not begin until 1712. Consequently, during most of the four women’s careers, the number of production slots available for premieres was reduced somewhat by the actors’ need to earn a living.

Besides the actors’ benefits, the available dates for premieres were further diminished by the custom of closing the theatres on Wednesdays and Fridays during Lent in February. Since they were so dependent upon box office receipts, the companies also needed time in the fall to raise enough money through performances of stock pieces to mount new productions. As far as playwrights were concerned, then, dates between late November and mid-February were the most advantageous for staging new works. During the first three years of the competition, when both theatres were staging at least seven and as many as seventeen new works per season while presenting anywhere from forty to sixty stock plays, even the most highly regarded of new plays would scarcely have received the detailed attention associated with a new professional production in the modern theatre. In order to see their works acted, however, Pix, Manley, Trotter, and Centlivre had to sometimes accept early fall, Lenten, late spring, or even summer premieres. As a result, many of their plays were not seen to best advantage due to incomplete or inexperienced companies, old stock sets and costumes, and the reduced audiences which resulted when many playgoers followed the royal and parliamentary practice of an extended summer leave outside London.

35 Avery and Scouten, introd., The London Stage, vol. 1, xcvi.
38 Avery and Scouten, introd., The London Stage, vol. 1, clvi.
39 Milhous and Hume, Producible Interpretation 39.
Another key to understanding the context in which the four women had their plays staged is the ambivalent attitude of theatre managers towards new plays. While contemporary opinion may hold that new scripts are the lifeblood of the theatre, Restoration and early eighteenth-century theatre managers, including Betterton, Rich, Cibber, Wilks, and Booth, viewed them as expensive, time-consuming risks necessitated by the renewed competition. Betterton was a key player with Davenant’s Duke’s Company in the 1660s and 1670s when their use of new works and experimental staging helped gain the upper hand over the King’s Company. When he managed the United Company, however, which faced no competition during the 1680s, Betterton sharply curtailed the number of new plays the troupe produced. To underscore this point, Milhous quotes the following observation from George Powell’s *The Treacherous Brothers* (1690):

> The time was, upon the uniting of the two Theatres, that the reviveing of the old stock of Plays, so ingrost the study of the House, that the Poets lay dormant; and a new Play cou’d hardly get admittance, amongst the more precious pieces of Antiquity, that then waited to walk the Stage.

For his part, Christopher Rich felt the necessity to scramble for new plays in 1695 because, as *A Comparison Between the Two Stages* (1702) tells us, “the Theatre-Royal was then sunk into a very despicable Condition: Very little difference appear’d between that and the Theatre at the Bear Garden.”

On the other hand, in 1706 Rich was quite willing to allow the majority of his best actors to join the Haymarket company in exchange for exclusive rights to the performance of opera as well as entr’acte song, dance, and novelty displays at Drury Lane.

Of the managers who would take over after 1710, Cibber and Wilks as well as Barton Booth (would become their partner in 1713) were all schooled in this period when London

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40 Milhous, *Thomas Betterton* 42, 259.
41 *A Comparison* 7.
42 Milhous and Hume, *Vice Chamberlain Coke* 5-6.
theatre managers came to believe that diversity in their offerings was more cost effective if achieved through casting changes in the existing repertory, enhanced with additional singers, dancers, acrobats, and (increasingly after 1710) short after-pieces. The investment of time and money in mounting new plays could be avoided, while the third and sixth nights’ earnings (ordinarily paid to an author) would compensate the extra performers as well as provide a tidy profit for the managers. From a managerial point of view, then, new plays were a necessary, not especially desirable, ingredient in a competition that depended upon a company’s ability to attract playgoers with a variety of offerings. Though they were aware that new plays were important to the company’s reputation/box office appeal, managers preferred whenever possible to make their money with less risk and less effort.

How To Succeed In Business

Two of the earliest commentators on the period have proposed useful ways to credit writers with success or failure. In a biased attempt to promote a return to a London with only one theatre company, the anonymous author of A Comparison analyzed the initial audience response to most plays of the period and pronounced that “I am sure you can’t name me five Plays that have indur’d six Days acting, for fifty that were damn’d in three.”\(^4\) Despite this harsh assessment, A Comparison is correct in pointing to the length of the original run of a play as an indicator of that play’s value both to the theatre company and to the author.

Crassly speaking, playwrights were hopeful that their works could generate enough ticket sales to hold the stage through an initial run of at least six performances, because their monetary compensation was made up of the proceeds of the third and sixth showings, again minus operating costs. If a play was extremely well-received, the author might negotiate a

\(^4\) A Comparison 2.
third benefit on the ninth performance or a subsequent revival later that season.\textsuperscript{44} During the 1660s and 1670s when house charges were £25, authors might hope to earn £75 on a third night.\textsuperscript{45} As house charges gradually rose from £30 to £40 between 1694 and 1707,\textsuperscript{46} while ticket prices remained relatively constant, part of any additional income from the sixth night’s benefit went to defray the extra operating costs. Though no exact playwrights’ income figures exist for the period, the £130 which Shadwell earned at one benefit for \textit{The Squire of Alsatia} (1688) is the recorded high;\textsuperscript{47} the less than £5 brought in by the premiere of Cibber’s adaptation of \textit{Richard III} (1699), heavily censored and marred by the author’s poor performance in the title role, represents a suitable nadir.\textsuperscript{48} At best, the four women might have hoped to net somewhere between £50 and £75 for each benefit in a six night run of a new play for a total earning of somewhere between £100 and £150.\textsuperscript{49}

If box office receipts flagged, however, theatrical managers could replace a new play with a repertory staple well before the second, or, in cases like Manley’s \textit{The Lost Lover} (1696), the first author’s benefit. As a result, if one of the women’s plays were “damn’d” by its initial audience, the writer stood to receive neither payment nor an increased reputation from her efforts, while the theatre had invested the time and money to mount the production for a very small financial return indeed. Additionally, when a company spent extra capital to

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{44} Avery and Scouten, introd., \textit{London Stage}, vol. 1, lxxix-lxxxiii.
  \item \textsuperscript{46} Milhous, “Company Management” 31
  \item \textsuperscript{48} Avery and Scouten, introd., \textit{London Stage}, vol. 1, lxxxiii.
  \item \textsuperscript{49} Milhous, “United Company Finances” 47-48. Milhous lists average income figures from 1688. Artisan and handicraftsmen’s families might earn £38 per year while a king’s yeoman might earn £40 per annum plus food, lodging, and livery. At the other end of the scale, the Archbishop of Canterbury earned £4233, and the Archbishops of Norwich and Oxford earned £500 and £355 respectively.
\end{itemize}
“new dress” a premiere, as the Haymarket did for Manley’s Almyna in 1706, perhaps even a six-night run would be insufficient to recover the theatre’s initial investment.\(^{50}\)

A Comparison also records the cautionary tale of a “Gentleman” who, in order to have his play acted for four nights at Drury Lane, was cajoled into paying £2 for refreshments at a first reading, £2 for the license from the Master of Revels, and £10 for “Coach hire and Wine” during rehearsals. Of the £70 finally realized by the writer after the crooked doorkeepers had rifled his benefit receipts, all but £15 were garnished by the theatre for “extraordinary” charges for chocolate, snuff, et cetera. In the meantime, the poor gull felt obliged to pass out several guineas to the performers to reward them for their performances.\(^{51}\) Since the rehearsal period cost the writer £14 and he received only £15 from his benefit, the extra guineas spent to gratify the actors meant that the production of his play actually cost the writer money. Though this account may be fictional, the story demonstrates that the acceptance of a play for production was no guarantee of future profits for a writer.

A second important criterion for playwriting success, inclusion in the company’s repertory, is often referred to by John Downes, former prompter and author of Roscius Anglicanus (1708), an informative though meandering chronicle of Duke’s, United, and Rebel Company cast lists and history from the 1660s until the author’s enforced retirement in 1706.\(^{52}\) Of less immediate financial importance, but ultimately of more career significance to a turn-of-the-eighteenth-century playwright, was the writing of what Downes refers to as a “living play”: in other words, a play which was popular enough to justify periodic inclusion in the company’s performance schedule beyond its initial run. Such plays became the property of the theatre company and were valuable commodities. They could be produced at less expense (no


\(^{51}\) A Comparison 8-9.

\(^{52}\) Milhous and Hume, introd., Roscius Anglicanus xi.
further payment to the author being necessary) as often as the plays continued to bring in a
profit. Consequently, when Downes characterizes a playwright’s effort as “having the life of
a stock play,” he is indicating that, not only did the play provide benefit income to the writer
on the third, sixth, and, in rare instances, ninth nights, but the company found the play
profitable enough to justify occasional performances along with its other stock pieces during
the rest of that season and into succeeding years.

Unfortunately, the bulk of Pix, Manley, and Trotter’s plays were acted prior to the
1705 advent of regular newspaper advertisement. The London Stage frequently lists revivals
of Centlivre’s later plays during the same seasons in which they premiered. The scanty
performance calendar before 1705, however, prohibits a definite answer to the question of
whether plays by Pix, Manley, and Trotter which did not subsequently enter the repertory
were given additional performances during their premiere seasons. Conceivably, some plays
by the Female Wits were acted more often than could be documented, a possibility which
would have resulted in more revenue for the companies and could account, in part, for the
continued acceptance of their works for performance.

Although evidence of reaching a second benefit and of continued revivals of authors’
works are acceptable measures of playwriting success, one cautionary stipulation is in order.
Since the London audience was especially hard to please between 1697 and 1703, new plays
during those years had a difficult time reaching the level of a second benefit, much less
inclusion in a company’s repertory; hence, plays of considerable merit were passed over only to
receive their share of credit later in the century. A conspicuous example is Congreve’s The
Way of the World which had an initial run of only five performances and was not included
in the established repertory until after the author ceased writing for the theatre. While

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53 Scouen and Hume 64.
none of the works produced by the four women during this period can pretend to the literary polish and stageworthiness of Congreve's masterpiece, the major plays of Pix and Trotter in particular suffer under the additional onus of having been staged during an era when the audience was disinclined to like any new works whatsoever. Another caution concerning the negative judgments in *A Comparison* is also advisable. Preoccupied with the attempt to prove the inadequacy of the two-company system, the anonymous author was apt to proclaim the failure of new plays whether they had survived to no, one, or two benefits: the only qualification for playwriting success according to *A Comparison* is inclusion in the repertory.

Another, more speculative standard for evaluating the success of the women's plays should be added to the list which currently includes immediate financial success for the writers and continued monetary returns for the company. A theatrical company's acceptance of additional new works for production indicates that, in spite of unsuccessful previous efforts, the writers felt encouraged enough concerning production opportunities to continue submitting scripts for subsequent plays. Furthermore, the production of additional scripts by all four of the women in this study indicates that, at the least, the companies believed the women potentially capable of producing a "living play," i.e. a financially rewarding addition to their repertory. Seen in this light, the production of twelve plays by Pix during an eleven year period; the staging of five plays during Trotter's playwriting career though none entered the repertory; the acceptance of Manley's *Almyra* ten years after *The Female Wits*; and the production of Centlivre's *Marplot* after the actors had been angry enough at comments attributed to Centlivre in the press to close her *The Man's bewitch'd* before its second benefit, all indicate that companies as well as writers were capable of setting aside previous failures, even animosities, in favor of the possibility of a financially rewarding production. Indeed, one of the seldom commented upon characteristics of this period was the willingness

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to let even acrimonious bygones be bygones when necessity dictated an alliance among former
adversaries.

This brings us to another measure of playwriting success for the four women: to what
degree were they able to accommodate, even befriend, the managers and performers for whom
they wrote? Undoubtedly, playwrights familiarized themselves with the various lines or
character types performed by the actors of the London theatres. In the preface to his
Woman's Wit (1697), Cibber says that he began the play during his brief period of
employment at Lincoln's Inn Fields "and of course prepar'd my Characters to the taste of those
Actors." He goes on to add that "In the middle of my Writing the Third Act, not liking my
Station there, I return'd again to the Theatre Royal." While apparently leaving intact what
he had written at the New Theatre, Cibber completed the second half of Woman's Wit with
the Drury Lane personnel in mind. On a less naive level, critic and playwright John Dennis,
writing in 1711, notes that "most of the Writers for the Stage in my time, have not only
adapted their Characters to their Actors, but these actors have as it were sate for them." Although literary merit, stageworthiness, and even financial viability were important, in
this era when playwrights took some responsibility for rehearsals and actors were involved
in repertory selection, the ability to collaborate with actors and managers, to excuse the
vagaries of those who might be useful later on, and to make friends within the company, both
among the influential and rank-and-file members, were major factors in the brevity or
longevity of that writer's career.

56 Richard Hindry Barker, Mr. Cibber of Drury Lane, Columbia University
Studies in English and Comparative Literature No. 143 (New York: Columbia UP,
1939) 30.
57 Philip H. Highfill, "Performers and Performing," The London Theatre World,
1660-1800, ed. Robert D. Hume (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1980) 171-
172.
In short, the success of the women's plays will be evaluated whenever possible on the basis of the following: 1) whether the play was initially popular enough to provide the author with the income from two benefits; 2) whether the company management deemed the audience demand for the piece significant enough to include the play in the company's repertory; 3) whether the author felt sufficiently encouraged to continue writing, and the companies were inclined to accept subsequent plays for production; and 4) whether the authors' relationships with the theatrical personnel contributed to the expansion or curtailment of their playwriting opportunities.

Although a succinct list of criteria for evaluating the women's playwriting success can be proposed, several factors prohibit arriving at definitive reasons for a given play's failure. Since, among the thirty-two plays considered here, only Pix's *Ibrahim* and *The Spanish Wives* and Centlivre's *Love's Contrivance*, *The Gamester*, and *The Busy Body* were "living plays," much of this study is concerned with attempting to understand the exclusion of the other twenty-seven plays from the repertory. Therefore, after determining as closely as possible what each play's original reception was, additional attention is given to investigating why the plays succeeded or failed.

Because of the eclectic nature of available evidence, a variety of techniques and sources are employed to arrive at an informed conjecture as to why each play succeeded or faltered. In the case of *The Man's bewitch'd*, Centlivre can be believed when she attributes her play's failure to the actors' angry reaction to unflattering comments she made about them privately that were published in *The Female Tatler*. In more complex instances like Pix's *Queen Catharine*, a combination of factors including the unpopularity of tragedy, faulty plot

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Wherever possible contemporaneous evidence is used to evaluate a play's reception. This type of evidence includes the plays themselves, authors' prefaces, cast lists, and information available from The London Stage, The Biographical Dictionary, and Vice Chamberlain Coke's Theatrical Papers. When these sources prove inconclusive, however, additional insight is sought from modern evaluations of the writers, their works, and the repertory. In many cases an examination of a play's dramatic merit is also employed either to supplement existing evidence or to provide possible answers when no other evidence exists. This study is not a chronicle of the literary merits or faults of the women's plays. At some points, however, literary analysis of the plays the women wrote during these years will be employed, but only as a means to discuss how a particular plot device, character, or thematic intent may have facilitated or hampered the playwright's career or standing with one of the companies. Though the methods employed to explain the writers' successes and failures vary widely, they invariably attempt to answer the following questions: how long was the play's initial run? did the play enter the repertory? why or why not?
CHAPTER II
INTRODUCTION TO THEATRE FOR THE FEMALE WITS

This chapter examines how Pix, Trotter, and Manley became playwrights in 1695 and 1696. The September 1696 production of The Female Wits is also discussed as an element of the Patent Company's competitive strategy against Lincoln's Inn Fields and as Drury Lane's satirical reaction to the beginning of the three women's playwriting careers.

Mary Pix

Facts are sparse about Mary Pix, the daughter of Reverend Roger Griffith of Buckingham parish.\footnote{Paddy Lyons and Fidelis Morgan, ed. and introd., Female Playwrights of the Restoration (London: J. M. Dent, 1991) xvii.} This scarcity is regrettable, because between 1695 and 1710 she wrote more plays than either Trotter, Manley, or Centlivre, whose colorful lives sometimes overshadow the degree of their participation in the theatre. Pix's birth is recorded in 1666 in Nettlebed, Oxfordshire. At age 18, with the consent of her widowed mother, she married merchant-tailor George Pix. Mary Pix entered the literary world at age 30 in 1696 with the printing of her only novel, The Inhumane Cardinal, and the late-May, Drury Lane staging of
her first play, *Ibrahim, the Thirteenth Emperor of the Turks*.2

Presumably Pix found opportunities for reading and study as she grew up in the vicar’s household. In her preface to *Ibrahim*, she says, "I read some years ago, at a Relations House in the Country, Sir Paul Ricaut’s Continuation of the Turkish History; I was pleas’d with the story and ventur’d to write upon it..."3 The dedication of her first comedy *The Spanish Wives* is addressed to Colonel Tipping of Whitfield, whom Pix had talked to at the house of her mother’s affluent relatives, the Wallis family.4 In this dedication, Pix mentions that "You have known me from my Childhood, and my Inclination to Poetry..."5 These two references indicate that Pix grew up with both the occasion and the desire for learning and writing.

Very little information exists concerning Pix’s marriage. In their introduction to Pix’s *The Beau Defeated*, Lyons and Morgan do mention the following strong reasons for the departure of the Pix family from Buckingham parish: between 1682 and 1684 Roger Griffith died, the Griffith residence burned, and a serious outbreak of smallpox occurred.6 On the positive side, Lyons and Morgan also note that George Pix inherited a house and substantial property in Kent upon the death of his father in 1675. Perhaps they lived there for a time, as

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6 Lyons and Morgan xvii.
their first child was buried in nearby Hawkhurst cemetery in September 1690. Though no reference to Pix attending the theatre before she began writing has survived, by the time their second child was baptized in 1691, she and George Pix were living in London between Holborn and Chancery Lane, a location very near Lincoln’s Inn Fields playhouse.7

Their marriage itself is the subject of contradictory claims which center on Mary Pix’s choice of writing as a career. In 1703 Tom Brown’s verse pamphlet *The Players Turn’d Academicks* implied that she squandered her husband’s money in order to get her plays staged. According to Brown, Pix was “said to Write well, because well she could treat,/And for her sake had written her husband in Debt”.8 Kendall hints at different financial circumstances, viz., that George Pix gambled, and Mary took up the pen to save the family fortunes.9 Still others, anxious to make the available facts sufficient to account for Pix becoming a playwright, posit that grief over the death of her child in 1690 led her to write.10 Constance Clark suggests that a financially secure Pix “may well have been the happy wife of that *rara avis* of the age, a liberal husband.”11 Nancy Cotton Pearse theorizes that George Pix may have died young thereby forcing his widow to seek a theatrical career.12 Convinced that George Pix outlived his wife, Lyons and Morgan even state that after his wife’s death

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7 Lyons and Morgan xvii-xviii.
12 Pearse 12.
George Pix remarried in June 1709. All of these scenarios are plausible, yet none can be proved.

The only point on which all sources agree is that Pix was heavy. Her size is confirmed by her satiric portrayal in The Female Wits as Mrs. Wellfed, "a fat female author," as well as by other contemporary sources like Tom Brown, who called Pix a "thundering piece of man's flesh." The most that can be said, then, is that Pix was a large person who had some access to, and an aptitude for, poetry as she was growing up and getting married, and that she had been writing for some time when the Actors' Rebellion of 1695 allowed her to produce Ibrahim and The Spanish Wives in rapid succession in addition to her novel. There exists, however, a measure of Pix's promise as a playwright: when Princess Anne and her husband Prince George of Denmark made one of their rare visits to the theatre in the spring of 1696, Drury Lane chose to perform Ibrahim for the royal couple.

Catharine Trotter

Born in 1679 of well-connected Scottish parents, Sarah and David Trotter, Catharine Trotter's prospects for a leisurely life were drastically altered by her father's death in 1684. Captain Trotter had distinguished himself during the Dutch Wars of the mid-1670s earning the nickname 'Honest David' from Charles II and his brother the Duke of York, who was crowned James II in 1685. When Captain Trotter succumbed to the plague, he was engaged in

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13 Lyons and Morgan xviii.
15 Constance Clark, introd., The Inhumane Cardinal, by Mary Pix (Delmar, NY: Scholars' Facsimiles, 1984) viii.
16 Clark, The Inhumane Cardinal, vi.
convoying the Turkey Company’s fleet, a voyage that would presumably have made his fortune. More bad luck followed Trotter’s death: the shipboard belongings of ‘Honest David’ were stolen by the crew’s purser, and, back in England, the goldsmith with whom he had invested the majority of his holdings went bankrupt.  

Charles II conferred a pension on the widow and her two daughters, but payment lapsed after Charles’s death the next year and was not renewed until Queen Anne’s accession in 1702 when Trotter’s mother began to receive £20 annually. In 1684, however, the three Trotter women were relegated to the status of genteel dependents upon their Catholic relatives, the Maitland and Drummond families. Even this tenuous security proved to be short-lived. When James II decamped for France in 1688, hard times came to his Catholic supporters. The Earl of Lauderdale of the Maitlands became strapped for funds, while by 1691 the Earl of Perth, head of the Drummond family, found his estates sequestered and was forced to flee the country. The family was obliged to seek other means of support even if that meant young Catharine Trotter had to earn money with her pen.

Thomas Birch, Trotter’s friend and first biographer, states that she was a child prodigy who had early schooling in Latin and logic and learned French “by her own application and diligence, without any instructor.” Birch also mentions that “her intimacy with several families of distinction of the Romish persuasion” led Trotter to forsake Anglicanism for Catholicism at an early age. After some deliberation, she was later to rejoin the Church of England, a year prior to her marriage to Reverend Cockburn in 1708. In addition

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20 Day, Olinda’s Adventures iii.
to her interests in languages, disputation, and religion, Trotter also had a youthful flair for poetry, evidenced at age fourteen when she dedicated verses to Bevil Higgons on the unlikely subject of his recovery from smallpox. Higgons, whose *The Generous Conquerour* would be acted in 1701, had recently written verses praising Dryden and a prologue for Congreve’s *The Old Batchelour* and might prove a useful literary connection for Trotter in the future.

As a young woman in need of money and interested in cutting a figure in the world of letters, Trotter sought publication, albeit anonymously, for a more substantial work, her epistolary novel, *Olinda’s Adventures*. Bookseller Samuel Briscoe included the novel in his 1693 volume of *Letters of Love and Gallantry and Several Other Subjects. All Written by Ladies* and went on to publish reprints in several other volumes, the last one in 1724. In her own autobiographical novel, *The Adventures of Rivella* (1714), Manley asserts that Olinda’s life has much in common with Trotter’s. Unfortunately, even if *Olinda’s Adventures* is autobiographical, Trotter bypasses her heroine’s early years too quickly to shed light on her development as a writer. After briefly mentioning her father’s death and her mother’s reduced circumstances, Olinda says, “I believe you’ll excuse me if I pass over all that occur’d till I was Thirteen, for about that time I began to fancy my self a Woman,” and goes on to begin the analysis of a budding romance.

In addition to epistolary fiction, Trotter made a lifelong habit of frequent correspondence, much of it with eminent people such as Locke, Leibnitz, and Congreve. During the mid-1690s, perhaps through Bevil Higgons, she may have already become acquainted with Dryden and Congreve who could have proved influential in promoting a production of

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25 Trotter, *Olinda’s Adventures* 134.
her first play *Agnes de Castro*. Perhaps through Congreve, William Wycherley, still an influential figure though no longer a practicing dramatist, was asked to write the prologue to Trotter's play. Prefatory verses from a respected source to be spoken prior to performance could provide the same protection and legitimacy for a stage production that could be had in print from a dedication to a highly-placed patron.

The sixteen-year-old Trotter had also approached the Earl of Dorset for an opinion and support for a production. As Lord Chamberlain, head of King William's household, governmental overseer of the theatres, and a legendary patron of the arts, Dorset was ideally placed to endorse a young author's work. Trotter's dedication to the published version of *Agnes de Castro* asserts that Dorset had both approved and recommended the play:

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This little Off-spring of my early Muse was first Submitted to Your Lordship's Judgment, Whether it shou'd be Stifled in the Birth, or Preserv'd to try its Fortune in the World; and since 'tis from Your Sentence it has ventur'd thus far, it now Claims a sort of Title to Your Lordships Protection. . . .
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Though her family connections, willingness to correspond with anyone concerning her interests and ideas, and growing acquaintance in the literary world provide hints, Trotter does not explain precisely how she came to solicit Dorset's help, but the earl's advocacy was probably a powerful factor in getting *Agnes de Castro* staged at Drury Lane.

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26 Gosse 92.
Delariviere Manley

Unlike Pix’s and Trotter’s, Manley’s path to the March 1696 Drury Lane premiere of her first play, *The Lost Lover; or The Jealous Husband*, is more fully documented. Manley’s father was an army officer who remained loyal to the Stuarts and fled to Holland during the Interregnum, and, like Trotter’s father, Sir Roger Manley died before his daughter reached maturity. During his exile, Sir Roger married a woman from the Spanish Netherlands. Born sometime between 1667 and 1672, Delariviere Manley was their second daughter. After the Restoration, her father never recovered the property he lost while supporting the Stuarts during the rebellion. Instead, Sir Roger and his family moved wherever the king’s army chose to post him. In his spare time Sir Roger wrote history; he published his translation of a Dutch history of Japan and Siam in 1663 and his history of Denmark’s wars appeared in 1670. During those years most likely for Delariviere Manley’s birth, Sir Roger was lieutenant-governor of the island of Jersey.

Sometime during the mid-1670s, Manley’s mother died, leaving Sir Roger to raise their three daughters and two surviving sons with the help of a succession of governesses and aunts. After his stint in Jersey, Sir Roger served as captain of the royal regiment of Foot Guards, and in 1680 he became governor of Landguard Fort, Suffolk. During these years Manley developed an unswerving devotion to the Tory party, had her first flirtations with young subalterns, and evidently took some interest in the scholastic work of her father who in

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1686 brought out a history in Latin of the Cromwell rebellion. Sir Roger also wrote the section of Richard Knolles's *History of the Turkish Empire* (1687-1700) dealing with the decade between 1676 and 1686; this was the type of exotic source his daughter was later to successfully exploit in her writings.

In the summer of 1685, while Manley's elder sister, Mary Elizabeth, was marrying a Captain Brathwaite during a brief stopover by his Twelfth Regiment at Landguard, Manley began a serious dalliance of her own with Ensign James Carlisle from the same unit. A sometime actor with the United Company and an aspiring playwright, Carlisle seems to have taken army work when acting jobs were scarce. Doubtless he told Manley something of his associations with the great Betterton, Barry, and company. When Carlisle's regiment departed, Manley was so upset that her father sent her to study at the home of a Huguenot parson near where her brother Francis was then posted; the French she learned under the minister's tutelage was her only formal schooling.

Though in Manley's fiction her father dies of a broken heart shortly after James II is deposed, Sir Roger actually died in office over a year prior to James's flight and the accession of William and Mary in 1688. Before the Glorious Revolution, Manley had been promised the next vacant position as lady-in-waiting to the Catholic wife of James II, Queen Mary of Modena, but those hopes of a comfortable maintenance, or even a suitable match, perished when the queen fled to the continent in December of 1688. That same year Manley's brother Edward died; her other brother Francis was to die a French prisoner of war in 1693.

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34 Clark, *Three Augustan Women* 102.
36 Clark, *Three Augustan Women* 103.
38 Morgan, *A Woman of No Character* 38.
39 Anderson 269.
Mary Elizabeth was safely married and had inherited their father's house at Kew, but her husband had no use for his wife's sisters. This left Manley and her younger sister Cornelia in the care of their cousin John Manley, a prosperous, married Cornwall lawyer about ten years older than Manley. The two sisters were promptly packed off to live with their elderly Aunt Dorothea in Wales. During her two years in Wales, Manley discovered that her aunt had a taste for stories of chivalrous romance. As Manley says, "This sort of conversation infected me and made me fancy every stranger that I saw, in what habit soever, some disguised prince or lover."

After Aunt Dorothea's death in 1691, John Manley took a much more active role in Delarivier Manley's life. In volume two of The New Atalantis, Manley casts her cousin as a conniving, heartless figure twenty years older than herself who, deceiving her with a false report of his shrewish wife's death, took advantage of her romantic notions to convince her to marry him. After the bigamous marriage, according to the versions of events in Atalantis and Rivella, Manley spent three years in wretched, solitary enthralment to her licentious cousin, bore him a child, and was helped by a sympathetic neighbor to escape at last into the nearby household of one of Charles II's former mistresses, the Duchess of Cleveland. Note should be taken that The Adventures of Rivella was written to forestall the publication of a biography of Manley to be compiled by Grub Streeter Charles Gildon and published by the irrepressible Edmund Curll, who was never one to let facts stand in the way of a good story.

40 Morgan, A Woman of No Character 38; Duff 66.
41 Duff 62, 67.
44 Manley, Rivella 31-2; Manley The New Atalantis 183-89.
45 Ralph Strauss, The Unspeakable Curll (London: Chapman, 1927) 44.
Manley's motive in writing the book might well have been to protect her own reputation for posterity.

Sometime around 1689, Manley certainly married her cousin John; he placed her in lodgings near his law offices in Westminster, and, as his business took him away from Cornwall for long periods, he lived with her intermittently for about three years. The couple had a son that John may have agreed to support; and Manley did become a retainer with Barbara Villiers Palmer, Countess of Castlemaine and Duchess of Cleveland, who felt that Manley brought her luck at cards. Since the duchess was a former mistress of Charles II and William Wycherley as well as an early lover and financial supporter of John Churchill, the stories from her salon were a first-hand source for Manley's later attacks on the Marlboroughs during her years as a Tory journalist.

Another colorful figure that Manley encountered during her six months with Castlemaine was the duchess's paramour Cardell Goodman, a retired actor formerly skilled in heroic roles. A sometime highwayman, Goodman had also been involved in 'clipping' coin edges and selling them to unscrupulous metal smiths and was later forced to flee to the continent because of his involvement in a failed plot against William III's life. Apparently Goodman was suspicious of Manley's status as Castlemaine's current favorite, because, unbeknown to the duchess, he was keeping a mistress in a house nearby and consequently in fear of exposure. Taking the offensive, Goodman "told his Lady [that Manley] had made Advances to him, which for her ladyship's sake he had rejected." Evidently other malicious gossip was also at work against Manley, and the duchess had a habit of tiring

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46 Duff 64-72.
49 Wilson, _Mr. Goodman_ 108.
50 Manley, _Rivella_ 36.
quickly of her favorites anyway. According to Rivella, convinced of the case against her card mascot, the duchess broke off the relationship by accusing Manley of a liaison with her son. Whatever the true state of affairs concerning Goodman, the duchess, and her son, Manley was soon on her way to the west of England.

During her two years away from London, Manley found time and means to draft the manuscripts of The Lost Lover and The Royal Mischief, the two plays with which she began her controversial London literary career. Any assumption, however, that Manley spent the majority of her country visit in the composition of her first play is incorrect, because in the preface to The Lost Lover, she admits that “to confess my Fault, I own it an unpardonable one, to expose, after two years’ reflection, the Follies of seven days, (for barely in that time the Play was wrought). . . .” Manley’s biographer notes that John Manley’s return to Parliament in 1696 coincided with Manley’s reappearance in London with her two plays. In all likelihood, then, even after Manley’s stint with the Duchess of Cleveland, she maintained some connection with her cousin. John Manley may even have provided some of the financial support necessary for Manley to compose her literary stockpile. A more probable termination of their connection was their unsatisfactory involvement in the multiple lawsuits over the Duke of Albemarle’s estate. Manley and her cousin served as go-betweens for various wrangling parties, but were unable to profit by their efforts. Though their participation in the lawsuit dragged on into 1701, John Tilly was also in the employ of one of the litigants. From the time Delarivier Manley and Tilly, a warden of the Fleet Prison, became lovers in 1696 or 1697, she seems to have had increasingly less use for her cousin, even as a business contact.

51 Manley, Rivella 38.
52 Morgan, A Woman of No Character 74-75.
53 Duff 76.
54 Duff 84-105.
Though she may have heard talk of the stage from Carlisle or from Goodman, who continued to frequent the playhouses though he was no longer acting, Manley admits a lack of familiarity with the theatre in the mid-1690s. In her preface to The Lost Lover, Manley refers to herself as "so great a stranger to the stage that I had lived buried in the country and in the six foregoing years had actually been but twice at the house." More important than Manley's ignorance of the stage, however, was her acquaintance with Sir Thomas Skipwith, Christopher Rich's partner. In his Apology Cibber mentions dining with Cardell Goodman at Skipwith's house sometime around 1696. Cibber also notes that as struggling young actors Goodman and Philip Griffin, who became one of Rich's deputy managers at Drury Lane, had been roommates. Considering Goodman's strained relations with Manley, listing him as the means for a meeting between the playwright and members of the Drury Lane management is certainly speculative. Manley's association with Goodman, however, falls very close to Goodman's affiliation with Skipwith and Griffin. Just possibly, during Manley's stay with the Duchess of Cleveland, she might have made the acquaintance of Skipwith and Griffin.

Manley fails to make clarify matters in Rivella where Skipwith appears as Sir Peter Vainlove, and the anonymous man who introduces them bears no resemblance to Goodman:

A certain Gentleman, who was a very great Scholar and Master of abundance of Sense and Judgment, at her own Request, brought to her Acquaintance one Sir Peter Vainlove, intending to do her Service as to her Design of writing for the Theater, that Person having then Interest enough to introduce upon one Stage whatever Pieces he pleas'd. . . .

Whatever the circumstances of their meeting, Skipwith seems to have preferred philandering to managing Drury Lane, a task which he resigned almost totally to Rich. In these first years after his inheritance, however, he sometimes took a hand in theatre

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56 Morgan, *A Woman of No Character* 75.
57 Cibber 215-17.
58 Manley, *Rivella* 45.
operations. Perhaps his avocation and his business found common ground in Manley with whom he seems to have carried on a spirited flirtation at the least. Though the relationship came to nothing and is humorously described in *Rivella*, Manley does thank him for his support on the production of *The Lost Lover* because "His native generosity and gallantry of temper took care nothing on his part should be wanting to make it pleasing." Of course, the limits of Skipwith's protection were demonstrated in the spring of 1696 when Manley angrily withdrew her next play, *The Royal Mischief*, from Drury Lane in mid-rehearsal and offered the script to Lincoln's Inn Fields because she was unhappy with her treatment at the Patent house.

The published version of *The Royal Mischief* appeared with a dedication to William Cavendish, Duke of Devonshire, another famous patron who could have been very influential in arranging Manley's debut. Manley thanks Devonshire in cautious terms for "the honor of your Graces Approbation, before it [The Royal Mischief] came upon the Stage." Since Devonshire was one of the lords who had invited William to depose James, insured Princess (later Queen) Anne's safety during the turmoil of 1688, and served frequently as a member of the council designated to rule England during William's continental absences, his protection could be powerful indeed. On a less exalted note, he was a famous gambler, an amateur poet, and man-about-town and, in addition to his interest in the arts, rumored to have kept an

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60 Manley, *Rivella* 45-52.
61 Morgan, *A Woman of No Character* 75.
62 Hook, introd., *The Female Wits* ii.
63 Anderson 270.
64 Kathryn McQueen Kendall, "Theatre, Society, and Women Playwrights in London from 1695 Through the Queen Anne Era," diss., U of Texas, 1986, 110.
actress as a mistress. Despite his high station, he could possibly have been acquainted with Manley; once again, the Duchess of Cleveland’s gaming table provides grounds for conjecture.

As Milhous notes, however, no standard procedure existed between writers and patrons concerning such matters as prior approval of a play, remuneration, permission to dedicate, or help with staging. A dedication to a wealthy nobleman such as Devonshire could mean anything from an attempt to gain future rewards to a public acknowledgment of financial, artistic, and theatrical help. Though The Royal Mischief was finally staged at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, Manley’s two plays could have been initially presented as a package deal which was offered to both theatres and accepted at Drury Lane. The commendatory epistle to Manley’s Letters Written on a Stage-Coach Journey to Exeter (1696) does claim that both theatres were vying to produce Manley’s plays. Conceivably therefore, Devonshire’s support was sought in negotiations which led to plans for the joint production of the two plays; Manley could have considered the six-night run of The Royal Mischief a more likely occasion than her first play's failure for a thankful dedication to her patron, but no hard evidence as to whether he actually helped bring The Lost Lover to the stage has survived.

When her cousin’s financial support was withdrawn, Manley was faced with the necessity of earning a living in a society which offered few legitimate job opportunities for women. She and Tilly tried a number of options, including alchemy, forgery, and, in his case, graft to make their fortune. For Manley, writing for the stage was just one of these money-making possibilities. An important fact to remember about Manley’s career is that The Lost Lover and The Royal Mischief, half her theatrical output, were written prior to her 1696 Drury Lane debut. She had two more plays produced: Almyna in 1706 and Lucius in 1717, but

67 Clark, Three Augustan Women 108.
the theatre was never her chief means of support. This is not said to diminish Manley’s interest in the theatre. Though she made her money elsewhere, at her death she did leave instructions for all of her papers except two play manuscripts to be destroyed. Unfortunately, the plays are lost, but the reference proves that Manley still entertained hopes of theatrical production.  

The Female Wits

Though Pix, Trotter, and Manley managed to have their first plays accepted for production, the theatre world was by no means sympathetic in its reception of the women playwrights. While Chapter Three begins the examination of the three women’s careers in chronological order, particular focus should be given beforehand to Rich’s production of The Female Wits: or, The Triumvirate of Poets at Rehearsal at Drury Lane in September 1696. The production had a determining effect upon Pix, Manley, and Trotter’s playwriting careers, and the circumstances surrounding The Female Wits provide many examples of why consideration of the women’s plays is also enhanced by reference to the theatrical context in which they appeared.

Similar in purpose to the passage quoted in Chapter One from A Comparison which alleged that “female poet” was a contradiction in terms, the play suggests that a female wit or literary woman is an oxymoron. In The Female Wits, women who write for the theatre are presented as incompetent both at the writing desk and in the rehearsal hall. The personal habits of women playwrights are also reviled; the anonymous author, together with eight of the Drury Lane actors who appear in the script under their own names, accuse Pix (as Mrs. Wellfed) of being illiterate and drunken, Trotter (as Calista) of phony intellectualism and...

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66 Duff 86-89.
69 Morgan, A Woman of No Character 156.
insincerity, and Manley (as Marsilia) of a host of offenses including vanity, ill-temper, backbiting, stupidity, toadying to a ludicrous duke, and promiscuity. The piece portrays women playwrights as ridiculous figures likely to damage the institution of poetry and endanger the health of the performers with foolish demands; the actors, in their turn, treat the women with tongue-in-cheek forbearance until these demands become intolerable. At the end of *The Female Wits*, the main target of the satire, Marsilia, withdraws her play from rehearsal and is sent packing with the derisive laughter of actors and former admirers echoing in her ears.\(^7\)

The play was written specifically to attack Manley for angrily taking her tragedy, *The Royal Mischief*, away from Drury Lane after disagreements with the Patent Company during rehearsals. Lincoln’s Inn Fields accepted the script when Manley offered it to them and produced the play that May for a respectable run of six performances with Elizabeth Barry scoring a considerable success as Manley’s high-strung villainess, Homais.\(^7\) *The Royal Mischief* was then published in June 1696 with commendatory verses by Pix and Trotter;\(^7\) thus, the three women had supported each other in print and incidentally made themselves targets for satire.

The combination of the actors’ experience in Manley’s *The Lost Lover* and their participation in the rehearsal fiasco over *The Royal Mischief* probably provided the Drury Lane company with plenty of motivation and material for a parody of Manley’s play and her rehearsal conduct. Based on the structure of *The Rehearsal* with some songs and dances added for variety’s sake, the play presents a ‘female wit’ taking a number of spectators to a disastrous run-through of her preposterous tragedy-turned-opera. *The Female Wits* ran

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\(^7\) *The Female Wits* 1-67.
\(^7\) Duff 230-231.
\(^7\) Hook, introd., *The Female Wits* iv-v.
successfully for six nights and would have run longer, so the preface to the anonymously published edition of 1704 hints, “had the Company thought fit to oblige the Taste of the Town in General, rather than that of some particular Persons.” Lamentably, the preface provides no information about who the “particular Persons” were or why they apparently pressured Drury Lane to end the run of The Female Wits. Since Congreve’s two great hits of that era, Love for Love (1695) and The Mourning Bride (1698), had initial runs of thirteen days which were considered exceptional, the fact that The Female Wits could have run longer than six days and was still worth the risk of printing eight years later proves that the production was a profitable component of the 1696 Drury Lane season.

Several details of the competition between the two theatres shed further light on the implications of The Female Wits for the women’s careers. Though the play is undeniably a vicious attack on the idea that women could write plays, The Female Wits was also part of a pattern of parody and satire that Drury Lane adopted in an attempt to compete with the more experienced performers at Lincoln’s Inn Fields. At the outset of the competition, the actors at the New Theatre, as Lincoln’s Inn Fields was also known, were undeniably superior as performers of the established repertory. Rich’s company was best furnished with farce performers like Haines, Pinkethman, and newcomer Colley Cibber, but inadequately staffed where tragedians were concerned; head-to-head competition with the formidable Lincoln’s Inn Fields company would have been a disaster at the box-office.

Instead, Rich and his “commanding Officer” Powell, who handled much of the play selection and rehearsal supervision, periodically presented plays in which the mannerisms

74 “Preface,” The Female Wits n. pag.
77 Cibber 113.
of the senior actors at the New Theatre were deliberately mimicked in an attempt to
discredit the Rebels and bring audiences to Drury Lane. In the spring of 1695, as Cibber
relates, Drury Lane announced that Hamlet with Powell in the title role would be performed
the night before Lincoln’s Inn Fields planned to offer the same play; the New Theatre
retaliated by rescheduling Betterton’s Hamlet to appear the same day as the Patent
Company’s version. Rather than face unflattering comparisons and an empty house, Powell
chose instead to appear at Drury Lane in Betterton’s role of Heartwell in Congreve’s The Old
Batchelor, where, to a good-sized house and considerable applause, he mimicked the older
actor’s deep voice and distinctive walk.\textsuperscript{78} Vanbrugh’s Aesop Part Two staged at Drury Lane in
March 1697 also features burlesque humor at the expense of the Lincoln’s Inn Fields company.\textsuperscript{79}
The Female Wits itself contains mimicry of Barry by Francis Maria Knight who is instructed
by Marsilia to “Stamp like Queen Statira does, that always gets a Clap”. Betterton is the
target for diminutive comedian ‘Pinky’ Pinkethman who is told to “Fetch long Strides; walk
thus; your Arms strutting, your voice big, and your Eyes terrible.” Bracegirdle’s skill as
pathetic heroine is mocked when Marsilia gives Letitia Cross minute instructions about the
“Art in crying.”\textsuperscript{80} The role of Marsilia as performed by Susanna Verbruggen, a skillful actress
and mimic who had recently left the Rebel Company, was also a parody of Manley’s personal
mannerisms.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{78} Cibber 114-115.
\textsuperscript{79} Milhous, Thomas Betterton 90; Van Lennep, The London Stage, vol. 1, 475.
\textsuperscript{80} Hook, introd., The Female Wits ix.
\textsuperscript{81} Philip H. Highfill, Jr., Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhans, ed. A
Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and Other
Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800, vol. 15 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP,
1973-1993) 138-139. All subsequent references to this work will be listed as: Highfill, BD.
Viewed in this context, *The Female Wits* becomes more than an expression of personal dislike for women playwrights; the satire was also a part of the Patent Company’s strategy in its attempt to compete with Lincoln’s Inn Fields. As Powell spoke in a 1695 prologue:

Between us and the other Theatre  
There is proclaim’d, and still maintain’d a War,  
And all, but knocking out of Brains, is fair.  

*The Female Wits* took full advantage of the Patent Company’s talents for broad humor and mimicry and fit nicely into Rich’s policy of heckling the better house by making foibles of their mannerisms. The play’s final image, which Powell relates to the laughing Drury Lane company, presents a bedraggled Marsilia setting off with her foolish entourage to present her play at Lincoln’s Inn Fields. The excerpts from Marsilia’s play have already proven what a horrendous writer she is; that the Lincoln’s Inn Fields company would be willing to stage such nonsense and condone such absurd behavior makes them appear as ridiculous as Marsilia. Thus, the Drury Lane players’ pique at Manley over *The Royal Mischief* found expression in *The Female Wits* as part of the Patent Company’s attempt to attract an audience by ridiculing their more talented rivals.

The Patent Company’s choice to alienate three new playwrights so early in the competition seems rash. Rich’s company, however, had begun to stage works by Vanbrugh and Cibber, and George Powell had shown some skill as a playwright. As a result, perhaps they felt that the services of Trotter and Pix, who had sided with Manley in print anyway, were well lost in striking a satiric blow that assailed the New Theatre’s dignity while attempting to discredit the women as writers along the way.

*The Female Wits* was also a logical choice for the fall of 1696 repertory at Drury Lane because the theatre was operating at a loss and Christopher Rich by late 1695 or early 1696.

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82 A Comparison xi.  
83 *The Female Wits* 66.
was trying to reduce the red ink by not paying full salaries to his actors. As Hume notes, the actors' practice of supplementing their incomes with benefit performances had just begun at Drury Lane around 1696. Prior to the establishment of the actor benefit, one of the strategies the actors employed to augment their incomes was to bring a play to the stage in order to collect the third night's receipts, again minus operating costs, which were usually paid to the playwright.  

A Comparison bluntly says that "The Players have all got the itching Leprosic of Scribling..." Of course, actors have often written for the theatre, but the short pay of 1696, as well as the Drury Lane company's scramble to find material outside the existing repertory in order to compete with their rivals, brought a bumper crop of six plays by actors (not counting The Female Wits) to the Patent Company stage that season.

This tactic for making money took several forms. Some actors would sponsor the production of a play by an unknown writer, perhaps even supervise rehearsals, and receive the playwright's share of the money in exchange for getting exposure for a new writer's work. Others would either plagiarize rejected or little known scripts or revise popular works from pre-Restoration writers. In The Female Wits, Marsilia trumpets her plans to revise Ben Jonson's Catiline by throwing out all but the first line. Of course, some actors like Cibber, whose Love's Last Shift was a box office success that year, actually wrote credible plays; George Powell took particular advantage of this opportunity to augment his earnings.

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86 Hume, "Actor Benefit" 105.
87 Hume, "Actor Benefit" 104.
88 The Female Wits 9.
by receiving the third night's proceeds for a new play each of the four years that he was
involved in Drury Lane management.89

The specific details of the payment of the author's share for The Female Wits are
unknown. The forced closing of the play's initial run as well as the script's biting satire
evidently caused the author(s) to remain anonymous in hopes of avoiding retaliation of any
kind. Those responsible for writing the show, however, must certainly have made
arrangements to collect their share of the proceeds. The Female Wits, then, appears to be a
seventh example during 1696 of the actors' attempts to replace the salaries that Rich, ever
ready to claim he was losing money, was withholding.

Existing evidence suggests that The Female Wits was composed within the Drury
Lane company, probably by Jo Haines. Lucyle Hook suggests that the initials W. M. from the
play's title page refer to a certain William Mann, a friend of the comedian's who could have
had access to Haines's papers after the actor's death in 1701. At the end of his long, colorful
career as actor, satirist, and sometime mountebank, Haines was still active writing prologues
and epilogues in 1696; his 1692 play The Fatal Mistake: Or, the Plot Spoil'd was also
reprinted that year.90 As Knowlittle in the cast of The Lost Lover, Haines would have
acquired valuable personal knowledge of Manley's foibles in order to satirize her; Haines had
also acted the role of Bayes in The Rehearsal, Buckingham's satire of heroic drama from
which The Female Wits borrows its structure. The specific details about Manley's behavior
in rehearsal, references to the personal habits of the Drury Lane company, such as Powell's
morning drinking and Mrs. Lucas's love of coffee, the use of the actors' real names in the play,
and the casual insertion of songs and dances being worked on by the company members suggest a

89 Hume, "Actor Benefit" 103.
90 Hook, introd., The Female Wits xi-xiii.
collaboration among company insiders.\textsuperscript{91} Haines had also introduced actor Cardell Goodman to the Duchess of Cleveland.\textsuperscript{92} As already noted, after the duchess became Goodman's mistress, her suspicions of Manley's intentions towards the actor led her to dismiss Manley from her household; perhaps with \textit{The Female Wits} Haines was also settling an old score for his friend Goodman.

\textit{The Female Wits} was also detrimental to Manley's theatrical future, because William Pinkethman, who portrayed Pulse in \textit{The Lost Lover} and Amorous in \textit{The Female Wits}, would later have a significant second career as an impresario of fair booth entertainments as well as producer of several summer theatre ventures outside London after 1710. When Pinkethman chose plays for Greenwich and Richmond, he opted for Centlivre's \textit{The Busy Body} and \textit{The Gamester};\textsuperscript{93} his association with Manley in the events which led to \textit{The Female Wits} would scarcely have caused him to remember her works as stageworthy. On a similar note, Colley Cibber, who acted the foolish old merchant Smyrna in \textit{The Lost Lover} and Mr. Praiseall in \textit{The Female Wits}, would be increasingly responsible for Drury Lane play selection after 1700 and become co-manager of the company in 1710. The failure of \textit{The Lost Lover}, the withdrawal of \textit{The Royal Mischief}, and the Patent Company send-up of the whole mess in \textit{The Female Wits}, must also have left a negative impression of Manley with Cibber. Later in her career, when she sought to return to playwriting, Manley would find Cibber unreceptive.\textsuperscript{94}

On the surface, all the results of the staging of \textit{The Female Wits} seem negative for women playwrights. As her preface to \textit{The Lost Lover} had already proclaimed Manley's

\textsuperscript{91} Hook, introd., \textit{The Female Wits} xi-xiv.
\textsuperscript{92} Highfill, \textit{BD}, vol. 7, 14.
\textsuperscript{93} Highfill, \textit{BD}, vol. 12, 320-331.
decision not to earn a living writing plays, the satiric hits she received from The Female Wits must have increased her resolve to earn her money elsewhere. Though the satire was less savage towards Trotter and Pix, they too must have felt unwelcome at Drury Lane. In the opening scene of Act II, Calista and Wellfed, the play’s alter-egos for Trotter and Pix, badger George Powell for promises to see their plays acted. When Powell sees them he cries: “Ounds! What am I fell into the Hands of two Female Poets? There’s nothing under the Sun, but two Bailiffs, I’d have gone so far to have avoided.” Not surprisingly, Trotter’s next play, Fatal Friendship, was acted at Lincoln’s Inn Fields in the spring of 1698.

Milhous notes that Pix’s Ibrahim, which featured a glamorous Ottoman setting, was staged at Drury Lane a month after The Royal Mischief, perhaps to compete with the success that Manley’s use of exotic locales had at Lincoln’s Inn Fields. In fact, as late as August 1696, a scant month before The Female Wits, Pix’s relationship with Rich’s company was still sufficiently positive for them to premiere her The Spanish Wives at Dorset Garden. The Female Wits, however, contains a sequence which, even with allowance for satiric exaggeration, shows that the Patent Company did not treat Pix as a valuable or promising playwright. At the end of Act I, the overweight, morning-drinking Wellfed, portrayed by Mrs. Powell, tries to interest Cross, Knight, Pinkethman, and Johnson in acting in her next play. Pinkethman comments laconically that Wellfed is “going her Rounds”; all the players quickly exit, and Wellfed is left to rationalize her way out of the snub by quoting some of her lame verses for her own satisfaction. Faced with such disregard, Pix submitted her next

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95 Morgan, A Woman of No Character 75.
96 The Female Wits 21.
98 Milhous, Thomas Betterton 90.
100 The Female Wits 19-20.
play to Lincoln's Inn Fields where *The Innocent Mistress* was staged in late June 1697. The following September, Pix discovered that large portions of her *The Deceiver Deceived*, previously rejected by Drury Lane, had been incorporated without her consent into George Powell's *Imposture Defeated* at the Patent house. Though Powell denied Pix's charges of plagiarism, he was probably trying to earn himself another third night's receipts in the same unscrupulous manner that allowed him to combine parts of two pre-Restoration plays by Richard Brome and one by James Shirley to form his *A Very Good Wife* in 1693.

*The Female Wits*, therefore, was the centerpiece in a series of incidents that marred the women's relationships with Drury Lane. Between March 1696 and November 1697, Manley, Trotter, and Pix had been embroiled in three different controversies with the Patent Company: the flap over rehearsals for *The Royal Mischief*, their satiric portrait in *The Female Wits*, and the plagiarism of *The Deceiver Deceived*. By November 1697, each of the three women was on an adversarial footing with George Powell, the man chiefly responsible for Drury Lane play selection; until the conclusion of Powell's tenure, the Patent House accepted no more of the three women's plays. Unfortunately then, only two years after the hopeful reopening of theatrical competition, the three Female Wits found themselves, once again, with only one London theatre where they could hope for their scripts to be considered for production, Lincoln's Inn Fields.

The negative portrayal of Pix, Trotter, and Manley at Drury Lane in *The Female Wits* enhanced their careers in the short run by making them outcasts from the one house and therefore desirable to the other. As Milhous notes, perhaps feeling that to fight parody with parody would be beneath their dignity and give too much attention to their adversaries, the

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101 Van Lennep, *The London Stage*, vol. 1, 481.
103 Danchin, *Prologues and epilogues*, vol. 6, 441.
Lincoln’s Inn Fields troupe had not burlesqued their Drury Lane rivals. Consequently, the opportunity to embarrass the Patent theatre by snapping up scripts by writers mistreated there must have been attractive to them. Certainly Lincoln’s Inn Fields quickly produced The Royal Mischief (late April/early May 1696) approximately one month after Manley withdrew the play from Drury Lane. The Patent Company premiere of Powell’s Imposture Defeated (September 1697) was followed in ten weeks or so by Pix’s The Deceiver Deceived (late November 1697) at the New Theatre. As The Royal Mischief contains the kind of villainess and innocent heroine roles in which Elizabeth Barry and Anne Bracegirdle specialized, switching companies had an extra advantage for Manley’s play.

More important for the women was the leading role Barry took in Lincoln’s Inn Fields repertory selection. In particular, Barry befriended Pix who was never obliged to submit another script to Drury Lane. William Congreve, the New Theatre’s leading playwright in those years, corresponded with Trotter and later offered her literary advice. In a sense, when they left the Patent Company because of The Female Wits and its aftermath, Pix, Trotter, and Manley found themselves valuable to a whole new group of associates. When they began to have their works staged at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, the women exchanged the unpromising conditions of Drury Lane for the collaboration and encouragement of some of the leading artists of their day.

Though The Female Wits is a sweeping indictment of the idea that women could write for the theatre, details concerning the context of the play’s production provide useful

105 Milhous, Thomas Betterton 91.
107 Milhous, Thomas Betterton 98.
information about the London theatre situation when Pix, Manley, and Trotter began their careers. The furor surrounding *The Royal Mischief*, the Drury Lane policy of parodying Lincoln's Inn Fields, and the actors' attempts to write plays to make up for partially paid salaries all combined to make *The Female Wits* an ideal choice for Drury Lane in the fall of 1696. The summer vacation after the spring premiere of *The Royal Mischief* provided time for Haines and his compatriots to plan their retaliation; they were even able to take advantage of the escape machinery used that season for Powell's *Brutus of Alba* to create a sight gag for Marsilia's 'play' in which Pinkethman and Cross take a trip to the moon in a sun-powered chariot. The deterioration of relations between the three Female Wits and the Drury Lane company also indicates the rapidly changing theatrical climate at the end of the seventeenth century. The reopening of theatrical competition in 1695 provided two theatres where new writers could potentially have their work staged, but within two years Pix, Trotter, and Manley could only hope for consideration at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Initially, this state of affairs worked in their favor by making their plays desirable to the more accomplished and receptive New Theatre company.

In the long run, however, Pix, Manley, and Trotter's estrangement from Drury Lane after the fall of 1697 could only hurt their careers. During the next four seasons as the Drury Lane company matured while the Lincoln's Inn Fields players began to stagnate, the three playwrights all missed the opportunity to work with players like Cibber, Wilks, Oldfield, and Norris who would become the most influential actors of the years from 1710 to the 1730s. When Trotter returned to Drury Lane in 1700 after Powell's departure, she still must have been associated in the actors' minds with the satiric portrait of her as Calista in *The Female Wits*.

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109 Hook, introd., *The Female Wits* ix, 57.
When seen in comparison to the career of Centlivre, the extent to which their limitation to one theatre damaged Pix, Trotter, and Manley's careers is obvious. After the satire's production in 1696, the three Female Wits were stigmatized as ridiculous female poets; on the other hand, Centlivre was not forced to make a choice between the two companies at the beginning of her career. Instead, Centlivre was able to have plays produced by both troupes as her skills at playwriting and dealing with theatrical personnel developed. Perhaps the knowledge that both companies were interested in producing her works made her plays more sought after commodities. In any case, later in her career when Centlivre faced strained relations with the actors similar to Manley's difficulties during the rehearsals of her *The Royal Mischief*, she had the resources and stature to overcome adversity and prolong her career into the second decade of the eighteenth century.
CHAPTER III
PIX, MANLEY, AND TROTTER MOVE TO LINCOLN’S INN FIELDS

Having discussed how Pix, Trotter, and Manley became playwrights and the significance of The Female Wits to their careers and to the rivalry between Drury Lane and Lincoln’s Inn Fields, we can now move on to a consideration of the first crucial stage of the competition. Initially, Lincoln’s Inn Fields held the dominant advantages of popular support and skilled performers in the established repertory. Armed with their new license to perform, acquired during the mourning period after the death of Queen Mary, the New Theatre collective seemed likely to shortly vanquish their rivals; when Lincoln’s Inn Fields opened the abbreviated spring season of 1695 with the successful premiere of Congreve’s Love for Love, which ran for an extraordinary thirteen nights, a Rebel Company victory must have looked inevitable. Unfortunately, a number of weaknesses lay hidden behind the sparkling façade of Congreve’s prose so aptly delivered by the best actors in England.

From the outset, the Rebel Company was hampered by their smallish, converted tennis court theatre (nicknamed “Betterton’s Booth”) and by their lack of access to the United

Company stock scenery and props which were controlled by Rich. The diffuse management structure at Lincoln's Inn Fields was a more serious problem. Designed to safeguard against interlopers like Christopher Rich, company ownership was split initially among eight sharing actors: Thomas Betterton, Cave Underhill, Edward Kynaston, John Verbruggen, George Bright, Elizabeth Barry, Elinor Leigh, and John Boman (Betterton received an extra one-half share for rehearsal supervision). The use of outside investment capital, Rich's entree into the United Company, was prohibited, a decision which also deprived the actors of a much needed mechanism to raise funds for the construction of a new theatre. Most critical, the division of the power to make company policy among so many individuals made the decisive managerial actions necessary to prevail in a prolonged, heated competition extremely unlikely. Furthermore, the Rebel Company seems to have expected to win a short struggle with their inexperienced rivals and quickly return to a London with only one theatre company. Perhaps they were lulled into complacency by the overwhelming success of Love for Love as well as the seemingly hopeless condition of Rich's remnant of a company at Drury Lane.

By contrast, Rich was angry enough at the Rebels and certain enough of the legal value of his Patents to dig his heels in for a long struggle. He was even willing and financially able to operate at a loss while his young actors gained experience and worked up a repertory of old and new plays. In addition to all the former United Company stock scenery, Rich controlled the well-equipped Dorset Garden Theatre, most suited for spectacular scenic effects, and Drury Lane, which had proven to be the best house for spoken drama. Rich lacked the expertise to use both buildings to their full advantage in subduing the rebels, but he did realize the importance of a centralized managerial structure. Consequently, Rich held overall control of the company while delegating much of the day-to-day decision making to

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4 Milhous, Thomas Betterton 247.
George Powell. At the very least, the Patent Company would have the advantages of orderly operation, ready-made scenery, better playhouses, and Rich's deep purse as it scrambled to survive.

During the first three years of renewed competition, the Rebel Company relied chiefly on their superiority in the existing repertory. Perhaps recalling how the Duke's Company had gained the upper hand over the King's Company during the 1660s, the Rebels also sought new plays, though not as feverishly as their Drury Lane rivals. The decision to emphasize new works, despite the many fine plays in which they could already show themselves to advantage, seems forward looking; however, this is actually an instance in which the New Theatre company shows its age. Since Elizabeth Barry, probably with the advice of Betterton, seems to have had the major voice in play selection, many of the new offerings at Lincoln's Inn Fields hark back to the hard-style comedies with their unreformed rakes, and the blood and horror tragedies (sans the rhyming verse) of the 1670s when Barry and Betterton reached their creative maturity. Consequently, the Rebels were slow to realize that many of their new offerings were not to the taste of their current audiences. These errors were masked in part because hard-style comedies from the 1670s like The Country Wife retained their popularity long after the audiences of the late 1690s had expressed a preference in new plays for works like Cibber's Love's Last Shift (1696) where the rascals reformed in Act Five. In tragedy, Elizabeth Barry and Anne Bracegirdle were so well-suited to plays which called for a strong woman/pathetic heroine combination that Lincoln's Inn Fields was inclined to accept tragedies written for the two women even though most new tragedies were not succeeding. Pix, Manley, and Trotter all benefited from this artificial

5 Milhous, Thomas Betterton 69.
6 Milhous, Thomas Betterton 83.
sustenance of a time-worn genre based on the skills of the performers rather than the audience appeal of the plays. New Lincoln’s Inn Fields tragedies were rarely revived, however, and, when Barry and Bracegirdle retired, their successors looked elsewhere for acting roles.

Because the Rebels felt secure in their performing talents and stock plays and had no desire to decrease their profits by increasing the number of actor/shareholders, they gave scant attention to recruiting new company members. As the new century approached, Edward Kynaston, a first-rank player since the 1660s, probably should have retired. Instead, as Cibber relates, he “staid too long upon the Stage, till his Memory and Spirit began to fail him.” More ominously, after long-time comedy stalwart Cave Underhill’s attack of heavy bleeding disrupted the premiere of The City Lady in 1696, the Rebel Company waited four months for Underhill’s recovery before attempting a new comedy. There were plenty of old comedies available; besides, Rich and his company, which A Comparison refers to as “Learners, Boys and Girls, a very unequal match for them who revolted”, seemed likely to go under.

At Drury Lane, Rich and Powell opposed the Rebels’ lofty tactics with a theatrical grab bag of whatever offerings might sell tickets. Following Powell’s lead, irreverent company members like Jo Haines, William Pinkethman, and, during his brief tenure at Drury Lane, Thomas Dogget showed a distinct preference for comedy over “the costly Trains and Plumes of Tragedy.” They were also well aware of their rival’s scheduling; if Lincoln’s Inn Fields announced Hamlet for Tuesday, Drury Lane would offer the play on Monday. When the Rebels rescheduled Hamlet for Monday, Drury Lane opted for the New Theatre’s original

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9 Milhous, Thomas Betterton 104.
11 Cibber, Apology 127.
Tuesday choice, The Old Batchelour. Of course, they also staged plays by new writers, including the first efforts of Pix, Trotter, and Manley.

The Female Wits' Brief Stay At Drury Lane

Though marred by the incidents that caused the removal of The Royal Mischief from Drury Lane, the period between the production of Agnes de Castro (Dec. 1695) and the appearance of The Female Wits (approx. Sept. 1696) represents a short theatrical honeymoon for Pix, Manley, and Trotter. Sensing that they were continuing the tradition of Philips and Behn (sometimes referred to by the pen names 'Orinda' and 'Astrea'), they prefaced each other's plays with commendatory verses. Manley contributed a poem to the published edition of Agnes de Castro which enthusiastically credits Trotter with inspiring Manley's playwriting career:

Thus Conqu'r, with your Wit, as with your Eyes.
Fired by the bold Example, I would try
To turn our Sexes weaker Destiny.13

Trotter congratulated Manley for surpassing male writers with her The Royal Mischief:

For us you've vanquisht, though the toyl was yours,
You were our Champion, and the Glory ours.
Well you've maintain'd our equal right in Fame,
To which vain Man had quite engrost the claim: . . .14

Pix also contributed verses to The Royal Mischief which tout Manley as a fitting successor in a noble tradition:

You snatch Lawrels with undisputed right,
And Conquer when you but begin to fight;
Your infant strokes have such Herculean force,

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12 Cibber, Apology 113-114.
Your self must strive to keep the rapid course;
Like Sappho Charming, like Afra Eloquent,
Like Chast Orinda, sweetly Innocent.\(^{15}\)

Trotter's hopeful dedication to Agnes de Castro (adapted from the Behn novel of the same title) promises to amend the dramaturgical weaknesses of youth and inexperience from her first play with a second which has "a better Title to the Favour of the Town."\(^{16}\) Most significant, Pix must have been elated to see both her Ibrahim, The Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks (late May 1696) and The Spanish Wives, despite its late August 1696 premiere, enter the Drury Lane repertory.

While Trotter and Pix were making headway in their new profession, Manley was discovering that success for The Lost Lover would lie beyond the mere decision of Sir Thomas Skipwith, Rich's usually silent partner, to back her play for production. As the Patent Company scrambled to rush new plays into the competition, Manley was not asked to revise her play to make it more stageworthy. Instead, as her preface relates, nearly half her work was summarily cut and the piece was acted only one night in March 1696 with dismal results.\(^{17}\) The play's flaws are readily apparent in the printed version which appeared while The Royal Mischief was still in rehearsal at Drury Lane. The two plot lines which lead the young lovers, Wildman and Willmore, to the attainment of their hearts' desires, Olivia and Marina, are tenuously connected at best. The low comedy characters, Dr. Pulse and the fortune teller Knowlittle, are not introduced until the second half of the play and given very scant development indeed.\(^{18}\) In Act Five, giddy Lady Younglove, after four acts of foolish pursuit of Willmore, suddenly develops wisdom and consents to his marriage to her daughter, Marina.

\(^{15}\) Mary Pix, "To Mrs. Manley, upon her Tragedy call'd The Royal Mischief. " Royal Mischief n. pag.
\(^{16}\) Trotter, "Dedication," Agnes de Castro n. pag.
\(^{17}\) Mary de la Riviere Manley, "Preface," The Lost Lover: or, The Jealous Husband (London, 1696) n. pag.
\(^{18}\) Manley, The Lost Lover 17-20, 31-33.
Meanwhile, Wildman and Willmore, after four acts of intrigue and mischief suddenly declare themselves in favor of matrimonial fidelity.

No doubt, Manley was trying to write for an audience which had begun to prefer that the immoral failings of comic characters be remedied by their fifth act reclamation. Manley's comments in the preface, however, about the play having been written two years prior to production and substantially cut for performance lead to the conclusion that The Lost Lover was submitted to the Patent Company in an over-long, unstageable condition; the players seem to have chopped the script to a performable length, let Manley's work take its chances with their audience, and gotten on to the next new play. In fairness to the players, the cast was as strong as Drury Lane could assemble at that time. Though they became first-rate performers later on, Colley Cibber, Jane Rogers, Benjamin Johnson, and William Pinkethman were still developing actors at this point; however, George Powell, Francis Maria Knight, Jo Haines, and Susanna Verbruggen were all proven comic performers. Additionally, the cast included roughly energetic John Verbruggen in his brief stay at the Patent House and rising young leading man, Hildebrand Horden, whose promising career would shortly end with his murder in a Rose Tavern brawl.

Following the one-night run of The Lost Lover, a bare four months after her hopeful dedication to Agnes de Castro quoted above which also contains the lines, "O! How I long in the Poetick Race,/To Loose the Reins, and give their Glory chase," Manley's preface to The Lost Lover declares that "I am now convinc'd Writing for the Stage is no way proper for a Woman, to whom all advantages but meer Nature, are refused." Perhaps hiding her hopes for the success of her second play, Manley also notes that her tragedy The Royal Mischief will

19 Manley, "Preface," The Lost Lover n. pag.
soon be acted, but only because the play is already in rehearsal. After disqualifying herself as a playwright, however, Manley goes on to conclude her preface with: "After all, I think my Treatment much severer than I deserved; I am satisfied the bare Name of being a Woman’s Play damn’d it beyond its own want of Merit." This about-face from self-effacement to defiance is indicative of a basic ambivalence that the women playwrights show towards their profession. While anxious to bring her next work to the stage, Trotter declares in her dedication to the anonymously published *Agnes de Castro* that she "Conceals her Name, to shun that of Poetress." The prologue to Pix’s *Queen Catharine* speaks disparagingly of the inadequacy of the female writer’s “enervate voice” to depict the male heroes of the War of the Roses.

In *The Lost Lover*, Manley actually puts her uncertainty about playwriting as a profession onto the stage. The character of Orinda is an example of one of the recurring comic types of the era, the ridiculous female poet. Between pinches of snuff and vows not to return to the theatre for a year because she saw a bad play, Orinda passes out copies of her own poor verses and evinces a desire to travel to the country to commune with her muse. When the young man she pursues proves indifferent, she blurts out one of her inane couplets and runs off in distraction. That a young female playwright should make a woman poet a figure of ridicule in her first play is unusual; what makes Manley’s use of the character more curious is the fact that, as Manley was aware, ‘Orinda’ was the pen name of Katherine Philips, the first woman dramatist to have a play staged after the Restoration. Perhaps Manley was merely taking a satirical hit at Philips’s chaste reputation and reluctance to publish her works, but more likely the Orinda character in *The Lost Lover* is an index of Manley’s own

21 Manley, “Preface,” *The Lost Lover* n. pag.
complicated feelings towards the theatre. These attitudes allow her to simultaneously renounce playwriting, recognize that societal preconceptions against women and her own educational disadvantages prejudiced her play’s reception, and still hold some barely disguised hopes of success for *The Royal Mischief*. Though *The Female Wits* contributed to a prolonged hiatus in Manley’s theatrical writing, she seems to have seriously contemplated ending her playwriting career well before the satire was staged.

**Ibrahim Enters The Repertory**

Before proceeding to consideration of the plays of Pix and Trotter after *The Female Wits*, a comparative discussion of the success enjoyed by the three tragedies produced by Trotter, Manley, and Pix in 1695 and 1696 will shed some light on the further progress of their careers. The initial reception of Trotter’s *Agnes de Castro* (December 1695) is unknown, and no further revivals are listed; presumably the play yielded one and possibly two benefits for Trotter but did not enter the Drury Lane repertory. Manley’s *The Royal Mischief* (late April 1696) was acted six times, probably providing two author’s benefits, but no record exists of the play’s subsequent revival. Though the initial reception of Pix’s *Ibrahim, The Thirteenth Emperor of the Turks* is unknown, the play subsequently entered the Patent Company repertory; revivals are listed in October 1702 (a benefit for the boxkeepers) and in January and February 1704.\(^{25}\)

To rank these tragedies in one-two-three order in terms of how successful they were would be difficult and imprecise considering the obvious gaps in the performance records of the period. Manley’s *The Royal Mischief* seems to have succeeded slightly more than Trotter’s *Agnes de Castro*. Trotter’s play probably had fewer initial performances which resulted in less financial return for both the theatre and the author than *The Royal Mischief*.

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Manley's play had the benefit of any gossip-based publicity that might have accrued from its removal from the Patent Company. Indeed, had The Royal Mischief not led to the appearance of The Female Wits, the production could have been considered a modest success for Manley. Another small point in Trotter's favor was that her Fatal Friendship was welcomed for production at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1698, while Manley's next play would not appear until 1706. While details are missing from the initial run of Pix's Ibrahim, her first script reached the coveted status of "living play" in the Drury Lane repertory, an achievement that Manley and Trotter would never enjoy.

Why Ibrahim? Why not Agnes de Castro or The Royal Mischief? Could Pix's play have benefited from superior performances? This might have been the case, but an inferior production of Trotter's play is less likely because both Agnes de Castro and Ibrahim were performed at Drury Lane. In fact, since post-Restoration actors customarily established themselves in certain types of characters, many of the same actors played the same sorts of roles in both plays. For instance, Francis Maria Knight acted the scheming sister, Elvira, in Agnes and the wicked mistress, Sheker Para, in Ibrahim. John Verbruggen played both the evil brother Alvaro in Agnes and the depraved title character in Ibrahim, while Jane Rogers portrayed Trotter's wronged Agnes and the ruined Morena in Pix's play. George Powell was cast in both scripts as the noble Prince character who must confront the death of his beloved. Since the two plays were staged with such similar personnel, superior casting is unlikely to be the reason for Ibrahim's success. If anything, the Rebel Company's superiority in tragedy would seem to make The Royal Mischief a more likely repertory choice. Even the usually disapproving author of A Comparison grants that Betterton and Barry "are indeed excellent, and what is stranger, never to be worn out;" yet Manley's play was not revived. One other point about the casting for Agnes de Castro should be made. Young Colley Cibber, soon to

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27 A Comparison 106.
discover that his best line as an actor was in malicious fop characters, was substantially miscast in Trotter’s play as the Enobarbus-like Lorenzo. As was the case with his role in Manley’s The Lost Lover, Cibber’s memories of acting the stalwart soldier who tries to save Agnes’s life could conceivably have made him look unfavorably on Trotter’s scripts later on when he became a power at Drury Lane.

All three plays also contain lurid helpings of what Hume calls “the late heroic love-and-drivel mode.” Trotter’s Agnes de Castro boasts an evil brother-sister tandem who stab a Princess in the dark, murder her best friend, and die horribly for their crimes, while the grieving Prince remains to carry on in spiritual torment. Trapped in a loveless marriage to an elderly and impotent ruler, Homais, the protagonist of Manley’s The Royal Mischief, pursues the love of Prince Levan (also unhappily married) at all costs. In addition to Homais and Levan, the death toll will eventually include Homais’s former lover Ismael, Levan’s wife Bassima, her admirer Osman, and Homais’s scheming eunuch, Acmat. In Pix’s Ibrahim, the debased Vizier and Sheker Para, the emperor’s evil mistress, have contrived to corrupt the government of the kingdom and the lusts of the emperor. Before the end of Ibrahim’s dreadful reign, the emperor has ravished his nephew’s fiancé. Both the nephew and his fiancé commit suicide; Sheker Para does likewise; the evil Vizier is torn apart by an angry mob, while Ibrahim and the scheming eunuch, Achmet (not to be confused with Acmat above) are done in by the prince’s best friend, Solyman, who dies of wounds sustained during the struggle.

Though a definitive reason why Ibrahim was placed in the Drury Lane repertory is unavailable, a number of other details about the plays and the companies that performed them provide clues to why Pix’s play held the stage for several years while Trotter and Manley’s plays fell immediately by the wayside. Though all three writers were laboring in the heroic sub-genre of tragedy, Trotter’s Agnes de Castro contains elements of stoicism which

mute the play's dramatic action and mar its climax. Though suffering from no such restraint,
The Royal Mischief shows a partiality towards its evil protagonist which made
unsatisfactory viewing for the influential 'Ladies' segment of the New Theatre audience. In
contrast, Pix's Ibrahim pulls out all possible melodramatic stops to provide its audience with
vigorous and detestable villains who receive punishment through suitably gruesome violence
and several virtuous innocents who suffer lamentably before the ultimate triumph of good. As
playwright and critic Charles Gildon noted about Ibrahim in 1698, "the Distress of Morena
never fail'd to bring Tears into the Eyes of the Audience." 29

Trotter's Agnes de Castro illustrates the belief that the preservation of honor and the
commands of duty take precedence over all human desires. To underscore this point, Trotter
traps her three virtuous characters, the Princess, her husband the Prince, and Agnes, in an
impossible love triangle. Agnes and the Princess are best friends; the Prince has fallen in love
with Agnes who loves him in return. All three characters are heartbroken about the
situation, yet they all decide that the path of honor and duty requires them to take no action
whatsoever. The Princess cares too much for Agnes to allow her to depart; the Prince respects
the Princess too much to pursue his passion for Agnes and resigns himself to being "exquisitely
wretched." As a result, Trotter has placed a trio of nearly paralyzed characters at the center
of her play's action.

The Prince, Princess, and Agnes become sitting ducks for the machinations of Elvira,
who hates the Prince for spurning her, and Alvaro, who hates Agnes for spurning him. The
two villains easily entangle the three heroes with a flurry of eavesdropping, note stealing,
letter forging, and misinformation to the king. While making no concrete attempts to remedy
their distresses, the three protagonists continue to suffer nobly but ineffectually. Even after
Alvaro has shown his hand and been spurned by Agnes in a stormy encounter in a dark room,
even after the Princess enters the same chamber and is stabbed by Elvira by mistake, even

29 Van Lennep, The London Stage, vol. 1, 462
after the Princess dies in Agnes's arms telling her that Elvira is evil, Agnes merely faints before she can act on her resolve, which is not to retaliate bravely against Alvaro and Elvira, but to end her own life. In fact, the protagonists take no action until the ghost of the Princess appears to Elvira and sets her "raving like a furious lion" by foretelling that Elvira will cause her own undoing. Unfortunately, the Princess has to be dead before she can take action against the villains.30

By using static, non-dramatic means, Agnes de Castro illustrates the belief that honor and duty are the highest callings on earth. Essentially, the play shows despicable schemers destroying admirable but frozen characters who must remain inactive to sustain the thematic intent. Even after the deaths of Agnes, the Princess, and the villains, the grieving Prince is persuaded not to take his own life. Instead he tamely accepts the argument that the paths of honor and duty require that he should live on to serve his country. The danger in writing such a restrained conclusion was the possibility of an equally restrained audience response. Since the play offers a frustrating choice between inactive victims, ripe for the plucking, and contemptible villains who deserve to die, small wonder that audience interest could not sustain Agnes de Castro as part of the Drury Lane repertory.

Two comments in Manley's preface to The Royal Mischief give insight into why her play was not revived at Lincoln's Inn Fields. First, Manley takes issue with the reaction of the 'Ladies' to the risqué "warmth" of her tragedy,31 particularly the passage where the scenic shutters are drawn moments before the mutual seduction of Homais and Levan.32 Manley ascribes the disapproval of the 'Ladies' to their perception that women should not be allowed to write as openly as men; had a man written the play, Manley claims, no objections

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30 Trotter, Agnes de Castro 1-47.
would have been raised. Though Manley’s reasoning is plausible, the ‘Ladies’ objections, which are not explained at any length, point toward some very controversial ideas at the core of *The Royal Mischief*.

In fact, what Manley has accomplished is the writing of a play which celebrates the strength of all passion, destructive or otherwise. Oppressed by her terrible marriage to the elderly, impotent Prince of Libardian, Homais intrigues for love: first with Ismael, then with Levan. Since both Levan and Homais are married and commit murder among other crimes, they are punished with death. Before they die, however, Homais and Levan are permitted to consummate their affair. Indeed, the entire liaison between Homais and Levan is presented romantically; the two fall in love with each other’s pictures in miniature before they meet. Their first encounter (the scene the ‘Ladies’ condemned) is described as “bliss and more”; as she expires Homais reaches desperately for Levan. Even death seems preferable to loveless marriage. Homais dies flinging “gore” and curses at Libardian, confident of her welcome in hell where “the fiends will hug my royal mischief.”

Manley also glorifies passion in *The Royal Mischief*’s other characters. Trapped likewise in loveless marriages, Bassima (Levan’s wife) and Osman both preserve their virtue and die for their illicit, unconsummated love. Their downfall, however, is presented heroically. Bassima refuses to flee when danger threatens; after Bassima and Osman are arrested, each pleads for the other’s life. Forsaken in spirit, Osman’s wife, Selima, brings about the catastrophe by making her husband’s faithless intentions public, but her passion for Osman is also ferocious. When the terrible sentence that Osman be fired from a cannon is carried out, an Officer delivers the grisly report that Selima was:

Gathering the smoking relics of her lord,  
Which singe her as she grasps them. Now on the

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33 Manley, *The Royal Mischief* 259.  
34 Manley, *The Royal Mischief* 257.
Horrid pile herself had heaped. I left her
Stretched along, bestowing burning kisses
And embraces on every fatal piece.\textsuperscript{35}

At the end of \textit{The Royal Mischief}, the character who remains on stage to turn his
thoughts to heaven is none other than the Prince of Libardian, Homais's inadequate husband.
In Act One, in response to Libardian's order that no visitors be admitted to her, Homais gives
him a potion which causes him to spend almost the entire play in a drugged sleep. After
Libardian wakes up at the end of Act Four, he arrests Homais, but she is so powerfully
persuasive that Libardian actually releases her. At that point, however, Levan's soldiers
assault the castle; Libardian skulks until he can leap out and stab his wife in the arms of her
lover. Therefore, the man who pronounces the benediction on Manley's tragedy has motivated
Homais's villainies in several ways, has never taken any moral action to oppose her, and has
finally murdered her in anger. In short, none of Libardian's behavior is commendable.

In contrast, the play celebrates the romantic passion between Homais and Levan,
Homais's ability to daunt Libardian when in his power, the respectful love between Osman
and Bassima, and even the extravagant grief of Selima. The deaths of Homais, Levan,
Osman, and Bassima do not cleanse the kingdom; rather the kingdom is returned to the control
of the man whose unwise marriage set the tragic events in motion. Yes, the characters that
transgress the bonds of marriage are punished, but no virtue is recommended as the proper
path to follow. The blame for all the carnage is assigned, not to the adulterers themselves,
but to their misalliances. From a modern standpoint, Manley's inquiry into the nature of
overriding passion and her refusal to condemn Homais may be dramatically interesting, but
the ascription by the 'Ladies' of impropriety shows how easy the play was to damn. In an
era when both theatres were struggling in a moral climate ripe for Collier's \textit{Short View},

\textsuperscript{35} Manley, \textit{The Royal Mischief} 260.
audience disapproval widespread enough for Manley to attempt to counter it in her preface was probably sufficient reason not to include the play in the repertory.

The second comment from The Royal Mischief preface which helps explain why the play had no further performances is Manley’s suggestion that the ‘Ladies,’ once satisfied of her play’s propriety, enjoy the performance of

Mrs. Barry, who by all that saw her, is concluded to have exceeded that perfection which before she was justly thought to have arrived at; my Obligations to her were the greater, since against her own approbation, she excell’d and made the part of an ill Woman, not only entertaining, but admirable.**

In addition to showing Manley’s respect for Elizabeth Barry’s performance and her approval that Homais appeared “admirable” on-stage, Manley’s admission that Barry was reluctant to undertake the part shows that the woman chiefly responsible for Lincoln’s Inn Fields play selection had reservations about the role from a moral standpoint. Perhaps the chief reason the New Theatre staged The Royal Mischief was to embarrass their rivals because Manley withdrew the play from Drury Lane. Though the passage quoted above shows Manley’s hope that patrons could enjoy Barry’s Homais at a later date, the objections of the ‘Ladies’ to the “warmth” of the piece may have confirmed Barry’s initial reluctance to act Manley’s protagonist and caused her to opt against further performances.

Like Manley, Pix also makes two comments in her prefatory material to the published version of Ibrahim which lend themselves to a discussion of why the play entered the Drury Lane repertory. While Trotter is concerned with the high cost of placing honor and duty above emotional needs and Manley (nearly Trotter’s opposite) shows the dreadful consequences of true passion pitted against the prior claims of hollow matrimony, Pix’s intentions are modest. In the preface, she refers to Ibrahim as “a thing only design’d for [the

** Manley, “Preface,” The Royal Mischief n. pag.
Unfortunately for the general state of tragedy circa 1700, Pix’s comment probably holds the key to Ibrahim’s success. With no thematic ax to grind, Pix is able to devote her playwriting energies to less exalted tasks. Where Trotter and Manley fail, Pix succeeds in depicting the triumph of identifiably good characters over blatantly evil villains with no larger moral questions asked. Pix also admits in her dedication that “the reading may prove tiresome as a dull repeated tale.” This unassuming comment also proves that, even at an early stage of her career, Pix was well aware of the proper medium for her work: the live theatre. In fact, of the three women, Pix is the playwright who repeatedly arrives at the most theatrical, stageworthy means to tell her story.

From the first scene of Ibrahim, Pix clearly shows that the Mufti (head priest), Mustapha (an elderly soldier), Amurat (the Mufti’s son/Ibrahim’s nephew), his friend Solyman, and Morena (Mustapha’s daughter, betrothed to Amurat) represent the forces of responsible government and faithful matrimony. Likewise, we quickly understand that the concubine Sheker Para, the duplicitous eunuch Achmet, and the unprincipled Vizier Azema are all depraved creatures of the decadent Sultan Ibrahim. Those details settled, Pix can immediately set about ‘diverting’ the audience with another variation on the spurned-love-turns-to-vengeful-hate plot line. With designs on “the God-like Amurat,” Sheker Para sends Ibrahim off to dally with another member of his harem. When Amurat refuses her point blank, Sheker Para schemes to sacrifice Morena to Ibrahim’s lust and ruin Amurat, the Mufti, and Mustapha should they protest. Before the forces of good can martial themselves for the overthrow of Ibrahim and Sheker Para, the emperor brutally rapes Morena. Pix neatly sidesteps the issue of administering on stage justice to a king (even an abominable one) by having Solyman do the killing, receive his own quietus in the process, and commend himself

38 Pix, “Dedication,” Ibrahim n. pag.
to the judgment of heaven. Fearing that Amurat may have slain Ibrahim, the distraught Morena poisons herself. Though offered the post of regent to the new emperor (still a child), Amurat stabs himself for love of Morena.

When the carnage stops, seven of the eleven characters named in the cast list (including all the villains) lie dead, and the Multi and Mustapha, the two virtuous officials who bemoaned the empire’s woes in the opening scene, are left to reorder the kingdom. Unlike Trotter’s play, where the same king who urged Alvaro to rape Agnes while the Prince was away persuades the Prince to consider the good of the country, or The Royal Mischief, where the murderous Libardian dedicates himself to virtue at the end, the two councilors have behaved admirably throughout. Though Homais dies at the end of The Royal Mischief, Manley’s play does not finally condemn her behavior; instead, determined to seek honor among the damned, she dies an unrepentant death. In contrast, Sheker Para in Ibrahim is spurned by the man she commits her crimes to gain. When all is lost, she cannot even provoke Amurat to kill her. After her suicide, Amurat orders soldiers to “bear the polluted wretch away.” With noble characters in control and the villains ignominiously removed, Pix insures that no disturbing questions remain as to the future of her fictional kingdom.

Among the three writers, Pix also possesses the surest sense of the possibilities of the stage. In The Royal Mischief, Manley closes the shutters on her racy seduction; in her play, Pix parades twenty virgins in a circle for the depraved emperor to survey before languidly dropping his handkerchief in front of his current preference. Manley also has difficulty bringing her action onto the stage. Poison is administered to Bassima offstage; the villainous Achmet and Ismael are also caught and done in offstage; and Libardian, the titular representative of good, sleeps through two-thirds of the action.

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39 Pix, Ibrahim 1-42.
40 Pix, Ibrahim 37.
41 Pix, Ibrahim 4.
In *Agnes de Castro*, Trotter has Alvaro threaten to take Agnes by force, but he balks before the strength of her virginal resolve. Trotter has Ibrahim menace Morena as well. When Ibrahim hesitates, however, the Vizier suggests that an unwilling victim will make Ibrahim's sport all the more satisfying. Pix also creates a servant with a conscience who offers to find a replacement for Morena and is stabbed for his intervention. Fighting desperately to defend herself, Morena slices her hands on Ibrahim's sword before she faints and is carried off to be ravished. Pix goes on to reveal the defiled Morena in her miserably disheveled condition, first to her father and then to her fiancé. Pix does not draw the scene to hide a distressing image; instead, she opens the shutters to confront the audience with the double pathos of Morena's undoing and Amurat's tormented reaction to the sight. In *Agnes de Castro*, the Prince's decision to go on living for the sake of the kingdom despite the murder of the woman he loves is necessitated by Trotter's stoic emphasis on duty over strong emotion; faced with a nearly identical dilemma in *Ibrahim*, Prince Amurat, extravagantly grieving, takes his life and dies beside his ruined Morena.

Though *Ibrahim* and *Agnes de Castro* were both written for the Patent Company, the same features that made Pix's play more of a crowd-pleaser must have made the piece appeal more highly to the players as well. By 1709 Steele could call a more restrained Powell, "that famous and heroic actor, Mr. George Powel; who formerly played Alexander the Great in all places, though he is lately grown so reserved, as to act it only on the stage." The impetuous Powell of 1696, however, would doubtless have found Amurat's passionate renunciation of life for love more to his taste than the logical decision of Trotter's Prince to overcome his profound distress for the sake of his country. Jane Rogers, who, after Robert Wilks jilted her several

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45 Pix, *Ibrahim* 41.
46 Highfill, *BD*, vol. 12, 113.
years later, would be angry enough to bite his cheek and draw blood during a performance of *Venice Preserv'd*, was cast as both Agnes and Morena. Presumably Rogers found Morena’s desperate struggle with Ibrahim more to her taste at this point in her career than Agnes’s chaste refusal of Alvaro and her inability to even contemplate revenge for the death of the Princess. Best known for his performances in “rough-hewn” roles like the exotic title character in Southerne’s adaptation of Behn’s *Oroonoko*, John Verbruggen could be expected to prefer acting the unredeemably iniquitous Ibrahim over the ineffectual Alvaro, who is daunted by Agnes and eventually kills her by mistake. Pix even makes use of small advantages of the Patent Company roster. For instance, in addition to her reputation for comic talent, Susanna Verbruggen, who played the eunuch Achmet in man’s britches, was also known for her shapely legs. Perhaps Ibrahim even made use of any non-stock set or costume pieces the Patent Company had been preparing for the similarly exotic *The Royal Mischief*; Pix’s play was staged at the Theatre-Royal within six weeks after Manley withdrew her tragedy to Lincoln’s Inn Fields.

To conclude this discussion, a reminder is in order that although Lincoln’s Inn Fields staged new works as part of the renewed competition with Drury Lane, the senior actors always had their substantial repertory of proven plays to return to when a new piece faltered. A modest success like Ibrahim might find a place in the Patent Company repertory for a few years; however, the Rebel Company could more readily afford to discard a marginal play like *The Royal Mischief* and add only unqualified hits like *The Mourning Bride* to its schedule of revivals. In this sense, at the outset of the competition the opportunities for untried playwrights like Pix, Trotter, and Manley were much greater at Drury Lane where

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the company had to create a repertory nearly from scratch. After her enforced departure to Lincoln’s Inn Fields, Pix made new friends and worked with superior players, but her plays lost access to the more easily entered Drury Lane repertory. Actually, the two plays that Pix wrote for the Patent Company, Ibrahim and The Spanish Wives, were her only works to enter either company’s repertory; after their initial runs, the ten plays she wrote for the Rebel Company were never revived.

The Struggle Between The Two Companies Lengthens

Despite their mistreatment of the three women writers, in their scramble for a new repertory the Patent Company staged thirty-five new plays between 1695 and 1698. In addition to modest successes like Ibrahim and The Spanish Wives, the Patentees were also blessed with several genuine hits such as Southerne’s Oroonoko, Cibber’s Love’s Last Shift, and Vanbrugh’s The Relapse, that were major factors in the company’s survival. Drury Lane, however, was also capable of the kind of inferior work that prompted James Drake to have printed on the title page of his 1697 Sham Lawyer that “it was Damnably Acted at the Theatre-Royal.”\(^51\)

Surprisingly, the personnel in both acting companies stayed essentially the same during these three years. The Lincoln’s Inn Fields company believed itself superior and in no need of reinforcements. On the other hand, Rich’s company may have been too busy staging new plays as well as re-casting and rehearsing stock pieces to bother with recruitment. Despite the death of a promising young actor like Horden, Rich seems not to have actively recruited new players outside of London. In defiance of legal prohibitions to the contrary, however, Rich did attempt to lure away some of the Rebel company performers. Drury Lane very nearly managed to recruit both John Verbruggen, who was dissatisfied with the Lincoln’s Inn Fields financial offer, and his wife, Susanna, a leading lady who had little prospect for

\(^{51}\) Milhous, Thomas Betterton 102, 105.
advancement playing third fiddle behind Barry and Bracegirdle. In fact, Susanna Verbruggen remained at Drury Lane through 1703 while her husband stayed just long enough to be involved in the first plays of Pix, Trotter, and Manley as well as The Female Wits. After a year with the Patent Company, however, Verbruggen quarreled with Skipwith over money and "shabby treatment"; by February 1697 he had returned to Lincoln's Inn Fields. Rich also briefly secured the services of Thomas Dogget, a talented but temperamental Rebel Company comedian. Predictably, Dogget soon quarreled with his new masters and stopped performing with either London company until his return to the New Theatre in December 1699, until then, Rich was left with the consolation that at least Dogget was not working at Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Rich gained similar solace concerning the Dorset Garden theatre by limiting the theatre's use in the competition. Unfortunately for them, the Patentees were never able to make telling use of the Thames-side playhouse's capacity for spectacular staging, a competitive advantage that the underequipped Lincoln's Inn Fields could never match. Opened in 1671 to take advantage of the latest scenic practices observed by Thomas Betterton in Europe, Dorset Garden was the perfect theatre to stage the elaborate semi-operas (partially spoken, partially sung) which became so profitable for the United Company during the 1680s. The Patent Company only used the theatre sporadically, however, for events like a 1698 revival of Purcell and Betterton's semi-opera, The Prophetess, to impress Russia's visiting monarch, Peter the Great, and the late summer 1696 production of Pix's The Spanish Wives, probably staged there because Drury Lane was undergoing repairs.

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53 Highfill, BD, vol. 4, 443-446.
Despite a summer premiere in a generally unused building, *The Spanish Wives* entered the Patent Company repertory.\(^5\) Indeed, the play was still popular enough to be performed in 1707 at the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin with John Verbruggen in the company.\(^7\) Unfortunately, the cast list for the first London production is not in the printed edition of *The Spanish Wives*. The play succeeded presumably because of its well-plotted and amusing presentation of the advantages of being a tolerant husband. Pix also created two lively low-comedy characters, Friar Andrew, the “Canonical Fornication-Broker”, and Hidewell, a master of disguise, whose lively competition to see who can be the most helpful to his master was well-suited to the Drury Lane comedians; Pinkethman (who spoke the prologue) and either Haines or Johnson seem likely candidates for the roles. After plenty of knockabout action, the plot is resolved on a very proper note: the tolerant Governor is reunited with his tempted, but ultimately faithful, wife while the intolerant Marquess is discovered to be married illegally. Consequently, his former wife is free to marry the man to whom she was previously betrothed, and everyone can live happily and morally ever after.\(^5\)\(^8\)

For Rich to produce *The Spanish Wives* at Dorset Garden was unusual. The following season the disastrous failure of Elkannah Settle’s *The World in the Moon* (late spring 1697) would ensure that Dorset Garden remained on the periphery of the competition. Unable to draw an audience, the costly production was never revived and left the Patent Company financially strapped at the beginning of the 1697-1698 season.\(^5\)\(^9\) Having failed with such an expensive venture at Dorset Garden, Rich contented himself with frustrating the Rebel Company’s periodic attempts to occupy the facility. While pleading poverty to avoid paying building rent, Rich managed to keep the theatre away from Betterton and company who were

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\(^7\) Highfill, *BD*, vol. 15, 136.
\(^9\) Milhous, *Thomas Betterton* 94-95.
capable of making expert use of its stage machinery against him. Rich’s willingness to permit
the aging theatre to fall apart rather than let his opponents work there is indicative of the
fierceness of the competition. By the end of 1699 when Rich lost control of the building
through not paying the rent, the Rebel Company was disorganized and unable to raise the
funds to acquire and repair the increasingly derelict facility. Two years later, Betterton,
with his recently expanded authority, preferred his chances of occupying Drury Lane when
Rich’s lease expired over the cost of refurbishing the old building.\textsuperscript{60} Finally, after years of
neglect and storm damage, Dorset Garden was torn down and sold for scrap in 1709.\textsuperscript{61}

Trotter And Pix At Lincoln’s Inn Fields

Though the Drury Lane stage was unavailable to the three Female Wits during the
remainder of Powell’s stint as Rich’s deputy, Pix, Manley, and Trotter found a more receptive
market at Lincoln’s Inn Fields where, under the agreement of 1695, women were able to own
shares in a theatre company for the first time.\textsuperscript{62} Though the theatre’s first new fall
production of 1695, ‘Ariadne’s’ She Ventures and He Wins, sponsored by Elizabeth Barry,
failed disastrously,\textsuperscript{63} Barry remained willing to recommend works by women writers,
particularly Mary Pix. Indeed, any adverse consequences associated with burning career
bridges with Drury Lane were probably not immediately apparent to the three
playwrights.

\textsuperscript{60} Milhous, \textit{Thomas Betterton} 121-124.
\textsuperscript{62} Milhous, \textit{Thomas Betterton} 42.
Fatal Friendship

Though not as severely censured as Manley in The Female Wits, Trotter offered her second play, Fatal Friendship, to Lincoln’s Inn Fields where the tragedy received a late season premiere in June 1698. The play’s uncompromising demonstration of the necessity that honor be maintained against a sea of troubles probably received a stronger performance from the Lincoln’s Inn Fields tragedians than might have been expected at Drury Lane. In addition to repeating some of the shortcomings that led to the failure of Agnes de Castro, however, Trotter’s endorsement of the stage reform movement did not win her audience approval at Lincoln’s Inn Fields either. Reformers clamored for the theatres to be censored or shut, but they seldom attended performances. As Scouten and Hume have noted, audiences demanding strict morality in new works resulted in the hard comedies of the 1670s being driven from the repertory, but this shift in taste did not occur until the 1750s and 1760s. Since Trotter’s works seem designed for an audience who placed a premium on a rigorous morality in the theatre, the title of Edmund Gosse’s 1916 article, “Catharine Trotter: Precursor of the Bluestockings,” proves ironically accurate. Though she wrote in accordance with her own views, Trotter’s plays were not embraced by the absent reformers or the censuring ‘Ladies’; perhaps Agnes de Castro and Fatal Friendship would have fared better after 1750.

In Fatal Friendship, Gramont, a war hero played by Betterton, is placed in an impossible moral dilemma. After a series of unlikely events, Gramont must either commit bigamy with Lamira/Barry or face imprisonment as well as the loss of his wife Felicia/Bracegirdle and baby. Hoping somehow to extricate himself, Gramont marries Lamira, is very quickly undone, and commits suicide so his family will suffer no retribution for his actions. Trotter’s play is a good example of the type of tragic vehicle in which Barry and

65 Scouten and Hume 78-80.
Bracegirdle could display their complementary talents. As Lamira, yet another spurned woman turned vengeful, Barry would have found plenty of opportunities to skilfully display the depths of her feelings when Lamira’s adored Gramont refuses to consummate the marriage, when she discovers that he is married to her rival, and when she spitefully vows to work Gramont’s ruin. Bracegirdle, on the other hand, would also have found many chances to show her accomplishments as pathetic heroine as the uncomprehending Felicia watches Gramont ensnared by his poor choices in his terrible quandary.

Still in top form at age sixty-three, Betterton could have given a sense of Gramont’s heroic stature as a soldier while still having the ability to portray the character’s moral vacillation when out of his element at court. Betterton’s portrayal of a military hero, second son to Count Roquelaure/Kynaston, however, points to the lack of young leading men in the Rebel Company in the first phase of the competition. Kynaston, who was five years younger than Betterton was certainly the right age to play an elderly king, but Betterton’s casting as the young Gramont is suspect. Granted, in this period before electric lighting and realism made age-appropriate casting a norm, Betterton could more easily portray a youthful character, even the son of a man his own age. Though semi-retired in 1709, he still acted Congreve’s young ingenue Valentine, though with doubtful success, in Love for Love at his next-to-last benefit.

As Betterton approached seventy, however, he was beginning to seek out roles more suited to his actual age. Yet despite the recent reacquisition of John Verbruggen who was cast as Gramont’s fiery friend, Castalio, the Rebel Company lacked a competent leading man to take over for Betterton. Two more years would pass before Barton Booth joined the company, George Powell defected from Drury Lane, and Betterton could divest himself of some of his younger roles. Of course, as Betterton assumed more mature characters, his roles in marginal

plays would be unlikely to be passed on to younger actors, thus increasing the likelihood that *Fatal Friendship* would not be revived.

Though Gramont is a more complex character than the Prince and Betterton’s skills were still superior to Powell’s, the hero of Trotter’s second play is prone to the same inactivity as the male lead in *Agnes de Castro*. A certain powerful General (who never appears on stage) has ordered Gramont imprisoned for killing the General’s only son in a duel. While visiting Felicia, Gramont runs afoul of Bellguard, her meddling brother, who, ignorant of Gramont and Felicia’s marriage, propels the first two-thirds of the play’s action. As a second son, Gramont will have no inheritance. Therefore, Bellguard has plans to betroth Felicia to Gramont’s wealthy, widowed father, Count Roquelaure. When Bellguard discovers Lamira’s passion for Gramont, he suggests that they marry as well to make sure that Gramont is unavailable to his sister. Made desperate by the news that pirates (who never appear on stage) have kidnapped his child, Gramont consents to the match. Almost immediately, Lamira learns that her new husband loves another, and her anger propels the remainder of the action. After furious inquiry, she discovers Gramont’s marriage to Felicia. Having dishonored himself and his wives as well as accidentally killed his best friend in an attempt to stop a duel, Gramont commits suicide in despair. As the play ends, Bellguard, whose ham-handed match making has helped put Gramont in a ruinous dilemma, states the moral. According to Bellguard, though beset by fear of the discovery of his secret marriage, the general’s wrath, and the kidnapping of his son, Gramont strayed from the path of honor when he sought to solve his problems through his bigamous marriage to Lamira.68

In spite of her hopes of mending the faults of *Agnes de Castro* with her second play, Trotter has once again placed an ineffectual protagonist at the center of *Fatal Friendship*. Pressured by forces that never appear to confront him (general, pirates) and cajoled by his

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wife's insistent brother, Gramont succumbs, not like the hero he has been described as, but like a helpless victim who has been waiting patiently for fate to work his demise. Bellguard's moral suitability to pronounce judgment on Gramont in Fatal Friendship is as questionable as the king's right to deliver the coda to Agnes de Castro. With her second script then, Trotter has essentially repeated flaws from her first play: a paralyzed protagonist, inability to place important events and characters on stage, and failure to reestablish a sound moral balance at the end.

Though the considerable talents of the Lincoln's Inn Fields company probably made Fatal Friendship seem an improvement over Agnes de Castro in performance, Trotter still needed to develop her craft before her plays could be considered for the repertory. Indeed, Trotter had begun an acquaintance with William Congreve. Pleased with verses she sent him to preface the publication of The Mourning Bride (1697), Congreve regretfully informed her the play had already gone to press. Though he could not insert Trotter's gift into the publication, Congreve had the play released with no dedicatory poems at all.69 In 1703, Trotter would send Congreve a manuscript copy of The Revolution of Sweden along with a request for his advice to which Congreve returned his suggestions for improvement.70

Despite Trotter's continuing interest in developing her playwriting skills, three aspects of Fatal Friendship point towards Trotter's eventual retirement from the stage at the age of twenty-seven. Extrapolating personal intentions from a writer's work is a risky practice. A noteworthy moment occurs in Fatal Friendship, however, when, after the fury of Gramont's betrayal subsides, Lamira contemplates withdrawing to a cloister.71 Considering Trotter's Catholic upbringing where she might have acquired a taste for the retired life and the fact that her remaining three plays each contain a character who longs to renounce the

70 Hodges 212-213.
71 Trotter, Fatal Friendship 41, 56.
world for a religious retreat, Trotter may have already begun to explore the ideas which eventually led her to quit the theatre and marry a clergyman. At the very least, Trotter’s repeated positive references to the cloistered existence suggest that a quiet life beyond the turmoil and criticisms of the theatre held attractions for her.

In contrast to the optimistic tone of the opening remarks to Agnes de Castro, the prefatory material for Fatal Friendship shows that Trotter was stung by The Female Wits and other criticism of herself and her work based on her sex. The dedication remarks that “when a Woman appears in the World under any distinguishing Character, she must expect to be the mark of ill Nature, but most one who seems desirous to recommend her self by what the other Sex think their peculiar Prerogative.” She also says that writing is “an undertaking so few of my Sex, have ventur’d at, [and] may draw some Malice on me.”\(^7\) The epilogue makes a blatant appeal for the play to be judged on its own merits rather than be dismissed because the author is a woman:

Since I have done you justice, be this Day  
As just to us in censuring our Play,  
Not with Grimace, and words all noise, and Huff,  
Damn it, a Woman’s! that must needs be Stuff;  
At Reason’s Great Tribunal she’d appear,  
Tho’ she has most from her decree to fear,  
But so condemn’d, conscious of Justice done,  
Perhaps she’ll mend, at least her faults, she’ll own.  
If they are such as care may well correct,  
No pains to please you better she’ll neglect,  
But if what she believes Poetick Rage,  
Is found th’ infection of a Scribling Age,)  
For ever she’ll forsake the Darling Stage.)\(^7\)

The three passages quoted above reflect Trotter’s growing frustration with the reception accorded to her plays. The desire to mend any reasonable faults still remains, but if the sex of the author or some general disaffection (“Poetick Rage”) are to continue as the criteria for the

\(^7\) Trotter, “Dedication,” Fatal Friendship n. pag.  
\(^7\) Trotter, Fatal Friendship 57.
dismissal of Trotter’s plays, then their author shows a new willingness to leave the theatre behind.

The third factor about Fatal Friendship that hints at Trotter’s early retirement is the playwright’s clear agreement with the theatrical reformers and her call for them to support her play. Where Wycherley, in some ways the epitome of the old hard comedy tradition, had contributed a prologue to Agnes de Castro, Trotter’s Fatal Friendship is dedicated to pious Princess Anne and preceded by four laudatory poems which take pains to present Trotter as a devoted stage reformer. The dedication suggests that Anne will like the play because “its End is the most noble, to discourage Vice, and recommend a firm unshaken Virtue.” While praising Trotter for destroying the “Salique Law of Wit,” the last of the prefatory poems goes on to call her “the first of Stage-Reformers too.” The epilogue quoted above also begins with an appeal to those members of the audience most likely to disapprove of a play on moral grounds, the ‘Ladies’:

First Ladies I am sent to you, from whom
Our Author hopes a favourable Doom,
As Friends to Vertue, since ‘tas been her End
Vice to discourage, Vertue recommend; . . .

The reform climate was real enough as Collier’s strident calls for theatrical suppression attest. In fact, in May 1698 when Fatal Friendship premiered, the Middlesex justices twice published presentiments against the playhouses as “nurseries of debauchery and blasphemy.”

The courts specifically cited

Mr. Congreve, for writing the Double Dealer; Durfey, for Don Quixot; and Tonson and Brisco, booksellers, for printing them: and [also declared] that women frequenting the playhouses in masks tended much to debauchery and immorality.

74 William Wycherley, “A Prologue; Written by Mr. Wycherly at the Authors request: Design’d to be Spoke,” Agnes de Castro n. pag.
75 “To the Ingenious Author, on Her Tragedy, call’d Fatal Friendship,” Fatal Friendship n. pag.
76 Trotter, Fatal Friendship 57
77 Van Lennep, The London Stage, vol. 1, 495.
In joining the reform movement so openly, however, Trotter was taking the additional risk of alienating powerful figures within the theatre like her friend Congreve, who, along with Betterton and many of the actors, fought a court battle to clear themselves of the immorality charges.76 Since plays with stoic inclinations like Agnes de Castro were not succeeding,79 Trotter may have felt that by emphasizing her belief in the need for improved morality in the theatres, she could attract a substantial audience to Fatal Friendship from among those who shared her desire for reform. Unfortunately, Trotter's hopes proved unfounded. As Scouten and Hume remark, the strident reformers like Collier were play readers not playgoers, while the 'Ladies' functioned disapprovingly, making their dislikes apparent while not endorsing any particular writer or style of writing.80

By courting the reformers' support at the box office, Trotter was working from the basic miscalculation that those who cried out to the theatre for reform would attend plays written to address their objections. By writing safe plays in which the rakes were allowed to misbehave as long as they reformed before they were rewarded, Pix and Centlivre would continue to have their works produced; whereas Trotter sincerely believed that theatre had a strictly didactic purpose “Vice to discourage, Vertue [to] recommend.” Unfortunately for her career, Trotter's perception of the playhouse as a moral pulpit was not shared by the theatre audience. Trotter also experienced additional frustration over audience censure of her works because a woman had written them (not for their merits or faults). These factors, combined with the general displeasure of the audience around 1700 with most new works, must have made retirement from the world of affairs more than just something for Trotter's stage characters to consider.

78 Milhous, Thomas Betterton 125-128.
79 Hume, Development 430.
80 Scouten and Hume 53, 61.
The Innocent Mistress. The Deceiver Deceived. And Queen Catharine

During the first phase of the competition, Pix made the transition from Drury Lane to Lincoln's Inn Fields more successfully than Manley or Trotter. In terms of writing output, Pix was simply more prolific than the other two. Where Manley was either disinclined or unwelcome to write for the theatre for ten years following The Female Wits and Trotter's next play after Fatal Friendship (1698) would not appear until the fall of 1700, Pix contributed The Innocent Mistress (June 1697), The Deceiver Deceived (November 1697), and Queen Catharine (June 1698) to the Rebel Company in rapid succession. Through the sheer volume of her writing and her probable participation in rehearsals, Pix came closer than Trotter or Manley to the advantageous theatrical insider status enjoyed by writers like Farquhar and Congreve. Unfortunately, though even The Female Wits describes Pix (Mrs. Wellfed) as "a good sociable well-natur'd Companion," little information survives concerning Pix's working relationships with her new company. She certainly made an influential friend in Elizabeth Barry, however, and Pix's dedication to The Deceiver Deceived also indicates that she was "pleased and treated by those who please every Spectator with a Candour and Sweetness not to be expressed." At Lincoln's Inn Fields, Pix would go on to write ten plays for the Rebel Company, one more than the combined output of Trotter and Manley's entire careers.

One of the advantages Pix held by writing so quickly was the ability to often, though not without exception, adapt the characters she wrote to the acting lines of the New Theatre performers. Though primarily written to appeal to the London audience, of course, The Innocent Mistress also seems to have something to offer almost the entire Lincoln's Inn Fields

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company. Luckily, a fair amount of information concerning the Lincoln’s Inn Fields actors is available in the autobiography of Colley Cibber who was familiar with their skills from his apprentice years in the United Company, and, since he later worked chiefly for their opposition, had no reason to overstate his “deep Impressions of these excellent Actors. . . .” Of Cave Underhill, cast in The Innocent Mistress as Mr. Flywife, who, as the character’s name suggests, had decamped to Jamaica to be rid of his shrewish wife, Cibber observed that the actor’s facial features could transform “him into the most lumpish, moping Mortal, that ever made Beholders merry!” Though Cibber tells us that Underhill was best as a “Blockhead of a Character” with a “Countenance of Wood,” he also notes that Underhill was well able to portray the “rustick Humour” of a “delightful Brute” which is the type of character that Pix creates in Mr. Flywife. Cibber also had praise for Elinor Leigh who was cast in The Innocent Mistress as Flywife’s abandoned spouse, Lady Beauclair, subsequently married under false pretenses to Sir Charles Beauclair. Cibber comments that Leigh, who would originate Lady Wishfort in The Way of the World (1700), “was extremely entertaining, and painted, in a lively manner, the blind Side of Nature.” For Betterton and Barry, the two actors Cibber praised most highly, Pix created two dignified characters forced by circumstances to suppress their romantic longings for one another. Trapped in an unconsummated marriage because he needed money to repair his fortunes, Sir Charles/Betterton maintains a platonic friendship with Bellinda/Barry who has fled her country estate and fortune in disguise to avoid the match arranged by her father.

Also featured are John Verbruggen and Anne Bracegirdle in a reprise of the on-stage mating game of what J. H. Smith dubbed the Restoration ‘gay couple.’ As Wildlove,
Verbruggen is witty, high-spirited, and opposed to matrimony; while Mrs. Beauclair (Sir Charles's niece, not to be confused with Lady Beauclair above), though at one point disguised as a man, amorousely pursued by another woman, and challenged to a duel by Wildlove, manages to charm and scheme away his matrimonial scruples. The portrayal of such a stage "Impertinent" as Mrs. Beauclair was well within Bracegirdle's skills. According to Cibber, Bracegirdle had a double gift because

... scarce an Audience saw her, that were less than half of them Lovers, without a suspected Favourite among them: And tho' she might be said to have been the Universal Passion, and under the highest Temptations; her Constancy in resisting them, serv'd but to increase the number of her Admirers.87

Evidently, Bracegirdle was able to use this combination of sensual appeal and unimpeachable virtue to advantage both as witty comic ingenue and pathetic tragic heroine.

Not content with keeping the major players busy, Pix also adds a niece for Lady Beauclair to attempt to swindle, a gallant to rescue the niece, a couple of wily servants, and a drunken daughter for whom Lady Beauclair seeks a husband. Though Lincoln's Inn Fields lacked low comedy players of the caliber of Drury Lane's Haines, Pinkethman, and Benjamin Johnson, Pix provided the role of Cheatall, fortune-hunting suitor to the drunken daughter, for William Bowen, a socially well-connected actor of fop characters whose penchant for violence would end with his death in a tavern duel in 1717.88 At the midpoint of a career that would last into the 1730s, John Boman was cast as the swindling Spendall, intent on ruining Sir Charles. By inserting a ballad for him, Pix also took advantage of the musical talents of Boman, whose singing skills were such that he had once been engaged to perform at a private house party for Charles II and Nell Gwyn.89

87 Cibber, Apology 97.
In order to bring a resolution to such a bewildering catalogue of characters and cross purposes, Pix concocted an event-packed plot full of disguise, subterfuge, and sudden recognitions. Experimenting with a device which would become a component of her friend Centlivre's success, Pix also introduced trendy topics (in this case, platonic relationships and commercial ventures in the Indies) into the standard intrigues of her comic situation. Hume faults *The Innocent Mistress* for sententious complacency, but the play's main failing may be its excess of incident at the expense of comic character development. Contemporary response was mixed: Gildon called it a "good Success, tho' acted in the hot Season of the Year"; *A Comparison* felt the piece deserved "to be Damn'd for its Obscenity." The play's failure to enter the repertory could also have been due to the rigors of the competition with Drury Lane. Citing the difficulties of two theatres competing for one audience, the disheartening combination of short pay and extra work for actors, and the ruinous pace of mounting a new play almost every week, fellow playwright Peter Motteux's prologue to *The Innocent Mistress* bemoans the contrast between the "full Scenes" and the "empty Pitt" at Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Though Pix may not have succeeded in placing *The Innocent Mistress* in the Rebel Company's impressive repertory, the play has a positive place among Pix's work because she did create roles for all of the New Theatre's major players with the exception of Kynaston. As the honorable couple who keep their love platonic until legally free to marry, Betterton and Barry could give the play a dignified center. With the rehiring of Verbruggen in early 1697, Pix was among the first writers to take advantage of pairing the actor with Bracegirdle. In fact the Verbruggen/Bracegirdle tandem would become almost as important in Pix's casts as Barry/Bracegirdle. Leigh, Underhill, Bowen, and Boman (all except Bowen were sharing

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90 Hume, *Development* 421.
91 Milhous, *Thomas Betterton* 105; *A Comparison* 20.
actors at Lincoln’s Inn Fields) were also given comic turns to perform that suited their skills. In addition to forming professional relationships with most of the New Theatre actors, Pix’s important friendship with Barry probably also began during work on The Innocent Mistress. More than anything else, Pix’s next new script, Queen Catharine, which appeared a year after The Innocent Mistress, was an attempt to write a tour-de-force acting role for her friend; The Deceiver Deceived, which was acted after The Innocent Mistress, but before Queen Catharine, had been submitted to Drury Lane before The Innocent Mistress was staged.

Motteux’s prologue to The Innocent Mistress also contains a reference which hints at how Pix differed from Trotter in her approach to the reform issue: “For there’s in Plays, you know a Reformation/(A thing to which y’have no great inclination).” Though sometimes classed as the same kind of stage reformer as Trotter, Pix was evidently aware that Trotter’s brand of stern didacticism was not popular with theatre patrons. Motteux’s prologue goes on to bluntly state that “ill-natur’d Truths” have emptied the pit when “Bawdy Jests” used to fill it. When the prologue asks that those “who for harmless sports declare,/Show that this age a modest Play can bear,” the key phrase is “harmless sports.” In Pix’s play (as in works by Cibber, Centlivre, Farquhar, and others) what Trotter might condemn as immoral, passes, at least until Act Five, as the high-spirited “sports” of characters who will ultimately be found not guilty of cuckolding, rewarding the unrepentant rake with the heiress, or any of the immoralities that so incensed the reformers.

In fact, Pix skillfully handles the balancing act between maintaining propriety while avoiding a preachy tone in each of her first three plays. She even manages to take some satiric hits at religion, but Pix’s plays always give a clear signal to her auditors that she has no intention of striking very close to home. For instance, in Act Three of Ibrahim the Vizier Azema’s complaints about church officials meddling in politics, comments which could have

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93 Motteux, “Prologue,” Innocent Mistress n. pag.
angered the reformers, are tempered by Azema's own dissolute character.\textsuperscript{94} In The Spanish Wives, Friar Andrew does his best to pander for Colonel Peregrine; however, Peregrine fails in his attempt to cuckold the Governor, and Andrew gets a thorough drubbing for his iniquities.\textsuperscript{95} Also, because the Friar is a Catholic, a member of an officially prohibited religion and therefore an acceptable satiric target, he has license for unprincipled behavior that would never have been tolerated on-stage if portrayed as that of a Church of England priest. Despite Wildlove and Mrs. Flywife's rakish intentions, Bellinda's flight from her parents, Lady Beauclair's (and everyone else's) schemes, The Innocent Mistress concludes with a veritable matrimonial roundup that includes five marriages as well as the poetically just return of Mr. Flywife to the "Matrimonial Noose."\textsuperscript{96}

Pix also finds a spot in The Innocent Mistress to poke some ironic fun at resistance towards women writers without seeming to confront the audience directly. Spendall, who remarks, "I said, a she Wit was as great a Wonder as a Blazing-star, and as certainly foretold the World's turning upside down; yet 'spight of that the Lady will write," is a troublemaking cheat who sets out to ruin the man who supports him.\textsuperscript{97} Spendall's denunciation of women writers is akin to foolish Lady Wishfort's recommendation of Collier's Short View in The Way of the World.\textsuperscript{98} Pix also uses the same device to ridicule stuffy moral condemnation of the theatre. In The Deceiver Deceived, Lady Temptyouth spends her time arranging cut-rate purchases of the estates of young spendthrifts and, for a commission, grooming penniless young women to marry into wealth. Yet she is falsely pious enough to brag at having sniffed out immorality at the theatre where none existed: "Yes, I vow, my Lord, at a Play, when no Woman of Quality else has found out a beastly wrapt-up thing, I han't show'd my Face in a

\textsuperscript{94} Pix, Ibrahim 14-15.
\textsuperscript{95} Pix, Spanish Wives 32-33, 48.
\textsuperscript{96} Pix, The Innocent Mistress 48-52.
\textsuperscript{97} Pix, The Innocent Mistress 7.
quarter of an hour.” Since Spendall, Tempyouth, and Wishfort lack credibility of any sort, the opposite of whatever they denounce or recommend is likely to be desirable.

Between the premieres of *The Innocent Mistress* and *Queen Catharine*, Pix found herself embroiled in the bitter controversy over Powell’s plagiarism of her *The Deceiver Deceived*, a script she submitted to him prior to her estrangement from Drury Lane. Since Pix’s *The Innocent Mistress* had already been staged at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, Powell probably believed that she had already moved on to a new company and new plays; consequently, he felt no qualms about stealing from her earlier script for his *Imposture Defeated*.

Understandably piqued at seeing her work claimed as part of a play by Powell who had sponsored and appeared in *The Female Wits*, Pix along with Congreve and Trotter attended the premiere of *Imposture Defeated* and tried unsuccessfully to cry the play down. In retaliation, Powell or someone close to him authored the anonymous *Animadversions on Mr. Congreve’s Late Answer to Mr. Collier* (1698) which sought to vindicate Powell while vilifying Congreve and the “two She Things, call’d Poetesses,” Trotter and Pix. Meanwhile, the New Theatre staged *The Deceiver Deceived*, and, when the play was published, Pix acidly dismissed Powell and Drury Lane in her dedication:

> I look upon those that endeavour’d to discountenance this Play as Enemys to me. . . I must not trouble you with the little Malice of my Foe, nor is his Name fit to be mentioned, . . he has Printed so great a falshood, it deserves no Answer.

Despite all the commotion, neither play entered either company’s repertory; *Imposture Defeated* lasted five performances, the run of *The Deceiver Deceived* is unrecorded. Though never revived, Pix’s script is enlivened by some Italian-style comedy situations and *lazzi*. Melito Bondi, a rich old man played by Betterton, counterfeits blindness

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99 Pix, *The Deceiver Deceived* 5.
100 *Animadversions on Mr. Congreve’s Late Answer to Mr. Collier* (London, 1698) 33-35.
101 Pix, “Dedication,” *The Deceiver Deceived* n. pag.
to avoid assuming expensive civic duties. Believing the counterfeit, his new wife
Olivia/Barry and daughter from a previous marriage Ariana/Bracegirdle take every
opportunity to flirt with their gallants Count Andrea and Fidelio, played by John Hodgson
and Verbruggen. An extremely angry Bondi must keep silent or reveal his own skullduggery.
With the help of a wily servant, the employment of a rascal as a comically menacing doctor,
and the ingenuity of the lovers, the two women finally outwit Bondi, though he does manage
to ‘regain’ his sight and keep his wife and money for the time being. Fidelio and Ariana are
allowed to marry, but Olivia decides to maintain her virtue as Bondi’s spouse in hope of being
a rich widow in the near future.\(^{103}\)

The Deceiver Deceived has much of the vitality that made The Spanish Wives
successful. Though the story is yet one more seventeenth-century variation on how the young
lovers outwit the stodgy blocking character, the play has a number of good verbal and visual
comic moments; Bondi’s medical examination by the quack doctor who refuses to believe that
Bondi is not a ‘blind Venetian’ must have provoked some laughter at least. The play features
amusing roles for Barry and Bracegirdle as Bondi’s gallant-chasing wife and daughter as well
as another opportunity for Elinor Leigh as Lady Tempyouth to display her “very droll way
of dressing the pretty Foibles of superannuated Beauties.”\(^{104}\) To compete with the growing
vogue for concerts, most writers inserted some musical entertainments into their plays. Pix
received support in this area from playwrights Thomas Durfey and Peter Motteux, who
contributed two dialogues which J. Eccles set to music for the fourth and fifth acts;\(^{105}\)

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\(^{103}\) Pix, The Deceiver Deceived 1-47.

\(^{104}\) Cibber, Apology 93.

\(^{105}\) Thomas Durfey and J. Eccles, “A Dialogue in the fourth Act, between Mr. Bowman and Mrs. Bracegirdle,” The Deceiver Deceived n. pag.; Peter Motteux and J. Eccles, “A Dialogue in the fifth Act, between a Boy and a Girl, and an Old Man,” The Deceiver Deceived n. pag.
Bracegirdle, who was also blessed with a good singing voice, and Boman were among the performers.

No existing evidence explains why the play was never revived. Though the November premiere was the most advantageous opening among Pix's first five plays, perhaps Powell's *Imposture Defeated* two months earlier had already removed any novelty value that Bondi's counterfeit blindness might have promised. Lincoln's Inn Fields may have only staged the play for the same reason *The Royal Mischief* was acted, to discredit the Patent Company. The prologue, which begins with "Deceiv'd Deceiver, and Impostor cheated!", vigorously attacks Powell's indiscretions, Drury Lane's attempts to conceal poor material "With Fountains, Groves, Bombast and airy fancies," and concludes with the suggestion that the best way to punish the plagiarist is to applaud the original. Perhaps the squabbling between the two companies, like their competing versions of *Iphigenia* staged simultaneously in 1699 with equally dismal results, alienated the audience. Though in Melito Bondi, Pix had written a more age-appropriate role for Betterton, perhaps the actor felt that his energies were best expended in vehicles which provided more ready applause. The play was republished as *The French Beau* in 1699, under a new title with no controversial associations, Pix may have hoped for the play's revival. In any case, after two non-repertory efforts for the Rebel Company, Pix could scarcely boast of the kind of success she had enjoyed with her first two efforts at Drury Lane.

When *Queen Catharine* appeared in June 1698, seven months after *The Deceiver Deceived*, Pix made another attempt to adjust her writing to the strengths of the Rebel Company in tragedy. For Betterton, Pix created the role of Owen Tudor, a pivotal, yet

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106 Cibber, *Apology* 98.  
107 Pix, "Prologue," *The Deceiver Deceived* n. pag.  
relatively small character who does not appear until Act Three, ideal for an actor seeking to cut back his workload. The play's subject matter, the machinations of the Duke of Gloucester prior to the events described in Richard III, fit well with Betterton's own interest in Shakespeare's history plays which would lead to a number of revivals and the actor's own adaptation of Henry IV. Pix again pairs Verbruggen as the impulsive and passionate Duke of Clarence with Bracegirdle as Catharine's loving but fatally deceived ward Isabella.

With the title role, Pix was clearly writing a showcase for her friend Elizabeth Barry. Journalist Tom Brown described the Pix/Barry relationship satirically:

The jolly poetess scribbles neither for fame nor money, But for the charms of Bacchus and Ceres; if the third day produce a bottle and Cacklers, she has her end; and treats Madam B____ as her great benefactress.

Pix would write seven roles for Barry, who, Brown's cynicism aside, seems to have been well aware of the need for commercial potential in a new play. In Queen Catharine, Pix first took care to praise Barry's physical beauties; in the opening scene a smitten Edward IV reveals that he "view'd That Queen with extasie and strange amazement, Methought she look'd and mov'd beyond her Sex; And something whisper'd to my ravisht Soul, She is a Goddess!" As the play progressed, Barry was called upon to display a range of emotions from elevated love, to defiance of a band of murderers, to a terrible grief which finally subsides when she is reminded that her children give her reason to go on living. Cibber's description of Barry's skills shows that, after forty years in the theatre, he still believed her the top tragedienne of her era:

Mrs. Barry, in Characters of Greatness, had a presence of elevated Dignity, her Mien and Motion superb, and gracefully majestick; her Voice full, clear, and strong, so that no Violence of Passion could be too much for her. And when Distress, or Tenderness possess'd her, she subsided into the most affecting

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112 Pix, Queen Catharine 3.
Melody, and Softness. In the Art of exciting Pity, she had a Power beyond all the Actresses I have yet seen, or what your Imagination can conceive.113

Despite Barry’s support, Queen Catharine falls short of excellence in three ways that may well have earned the piece a speedy oblivion and inclusion in A Comparison’s list of “damned” plays.114 First, by writing about the Duke of Gloucester (later Richard III), Pix would inevitably evoke unfavorable comparisons with Shakespeare’s Richard. In speaking the hesitant prologue ("’Tis grown so hard a Task to please the Town,/We scarce can tell what Prologue will go down"), Betterton tried to deflect such criticism with an appeal to the ‘Ladies’:

But how shall Woman after [Shakespeare] succeed,
And what excuse can her presumption plead,
Who with enervate voice dares wake the mighty dead,
To please your martial men she must despair,
And therefore Courts the favour of the fair:
From huffing Hero’s she hopes no relief,
But trusts in Catharine’s Love, and Isabella’s grief.115

Though the prologue shows that Pix and the Rebel Company were aware of the difficulties of writing a new play about such famous subject matter, the attempt to focus audience attention on the female characters’ woes apparently did not rescue the production.

Second, having chosen the misshapen Gloucester as her villain, Pix had unfortunately written a major part for which the Rebel Company suddenly lacked a first-rate actor. As the published cast shows, Betterton, Verbruggen, and Kynaston were already playing other parts; lesser players Mr. Freeman, Barnabus Scudamore, and Samuel Bailey were cast as well, while Underhill, Bowen, and Boman were either unavailable or unsuited to play the machiavellian villain. Conspicuously absent from the cast was Samuel Sandford whose distinguished acting career as a stage villain stretched back to 1661. Described as “Round-shoulder’d, Meagre-fac’d, Spindle-shank’d, Splay-footed, with a sour Countenance, and long lean Arms”,

113 Cibber, Apology 92.
114 A Comparison 20.
115 Pix, “Prologue,” Queen Catharine n. pag.
Sandford was, Cibber felt sure, the actor Shakespeare would have picked to originate the role of Richard III had Sandford been available. Though the actor had in fact appeared as Richard many times, as early as 1692 Sandford’s health had begun to decline; after assuming control of the United Company in 1694, Rich complained that Sandford was still on salary though he acted infrequently due to “his Indisposition & his Voice often Failing.” Though at his peak Sandford had been Charles II’s favorite stage villain, he made only sporadic appearances after the 1695 rebellion; his last recorded performance was in January of 1698, some five months before the premiere of Queen Catharine.116 Presumably, he retired that spring, because the following winter when Cibber brought his own adaptation of Richard III to the stage, he could only wish in vain that Sandford was available to act the role.117 Unfortunately, then, though Pix could conceivably have designed the role in hopes that he would be fit enough to act in June 1698, Sandford was not cast as Gloucester in Queen Catharine.

The most likely remaining candidate Mr. Thurmond, who had played the conniving Bellguard in Fatal Friendship, was already cast as Sir James Thyrrold, the evil henchman who does much of Richard’s dirty work. So the role of the Duke of Gloucester went to a Mr. Arnold, described by the Biographical Dictionary as a “minor member of Betterton’s company” between 1696 and 1702 whose “specialties appear to have been heavy and elderly parts.”118 Though no record exists of Arnold’s performance as Gloucester, Pix’s writing calls for the character to bring catastrophe to Queen Catharine through malice, manipulative mastery, and fierce will without the advantage of Shakespeare’s superior command of language, character, and situation. Presumably Arnold’s skills were insufficient to accomplish the task of making Pix’s Richard a formidable nemesis for Catharine. The New

117 Cibber, Apology 81.
118 Highfill, BD, vol. 1, 120-121.
Theatre's lack of a first-rate actor to play Gloucester probably contributed to the play's failure. Also, highlighted was the advanced age and impending retirement of many of the Lincoln's Inn Fields players; as a matter of fact, when he assumed control of the United Company, Rich made the same complaint about Underhill's infrequent performances as he made about Sandford. During the first three years of the competition Lincoln's Inn Fields clearly had the superior personnel. If Rich's fledgling company could survive, however, the aging Rebels would face increasing difficulties in casting their plays.

In addition to casting problems, Pix's sense of dramaturgy deserts her in *Queen Catharine*. The play's major catastrophe, the brutal slaying of Catharine's beloved Owen Tudor as she looks on helplessly, is accomplished through the bad judgment of the Duke of Clarence, whose desire to elope with Isabella causes her to make the mistake of trusting a false man with the key to a secret passage. Up to the point of this betrayal, the audience has seen only the mutual devotion of Tudor and Catharine and been told of their greatness, a stature they never observe in action. In a scene reminiscent of the downfall of Trotter's protagonist/victims, the noble pair are trapped and vanquished summarily by the gloating villains. Having disposed of her heroic soldier in Act Four without a real struggle, Pix has only Catharine's pathetic suffering to sustain the remainder of the play.

Trapped by the use of historical (and Shakespearean) characters among the villains, Pix is unable to administer a proper comeuppance for Tudor's vicious murder. Although the minor character who stole the key is treacherously killed, Gloucester and the despicable Edward IV are left free at the end because the familiar events described in *Richard III* have yet to occur. Meanwhile, when his attempt to force Isabella's virtue fails, Thyrrold stabs her to death, but Clarence lets Thyrrold abscond when Thyrrold refuses to pick up a weapon and fight for his life. Clarence and Warwick have begun a plot against the king which goes

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119 Milhous, *Thomas Betterton* 244.
120 Pix, *Queen Catharine* 33-39.
unresolved as does most of Gloucester's scheming for the throne. Though he pressured Isabella into the misjudgment that gave Richard access to Catharine's castle, Clarence must also await his judgment in Shakespeare's play.\textsuperscript{121} One of the strengths in Pix's first four efforts is her ability to place major action and character development on stage. In \textit{Queen Catharine}, however, Pix is reduced to including the following comment in her dedication:

\begin{quote}
I cou'd not, without a plain Contradiction to the History, punish the Instruments that made my Lovers unhappy; but I know your Ladyship will trace Richard the Third into Bosworth Field, and find him there, as wretched as he made Queen Catharine.\textsuperscript{122}
\end{quote}

This reference proves that Pix was aware that the conclusion of her tragedy had too many loose ends, but an explanatory comment in the published version was an unsatisfactory solution to the play's problems on the stage.

\section*{Summary}

As the first phase of the competition ended, the London theatre was in a precarious condition. What appeared to be a return to the type of healthy competition which produced the great plays and players of the 1660s and 1670s had turned into an ugly dogfight between two flawed companies for one elusive audience. With its better players and superior repertory, the Rebel Company held the initial advantage, but had failed to administer a knock-out blow to its opponent. During these three years the Rebels, though under less pressure to produce new works, averaged nine new plays a year.\textsuperscript{123} During the 1697-1698 season, however, Lincoln's Inn Fields mounted only two new comedies (including Pix's \textit{The Deceiver Deceived}) which did not enter the repertory, while expending their energies on seven new tragedies (among them Trotter's \textit{Fatal Friendship} and Pix's \textit{Queen Catharine}) at a time when audiences were more inclined to comedies. As Patent Company skills improved and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[121] Pix, \textit{Queen Catharine} 45-52.
\item[122] Pix, "Dedication," \textit{Queen Catharine} n. pag.
\item[123] Milhous, \textit{Thomas Betterton} 107.
\end{footnotes}
moral criticism of the theatres increased, the Rebel Company showed a lack of clear direction and competitive vigor in the face of challenges both within and outside the theatre community.

To avoid unfavorable comparisons with their rivals, Drury Lane embarked on a frantic search for new works which led to seventeen new plays the first season, ten in 1696-1697, and eight in 1697-1698. The Patent Company's fortunes were low enough for Rich to introduce animal tricks and tumbling displays between acts of Drury Lane performances in 1698. For Rich, who valued ticket sales over the integrity of spoken drama, a full house was more important than whether Drury Lane looked more like Bartholomew Fair than the Theatre-Royal. The major theatrical fact of these years, however, is that, despite some shoddy work, dirty tactics, and inferior personnel, Drury Lane managed to survive. While Lincoln's Inn Fields drifted towards the new century, Drury Lane had proven its staying power and was about to be reinforced by the arrival of Robert Wilks, Henry Norris, and playwright George Farquhar from Dublin's Smock Alley Theatre.

For Manley, Trotter, and Pix, by 1698 the hopeful situation occasioned by the 1695 actors' rebellion was already past history. Until Powell's departure from Drury Lane, the three women could only submit their works to Lincoln's Inn Fields. Following the failure of The Lost Lover, the controversy over The Royal Mischief and its exclusion from the New Theatre repertory, and the humiliation of The Female Wits, Manley probably began the ten-year hiatus in her playwriting career with more relief than regret. While only lightly satirized in The Female Wits, Trotter evinced growing frustration with the capricious audience reaction to her plays. Though her prefaces and contacts with Congreve indicate that she was not yet ready to renounce playwriting, Trotter's sincere belief in the need for stage reform would not endear her to theatrical personnel or to audiences disinclined to support

\[124\] Milhous, *Thomas Betterton* 97.
\[125\] Milhous, *Thomas Betterton* 112
overtly didactic plays. More importantly during these three years, Manley and Trotter were both unable to take advantage of the drastic increase in demand for new scripts and produce a play which entered either company's repertory.

On the other hand, Pix's career began with the inclusion of her first two plays in Drury Lane's repertory. Though the fact is not readily apparent because of her positive associations with Lincoln's Inn Fields, Pix's estrangement from the Patent Company following The Female Wits and The Deceiver Deceived was detrimental to her career; The Spanish Wives (August 1696) would be her last "living play." Indeed, Queen Catharine, Pix's last play during the three years of Rebel Company ascendancy, was her weakest effort among her first five plays. The tour-de-force role for Barry notwithstanding, Pix's first New Theatre tragedy had failed. Unable in her first three New Theatre efforts to produce a script sufficiently valuable to enter the repertory, Pix would be forced to depend on her reputation for past successes and the good offices of Rebel Company personnel like Elizabeth Barry to bring her new plays to the stage.

This combination of a bright beginning and good working relations with the New Theatre company would sustain Pix for the remaining eight years of her playwriting career. Her exclusive association with the aging Lincoln's Inn Fields stars, however, would eventually contribute to the disappearance of her works from the stage. Though Pix was unaware of it at the time, Betterton's role in Queen Catharine would be his last documented appearance in one of her plays; as the actor cut back his schedule after 1700, Pix would be unable to rely on his talents to help her works succeed. As the first decade of the eighteenth century slipped away, the majority of the actors who originated Pix's characters, including Bracegirdle, Verbruggen, Betterton, and Barry, would all retire; Pix's unrevived Lincoln's Inn Fields plays would disappear from the stage with them. Meanwhile, Cibber, Wilks, and Anne Oldfield, who would all be active in shaping the English theatre beyond 1710, were all developing their skills at Drury Lane and about to encounter newcomer, Susanna Centlivre.
CHAPTER IV
THE RESURGENCE OF DRURY LANE AND THE ARRIVAL OF CENTLIVRE

During the four seasons between 1698 and 1702, the competitive balance between the two companies shifted in favor of Drury Lane. By the fall of 1700, the Lincoln's Inn Fields collective had become so disorganized and lethargic that Lord Chamberlain Jersey was forced to intervene to save the company. Jersey's solution was to grant Thomas Betterton, manager of the Duke's and United Companies from 1668 until 1694, some very limited managerial authorities: the ability to impose fines, pay bonuses, and spend up to £2 petty cash.¹ Meanwhile at Drury Lane, workaholic Robert Wilks had replaced the alcoholic Powell as Rich's deputy; Cibber had found his niche as a performer and writer and begun to handle some of the repertory selection; and new plays by Farquhar, Steele, and Vanbrugh insured the company's continued existence. Yet despite their improvements, the Patentees were unable to force Lincoln's Inn Fields out of business or into a new union under Rich's supervision.

These indecisive years began with some of the most bitter competition between the two theatres. After Rich brought acrobats and trained animals onto the Theatre-Royal stage in 1698, the Rebels were able to resist for only one season before importing European singing and dancing masters in hopes of recapturing the sparse audience. In spite of increased attendance

and ticket prices, a substantial portion of the New Theatre profits went to the likes of Monsieur Balon and Madame Subligny who demanded fees as high as £400 for their brief engagements.²

In 1698, when the Rebels scored a surprising success by mounting an opera at tiny Lincoln's Inn Fields, the Patentees eclipsed them with their own more lavish production of Motteux's The Island Princess.³ A Comparison notes that the two theatres also pitted the Elizabethan classics against each other; the New Theatre chose Shakespeare while Drury Lane responded with a series of Ben Jonson revivals. The most debilitating example of the theatrical infighting occurred in December 1699 when Drury Lane staged Achilles: or Iphigenia in Aulis by Centlivre's friend Abel Boyer in head-to-head competition with John Dennis's Iphigenia at Lincoln's Inn Fields; to the sardonic amusement of A Comparison, neither play succeeded.⁴

While the two companies were thus embroiled, forces outside the theatres made the going even tougher. As already noted, the turn-of-the-century London audience was notoriously displeased with most new plays, particularly tragedies.⁵ The movement for moral reform of the theatres made the climate even more difficult. Indeed, some venal minded reformers actually took notes at the theatres in order to charge the actors under a long disused legal statute that granted the informer half of a £10 fine collectible for public obscenity or blasphemy. The prologue to Centlivre's The Perjured Husband refers to this

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³ Milhous, Thomas Betterton 129-131.
practice:

Such dreadful Laws of Late 'gainst Wit are made,
It dares not in the City show its head.
No place is safe; each Cuckold turns Informer,
If we make merry – it must be in a corner.6

Before Queen Anne was finally prevailed upon to grant that the plays had already been licensed by the Master of Revels and the actors were therefore protected from the archaic law, a number of players were hauled into court on trivial charges. On a more ominous note, in 1700 some of the London city merchants tried to have posted playbills (the theatre’s chief advertising method until 1705) prohibited within the city limits. At this point, in his preface to Love Makes a Man, the normally flippant Cibber lashed back with "I think the last time they pull’d down the Stage in the City, they set up a Scaffold at Court."7

Evidently, more powerful forces than Cibber remembered that the Commonwealth had sponsored both the closing of the London theatres and the execution of Charles I, because the playbills stayed up and the theatres stayed open.

Milhous characterizes the four years between 1698 and 1702 as an inconclusive period for the London stage. Neither theatre gained a decisive edge in the competition; no solution appeared to attract the dissatisfied audience back to the box office. If these four years were a kind of limbo for the theatre in general, they had significant consequences for the careers of the four women playwrights in particular. Manley spent the years actively, but away from both theatres, involved in the business dealings of John Tilly. After severing all her connections with Drury Lane, Pix wrote four more plays for the aging stars of the 1690s at Lincoln’s Inn Fields. Surprisingly, Trotter’s two plays during this period were produced at Drury Lane. On the other hand, since she was not involved in the disputes over The Royal

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7 Milhous, Thomas Betterton 125-128.
Mischief, The Female Wits, and The Deceiver Deceived, Susanna Centlivre (or Susanna Carroll as she was then known) was able to work with both companies as she developed her professional playwriting skills.

The Rebels Falter: Lincoln’s Inn Fields, 1698-1702

During these uncertain years, the fortunes of Lincoln’s Inn Fields spiraled steadily downward until Betterton was given limited disciplinary control of the company in the fall of 1700. Prior to that point, a number of problems brought the company to a virtual standstill. The New Theatre in Lincoln’s Inn Fields remained an obstacle. As audiences demanded more spectacular staging effects, the Rebels continued to limp along in their underequipped, smallish building.

Even after Betterton was granted increased managerial powers, the building situation remained desperate. Lacking the means to acquire and renovate vacant Dorset Garden, Betterton opted instead for an attempt at the Drury Lane lease that was due to expire in November 1701. Once again, Rich made use of his experience as a pettifogging lawyer: Betterton acquired his lease, but Rich retained power over the land where the building stood.\(^8\) With control of the building site, Rich could have ordered the playhouse destroyed; hence, Betterton’s lease was worthless, and Lincoln’s Inn Fields remained the Rebel Company home until 1705.

Though Kynaston and Sandford had retired by 1700 with Underhill to follow suit in 1701,\(^9\) Betterton, Barry, Bracegirdle, John Verbruggen, and Elinor Leigh continued to perform

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\(^8\) Paul Sawyer, *Christopher Rich of Drury Lane* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986) 40-41.

well. They also retained their shares in the company’s dwindling profits along with their
loose collective organization which left them unwilling or unable to pay for the development
of talented newcomers; as a result, younger actors, singers, and dancers left the New Theatre to
seek their fortunes as strollers or in Dublin. While Bracegirdle was still capable of acting the
young heroine roles, the company needed a leading man to take on some of Betterton’s casting;
luckily, a crisis was averted by the defection from the Theatre-Royal of Powell, a competent
actor despite his vagaries, and the arrival from Dublin of the talented and socially well-
connected Barton Booth, who became Betterton’s protégé.10

Though the Rebel Company retained the ability to cast their plays, the performers’
willingsness to act them was sometimes questionable. By the spring of 1700, the New Theatre
collective had become increasingly disorganized; the shareholders were willing to exert
themselves only for their benefit days and the probable successes of new works by insiders like
Betterton, Southerne, and Congreve. When David Craufurd’s doubtful new work Courtship A-
la-Mode was foisted on them late in the season at the request of a “certain Scotch lord,”
however, the company was incapable of even mounting a production. Craufurd’s scathing
preface to the published script, which was acted indifferently at Drury Lane in July, speaks
of “six weeks of sham rehearsals” at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, sparsely attended by actors who
never bothered to learn their lines. Despite the lateness in the season, the bad play, and the
coercion applied by the “Scotch lord”, the tawdry episode indicates that the New Theatre
was faltering. Indeed, Courtship A-la-Mode was the last new play attempted at Lincoln’s Inn
Fields until the following November after Betterton had acquired his new powers.11

In these four seasons, Lincoln’s Inn Fields survived a number of narrow escapes and
disappointments. During December 1699, the situation was dire enough for Vanbrugh to

10 Milhous, Thomas Betterton 117-118.
11 Milhous, Thomas Betterton 142-143.
predict that the company’s fate rested with the upcoming production of *The Way of the World*: “if Congreve’s Play don’t help ‘em they are undone.” Unable to finance a new building or retain new personnel, their collective organization was near collapse when Betterton took more control of the company. Though unable to maneuver Rich out of Drury Lane, Betterton could at least institute economy measures and discipline at his small theatre. With the arrivals of Powell and Booth, Betterton now had the low-cost luxury of making the old repertory appear new by recasting the plays with the new leading men and Bracegirdle in the younger roles, while he and Barry acted the more mature parts. The return to established plays, coupled with the decision to pay heavily for European singers and dancers, must have made the effort and expense of staging new plays even less attractive. Indeed, Lincoln’s Inn Fields staged only four new plays during the 1701-1702 season. The company survived under Betterton, who also had the satisfaction that his personal triumph as Falstaff in *Henry IV* (January 1700) helped offset the phenomenal success of Farquhar’s *The Constant Couple* the previous December at Drury Lane.13

**Pix Strives To Have A Play Enter The New Theatre Repertory**

As an established writer with the Lincoln’s Inn Fields company, Pix was in the enviable position of seeing her plays reach the stage in a timely fashion. Still prolific, she turned out three more tragedies and another comedy between the fall of 1698 and the spring of 1702, though none of the premiere dates occurred in the preferred time between November and February. *The False Friend, or, the Fate of Disobedience* was staged in May 1699; her comedy *The Beau Defeated: or, The Lucky Younger Brother* appeared prior to Easter in March 1700,

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12 Milhous, *Thomas Betterton* 141.
while *The Double Distress* and *The Czar of Muscovy* were both acted in the spring of 1701.\textsuperscript{14} Yet, despite this impressive output, her career shows a distinct loss of momentum during this second phase of the competition.

Initially, by forcing her to take her plays to Lincoln's Inn Fields, Pix's difficulties with Powell and the Drury Lane production of *The Female Wits* appeared to work to her advantage. The Rebel Company's problems with organization, age, and reluctance to stage new works placed additional obstacles in Pix's path. Unfortunately, no records give the length of the original runs of the four plays she wrote between 1698 and 1702; whether she enjoyed one, two, or no benefit performances for these plays is unknown.\textsuperscript{15} A greater worry for Pix in the long term must have been the fact that none of the four plays entered the New Theatre repertory. Since no information exists concerning Pix's income during this period, her output of four plays, one revised by another writer and one an adaptation,\textsuperscript{16} suggests that she was scrambling to earn a living by writing as quickly as possible. At least Pix's work was sufficiently well regarded for her new plays to be accepted for production as she submitted them.

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\textsuperscript{14} Van Lennep, *The London Stage*, vol. 1, 511, 526; Avery, *London Stage*, vol. 2, 8.
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The False Friend, Or, The Fate Of Disobedience

After her strong start with Drury Lane where both Ibrahim and The Spanish Wives continued as repertory plays, Pix found herself trying a variety of unsuccessful strategies to enter the Lincoln's Inn Fields repertory. With The False Friend, she began conservatively enough. A pathetic tragedy about the undeserved deaths of two young married couples, The False Friend contains the same sort of exploration of female villainy in an exotic setting which had already succeeded in Ibrahim. In an attempt to appeal to any reform-minded patrons who might have been in accord with Collier's recently published immorality charges, the prologue "Hopes a Moral Play your Lives will Mend" while the epilogue claims that "All loose Expressions now are Banish'd hence." Unlike Trotter, who was writing very much to recommend virtue and discourage vice, Pix, in her prologue and epilogue to The False Friend, merely suggests that the play is not offensive in form or content. Pix's play, however, is chiefly concerned to show the effects of the bold-faced villainy of a spurned woman who ruins two marriages that were performed without parental consent. After five acts of unscrupulous intrigue, poisoned daggers, and fatal potions, the evil Appamia, in custody at last, merely pronounces an injunction against what has already concerned most of the play's action:

Let me for ever
Warn my Sex, and fright 'em from the thoughts of
Black Revenge, from being by Violent Passions
Sway'd.18

In addition to paying only lip service to the reformers, The False Friend lacked the scope and Near-Eastern appeal of Ibrahim. Though nominally set in Sardinia, The False

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18 Pix, The False Friend 59.
The False Friend has none of the exotic trappings (harems, eunuchs, a fanatical palace guard, and the like) which enliven her earlier play. Additionally, though Emilius and Adellaida, the brother and sister who have married without their father's consent, are the children of the Sardinian Viceroy, the play deals only with their domestic fortunes rather than the fate of Sardinia itself. In Ibrahim the fate of the kingdom is determined to a large degree by the palace intrigues; The False Friend is concerned with the downfall of two children in a nondescript world who should have kept their father better informed and picked their friends with better judgment. Like some of Trotter's volitionless protagonists, Emilius and Adellaida are easily dispatched because they are ignorant of Appamia's hatred for them. Likewise, the Sardinian Viceroy is ignorant of his children's marital status until their fate is sealed. The play is also flawed (perhaps more for a modern audience) by the fact that Adellaida's husband, Brisac, just happens to be the brother of Lovisa, Emilius's secret wife. Inexplicably, though he is secretly married himself, Brisac is incensed that Lovisa should have married in private as well. Even in an age well known for sexually-based double standards, Brisac's attempted vengeance on his sister for an action that he has taken himself has the false ring of inappropriately contrived plotting.

Luckily, not all of Pix's theatrical sense deserted her in The False Friend. As the title character Appamia, Elizabeth Boman, in the second rank of actresses behind Barry and Bracegirdle, was given plenty of scope to act the devious and deceitful spurned woman. For Elizabeth Barry, who had already demonstrated her reluctance to act Manley's unscrupulously evil Homais in The Royal Mischief, Pix wrote the sympathetic and passionate

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Adellaide character. Adellaide has an appropriately grief-stricken rant in Act Five when she must be forcefully dragged away from her dead husband.21 Paired again with the stalwart John Verbruggen/Emilius, Anne Bracegirdle/Lovisa was given a startling and difficult to act entrance where, having been poisoned, she was required to burst into a scene, “her Hair down, Distracted, Wounded in her Bosome, and Arms,” and expire in agony.22 As opposed to censures about disobeying your parents, seeking unbridled revenge, or abusing friendship, watching Barry and Bracegirdle in passionate distress was the appeal of this play. Despite the advantages of fine performers and some theatrical moments, however, The False Friend became Pix’s third consecutive play to fail to enter the Lincoln’s Inn Fields repertory.

The Beau Defeated, Or, The Lucky Younger Brother

Pix’s next play The Beau Defeated (spring 1700) is a formulaic comedy about foolish country folk and worldly city dwellers intriguing for fortune and love. The play relied on the comic talents of the same trio of actors (Barry, Bracegirdle, and Verbruggen) who played the major roles in The False Friend. As Mrs. Rich, “a Fantastick City Widow,” Barry was called upon to pursue a roguish knight, squander her money at cards, and finally be duped into marrying a rude country squire whom she mistakenly believes is an accomplished gentleman.

Verbruggen was cast as Younger Clerimont, melancholy over his father’s death and swindled of his fortune by his churlish elder brother. As Lady Landsworth, Bracegirdle was once again paired romantically on stage with Verbruggen. The young lovers in The Beau Defeated do not, in the standard ‘gay couple’ fashion, debate the superiority of their independence over the bonds of matrimony nor demand a list of continuing freedoms as a

21 Pix, The False Friend 56.
22 Pix, The False Friend 57-60.
condition for marriage. Instead, in an ill-conceived attempt to stimulate attraction between Clerimont, Jr. and Landsworth, their servants arrange to tell both prospective lovers that the person they are attracted to is the untrustworthy veteran of many intrigues. As a result, when Clerimont Jr. declares his attraction to Lady Landsworth, she mistakenly believes he is inviting her to begin an extramarital affair and spurns him accordingly.\textsuperscript{23} The two servants eventually confess their poor matchmaking scheme, and, after Landsworth eavesdrops while Clerimont proves his virtue, the two make plans to marry.\textsuperscript{24}

The play also contained good acting opportunities for John Boman as a fortune-hunting servant posing as Sir John Roverhead, the 'Beau' character from the title. In the middle of his long career which lasted from the 1670s well into the 1730s, Boman was also able to make use of his singing talents again. In addition to speaking the prologue, Boman performed a comic song in Act Two to the delight of a ladies card party and presumably the theatre patrons.\textsuperscript{25} Boman was also the performer that David Craufurd singled out for refusing over a six-week period to learn his lines for \textit{Courtship A-la-Mode}. Whether Boman performed Pix's work as unwillingly as he did Craufurd's or as credibly as he did Congreve's Tattle in \textit{Love for Love} and Petulant in \textit{The Way of the World} is unknown. The length of Boman's career and the lack of further complaints about his work habits suggests that \textit{Courtship A-la-Mode} was an exception.\textsuperscript{26} Since Pix was well-connected with Congreve and Barry and a frequent writer for Lincoln's Inn Fields, hopefully Boman would treat her as a colleague rather than as the type of pushy outsider which Craufurd appears to have been. That the same actor could be so valued in usual circumstances and so unreliable with an untried writer also gives some

\textsuperscript{23} Pix, \textit{The Beau Defeated} 34-35.
\textsuperscript{24} Pix, \textit{The Beau Defeated} 42-43.
\textsuperscript{25} Pix, \textit{The Beau Defeated} 12.
\textsuperscript{26} Highfill, \textit{BD}, vol. 2, 198-202.
indication that the hungry scramble for new works which had helped Pix, Trotter, and Manley launch their careers in 1695-1696 had slowed considerably by 1700.

A number of other factors make the play noteworthy in terms of the development of Pix's career. In addition to stating that *The Beau Defeated* was "partly a translation from the French" (Hume gives the source as Dancourt's *Le Chevalier à la mode*) and acknowledging that her work "had not the power to please," Pix's dedication says that the play had "no immodesty to offend." Indeed, the characters who behave immorally or foolishly are punished and ridiculed for their follies while, as already noted, the young lovers are eventually able to behave with scrupulous matrimonial propriety. Lady Landsworth even passes judgment on the absurdity of both casual courtship and the theatre itself:

I have seen it all, and despise it: At the Theatre, am tir'd with the double Acted Farce on the Stage, and in the side Boxes; the Noisy Nonsense of the Pit; the Impudence of the Orange Women renders the whole Entertainment to me, a disagreeable Medley. . . .

As Hume notes, the intrigues of Pix's previous comedies, *The Spanish Wives*, *The Innocent Mistress*, and *The Deceiver Deceived*, are essentially moral, but the three plays retain their focus on comic high spirits and fast action. With *The Beau Defeated*, however, Pix moved towards Trotter's position that plays which advocate strict morality will also be viable at the box office.

*The Beau Defeated* contains an interesting allusion to *The Country Wife* (1675) which provides an index of how much Pix was attempting to appeal to a reform audience. As the two misguided servants set about bringing Young Clerimont and Landsworth together, they enlist the help of the gentleman's landlady, Mrs. Fidget. After telling the lie that Clerimont is

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29 Hume, *Development* 418, 421, 445.
scarcely home because of the "forty ladies" who pursue him, Fidget shows Landsworth to Clerimont's lodgings where she claims to keep her best "China." Landsworth even makes an appointment to "chuse some China" when Clerimont comes home that night.\(^{30}\) This detail marks the end of any resemblance to the infamous 'China' scene in Act Four of *The Country Wife* where Horner seduces Lady Fidget while her husband waits in the next room until his wife returns with a piece of Horner's porcelain as an adulterous souvenir.\(^{31}\) Although Landsworth does keep her assignation, when Clerimont attempts a seduction, she does not retire with him to the next room to acquire her trophy. Instead she denounces him as a "vile dissembler" and leaves in a fury. Pix was probably aware that naming a character Fidget and using 'China' as a euphemism for the sexual act would recall *The Country Wife*, still a repertory favorite in 1700. Where Wycherley's play, however, comes close to celebrating the ease with which Horner seduces women and fools their guardians, Pix's virtuous Landsworth indignantly tells Clerimont that "I will remove thee from my sight, and from my Soul, as far as thou art gone from Honour, Truth and Honesty."\(^{32}\) If, as appearances suggest, Pix was attempting to appeal to an audience by rejecting the old hard-style comedy, the results were disappointing. As Hume also points out, with the exception of Steele's *The Funeral* (1701), the comedies which were having the least success in this period were the plays which adopted the most exemplary approach.\(^{33}\) Though hindsight can minimize the effect on playwrights of the cry for reform and focus on the failure of plays written to please the reformers, Pix was mistaken in hoping that exemplary comedy was a path to playwriting success.

\(^{30}\) Pix, *The Beau Defeated* 26-27.  
\(^{32}\) Pix, *The Beau Defeated* 34-35.  
\(^{33}\) Hume, *Development* 438-440.
Another example of Pix’s attempts to make her work succeed commercially was her failure for the first time to include her name with the published version of one of her plays. *The Beau Defeated* appeared without the author’s name on the title page; Pix’s dedication is likewise unsigned. Most notable, the prologue makes a brief reference to the author as “he.” The appeal to the reformers and the use of anonymity to counteract prejudice based on her sex suggests that Pix was taking whatever steps she could to make her plays popular. In an era when new plays were struggling, however, and when Lincoln’s Inn Fields was rarely adding to its repertory, *The Beau Defeated* did not advance Pix’s career.

Nonetheless, one positive aspect of *The Beau Defeated* deserves mention. In May 1709, some time after Pix’s death, a tantalizingly incomplete notice appeared in the *Daily Courant* advertising a benefit performance of Centlivre’s *The Busy Body* for Pix’s estate. The notice also claimed that Pix wrote the “greatest part” of *The Gamester* and *The Busy Body*. This brief comment is the only hard evidence that Pix functioned in a mentoring and collaborative capacity in Centlivre’s career. In reading Pix’s works, however, evidence can be found occasionally of characters and plotting devices that will appear in more polished form in later works by Centlivre.

Among the minor characters in *The Beau Defeated* are two crooked card players, Lady la Basset and Mrs. Trickwell, who do their best to fleece Widow Rich at basset while secretly vying for the attentions of the ubiquitous Roverhead. Though the plot does not turn on the ladies’ fortunes at cards, Roverhead does his singing at a card party, and, later on, Widow Rich attempts to prove the superiority of her lifestyle by ‘drawing the scene’ to reveal la Basset, Trickwell, and a footman named Vermin at play. In particular, la Basset is involved in the play’s resolution; balked in her attempt to gain Roverhead by brandishing a pistol at

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34 Pix, *The Beau Defeated* n. pag.
35 Barbour 10.
Widow Rich, la Basset is the character who reveals that 'Sir John’ was merely a servant in the real Roverhead family.36

In 1704, four years after The Beau Defeated, Centlivre produced the first of her major commercial successes, The Gamester. To what degree, Pix’s plays influenced Centlivre’s is impossible to say. If the two were in the habit of discussing their work together, even collaborating, however, Pix could have given Centlivre the idea to develop one of the lesser features of The Beau Defeated into the major focus of The Gamester. In Pix’s play, the gambling provides supplementary evidence of Widow Rich’s misguided approach to life, while the evil effects of gambling on personal relationships are of primary concern in The Gamester, where the young title character, Valere, is a gambler desperately in debt. Angelica, the woman Valere hopes to marry, says he must choose between her love and gaming. To influence his choice, Angelica dons male clothing and encounters Valere in a gambling house where she wins all of Valere’s money as well as a miniature of her that he promised never to relinquish; she later uses her winnings as part of the means to work Valere’s reclamation.37

As this brief summary shows, the workings of The Gamester are different from those of The Beau Defeated. Yet Centlivre’s play contains enough similar elements -- the atmospheric gaming scenes, dissolute gamblers, and a major character whose judgment in love is clouded by his appetite for card playing -- for Centlivre to have possibly taken her cue from Pix’s failed comedy to write her successful play and its sequel, The Basset-Table (1705). A similar case can be made that Dandle in Pix’s The Different Widows (1703), a young intruder in everyone’s affairs who is laughed at, beaten, and tricked into marrying a servant,38 is a

38 Pix, The Different Widows 1-62.
first draft for one of Centlivre's most famous creations, the meddlesome Marplot in The Busy
Body (1709) and its sequel, Marplot; Or, The Second Part Of The Busie-Body (1710). In Pix's
last comedy The Adventures in Madrid (1706), the character of Jo, an inept servant whose
bumbling lands him in scrapes where he must counterfeit madness and dodge bullets to save
his skin,39 seems like another rehearsal for Marplot, especially since Centlivre's friend
George Pack played both roles. Though evidence of Pix's mentoring relationship with
Centlivre is elusive, the presence of the gaming scenes in The Beau Deated and the
similarity of Pix's Dandle and Jo to Centlivre's Marplot give additional credence to the notion
that, as Pix's own career began to flag, she may still have been able to influence Centlivre's
work.

The Double Distress

In March of 1701, Pix had the distinction of having two new scripts, The Double
Distress and The Czar of Muscovy, produced almost simultaneously. Though the appearance
of two new Pix plays at the same time is unusual, several explanations are possible. Since a
year had passed between The Beau Deated and The Double Distress, Pix, who certainly
worked quickly, had time to pen two plays. Perhaps one of the new works had been written
some time previously, but was forced to wait for an open production slot or the sudden
withdrawal of another play. Certainly the two quick productions provide evidence of the
regeneration of Lincoln's Inn Fields' producing capabilities after Betterton was granted his
new powers. Unfortunately for Pix, however, only three performers (Booth, Arnold, and
Barry) from The Double Distress cast appeared in The Czar of Muscovy. Apparently with
both plays in rehearsal at nearly the same time, the company divided the casts, as much as

39 Mary Pix, The Adventures in Madrid, The Plays of Mary Pix and Catharine
53-55.
possible, into two separate units. As a result, neither cast boasts all of Lincoln’s Inn Fields’ strongest performers, perhaps to the detriment of both productions.

Both plays show Pix continuing her genre experiments without success. With *The Double Distress*, Pix returned to the flamboyant Near-Eastern setting of *Ibrahim*, but, instead of the sensational bloodbath which concludes the earlier play, Pix substituted a contrived and unsatisfactory happy ending. An unusual experiment in prose tragedy, *The Czar of Muscovy* occurs in a brutal Russian setting where a look-alike for the dead heir to the kingdom has schemed his way to the throne. Unfortunately, the impostor, Czar Demetrius, is a two-dimensional villain whose chief aim is to annul his marriage and ravish the fiancé of the man who is legally next in line to be Czar. Since Demetrius’s eventual downfall quickly becomes apparent, the play is forced to arouse audience interest in the degree to which the impostor will menace the women before his downfall. Though both plays have some merit, neither has the combination of energy, inventive plotting, and powerful characters which enliven Pix’s earlier works. With the failure of *The Czar of Muscovy* to enter the repertory, her sixth consecutive such failure, the promise of Pix’s early successes had been replaced by an increasing desperation to find some approach, any approach, to please an audience.

Of the two tragedies Pix produced in the spring of 1701, *The Double Distress* is the stronger script. The prefatory material, however, makes a number of statements which show the growing pressures under which Pix labored. In her dedication, an elaborate compliment to Viscount Fitz-Harding, Pix makes the fawning comment that “the Play is not wholly mine, because I thought it done and revised by abler Hands, and therefore fitter to lay at your Lordships Feet.” Though generally modest about her accomplishments, this is Pix’s first acknowledgment that one of her plays required revision by another author to reach the stage. The comment contrasts with Pix’s remark in the dedication to *Ibrahim* that “I am often told,

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and always pleased when I hear it, that the Works not mine..."41 By 1701 Pix's bashful pride in her own creativity has been replaced by a readiness to humbly accept the judgment of another writer in hopes of success.

Openly discussing the long odds against presenting "A Serious Play in this Fantastick Age," the prologue to The Double Distress notes that the writers and theatres were at a loss for means to recapture the audience: "we've shew'n all we can to make you easie,/Tumblers and Monkeys, on the Stage to please you." The speech even suggests that the subject of Pix's previous play, The Beau Defeated, can be better observed in the audience or outside the theatre: "The Beau in Person shews himself to all/Much better in Side-Boxes and the Mall." As an additional measure of Lincoln's Inn Fields's despondency, an even more drastic way to make the theatre popular again is proposed:

'Tis quickly done, the Racket Walls remain,)  
Give us but only time to shift the Scene,)  
And Presto, we're a Tennis Court again.)42

Perhaps feeling a similar sense of desperation, in The Double Distress Pix would resort to yet another attempt to juggle plot elements to produce a successful play.

After establishing a reasonably effective set of complicating circumstances among the princes and princesses vying for control of the Persian empire, The Double Distress strains unconvincingly to reach a happy ending. The prologue alludes to one of Pix's means to bring her tragedy to a favorable conclusion: "Tho' our Play without a Villain's out of Fashion./We hope no less to move your tender Passion."43 As might be expected, an attempt to write a tragedy without an antagonist was bound to lead to some structural anomalies. Pix's ineffective solution was to leave her villains offstage; all the trials suffered in The Double

42 Pix, "Prologue," The Double Distress n. pag.
43 Pix, "Prologue," The Double Distress n. pag.
Distress by her heroes and heroines are due to the machinations and bad judgment of two
characters who never appear in the play: Astiages, King of Medea, an "Ungrateful Monster,"
and his second wife,

... ambitious Orna,
The product of a vile and perfect States-man,
Begot when his black Soul was forming Mischief,
And stamp'd with all her Father's Haughtiness,
Curst Avarice, and Cunning.44

By refusing to include these evil characters in the on-stage action in The Double Distress, Pix
produces something akin to Ibrahim without the dissolute Sultan and the destructive energy
of Sheker Para.

Instead of pitting virtuous characters against the villainies of Astiages and Orna, the
play turns on mistaken identities concerning the King of Persia's two chief generals,
Cleomedon/Barton Booth and Cyraxes/John Verbruggen. The two generals are opposed by
Tygranes/Benjamin Husband, Orna and Astiages's son and deputy, who wants to defeat the
Persians and marry Cytheria/Bracegirdle, a princess who has been raised in ignorance of her
parentage. Cytheria is faced with the 'double distress' posed by her love for Tygranes which
goes against her political loyalties to Persia; she is also beleaguered by disturbing prophesies
that she may commit incest with her brother. Indeed, in his attempts to thwart Cytheria's
interest in Tygranes, Cyraxes displays more than brotherly affection for her. Cytheria's
friend Leamira, Princess of Persia/Barry, is likewise in dire straits because she and
Cleomedon have fallen in love at first sight; his lineage is too lowly for him to aspire to
marry a princess.

Pix untangles this complicated knot in an unusual manner. In Act Four, news arrives
that Astiages has been captured and a repentant Orna has slain herself.45 Likewise in

44 Pix, The Double Distress 2-3.
45 Pix, The Double Distress 45.
custody, Tygranes makes secret plans to marry Cytheria after she contrives his escape. The morning after the planned elopement Cyraxes announces to Cytheria that she is actually the daughter of Astiages and his first wife; therefore, Tygranes is her brother. Aghast, Cytheria claims that the "earth groans under my incestuous weight" until Cyraxes is able to deliver the relieving and unnerving news that, in a variation of the old comic bed trick, he actually married her the night before and "rifled her charms." Instead of being angry with her ex-brother-turned-husband, Cytheria is overjoyed at being saved from incest and discovering herself a princess. Leamira is overjoyed as well to discover that Cleomedon is heir to the Medean throne and therefore worthy of her hand. Tygranes is quickly reconciled to the fact that his former love is really his sister and renounces his desire for conquest. Declaring that "My Head's too feeble for the ponderous weight," Darius actually abdicates the Persian throne to the never-seen Astiages so that everyone except Orna manages to live happily ever after.

In her dedication to The Double Distress, Pix comments that "The Success answered my Expectation" which gives the impression that the play had at least one and perhaps two well-paying benefits. The combination of improbable plot complications and the contrived happy ending must have placed additional demands on the performers to achieve whatever success the piece had. Luckily, Pix could rely again on Verbruggen, Bracegirdle, and Barry; at this point, the same trio of performers had appeared in all six Pix plays staged at Lincoln's Inn Fields beginning with The Innocent Mistress in 1697. As usual, Pix used the romantic duo of Verbruggen as the fiery General Cyraxes, and Bracegirdle as Cytheria, struggling passionately with her conflicting duties, fears, and passions. For Barry, Pix wrote a character who is nobly true to Cleomedon despite attempts to force her into an arranged political

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46 Pix, The Double Distress 54-58.
47 Pix, The Double Distress 59-64.
marriage with Tygranes. Pix also paid another compliment to Barry’s beauty by having the victorious Cleomedon, who is immediately enraptured by her charms, kneel before her at their first meeting and declare his undying love. The Double Distress also had the advantage of Betterton’s new protégé, Barton Booth, as the gallant Cleomedon, while Tygranes was acted by young Benjamin Husband at the beginning of a career in London and Dublin which would last into the 1740s. Moreover, the play featured an operatic scene in the “Temple of the Sun” where, after a “Hymn to Apollo, Solemn Musick [and] Antick dances,” Leamira and Cytheria request their “Loves eternal Doom.” Despite the additional spectacle and experienced cast, however, and perhaps because of the contrived ending and lack of on-stage villains, The Double Distress marks yet another failure by Pix to produce a repertory play.

The two epilogues printed with the play give more clues to the difficulties Pix labored under as she worked at Lincoln’s Inn Fields. Though the dedication is signed “Mary Pix” and the prologue refers to her as “Our modest Muse,” the first of the two epilogues refers four times in three lines to a male author:

pray repay the Poet his good Nature,
Since ’tis at my Request he spares his Satyr.
If not -- He knows such monstrous things of some... The passage reads as if Pix (or whoever authorized the epilogue) wished to make sure that the audience left the theatre without any reminders of the playwright’s sex that would prejudice them against the play.

48 Pix, The Double Distress 13-16.  
The second epilogue, "Sent by C. V.," begins with the type of reference increasingly common as William III's reign drew to a close and the Whigs and Tories redoubled their struggle for political power:

Faction, the Curse of every free-born State,
The People's Darling, and Prince's Hate,
Reigns with Advantage in this froward Age,)
And with pernicious discontented Rage,)
Embroils the Court and Town; nay, ev'n the Stage.\textsuperscript{52}

Though the theatre had already discovered that neutrality was the best policy towards political factions, impartiality would become increasingly difficult for the women playwrights to maintain on a personal basis.

As the debilitating struggle between Drury Lane and Lincoln's Inn Fields dragged on into the eighteenth century, rumors circulated at times concerning an impending reunion. Perhaps reflecting some willingness to compromise at the Patent House, Catharine Trotter's \textit{The Unhappy Penitent} (February 1701) contains a moderate suggestion that the two factions replace shouting with concessions:

But now the peaceful Tattle of the Town,
Is how to join both Houses into one,
And whilst the blustering hot-brain'd Heroes fight,
Our softer Sex pleads gently to unite.\textsuperscript{53}

The "C. V." epilogue from \textit{The Double Distress} makes reference to a merger and begins by apparently supporting the idea:

Sure these two Companies from ours arose,)
Faction divided first, and made 'em Foes,)
And want but our Example now to close,)
Let 'em with us lay hold on the occasion,
Was lately given for Reconciliation. . . \textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{52} C. V., "Epilogue," \textit{The Double Distress} n. pag.
\textsuperscript{54} C. V., "Epilogue," \textit{The Double Distress} n. pag.
As the speech proceeds, however, what the writer appears to have in mind (and what Pix tacitly endorses by having the piece spoken at, and printed along with, her play) is a nearly complete curtailment of Christopher Rich's authority in any new United Company. If only the first word of the following selection, "He," can be taken to refer to Betterton and the words "Projector," "Worship," "Director," "the Man," "Governour," and all subsequent "his's" and "he's" designate Christopher Rich, then the proposed reconciliation would be humiliating to the head of the Patent Company:

He who propos'd for us shall do the same
(If they're content to be control'd) for them:
'Twould be a lucky Thought for the Projector,
If they should make his Worship a Director.
'Faith, as to us, I think (who e'er he was)
He had contriv'd himself a pretty place.
None but selected Beauty's here had shone
The Choice of all the Fair had been his own.
How pleasantly the Man had past his Time!
Turk Mahomet had never liv'd like him.
If the Reformers of this pious Age
Will set up a Seraglio on the Stage,
Pray let the Governour, before he come in
His Place, be qualify'd to rule the Women.
You know how 'tis in Turky; Let the Town
Prevent his Pleasure, to secure their own.55

What this passage actually suggests is that the two companies be reunited with Rich retained as a management gelding. Rich, we may safely assume, preferred to continue running the Patent House rather than become a eunuch of any kind. The barbed tone of this epilogue shows that the Lincoln's Inn Fields company still took a haughty approach to reuniting the companies. To let this broadside be published with her play, Pix must have been sure she would never work at Drury Lane again.

55 C. V., "Epilogue," The Double Distress n. pag.
The Czar Of Muscovy

The only surviving evidence concerning the reception of Pix's second play that spring, The Czar of Muscovy, is that the piece did not enter the Lincoln's Inn Fields repertory. Again, the play's failure to be revived can be attributed partially to a pair of familiar factors, poor audience support for new tragedies and the difficulties of entering the New Theatre repertory. Additionally, the play suffered because of its ineffectually villainous central character, inadequate plotting, and the comparative inexperience of the cast.

In an attempt at using topicality to attract an audience, The Czar of Muscovy tries to take advantage of any interest that may have been generated by Peter the Great's 1698 visit to England. As the prologue notes:

'Tis known how very civil one was here:  
For his Sake then may this be not accurst;)  
We hope you'll find (if to his Name you're just)  
A Second Czar obliging as the first.)

Perhaps a closer similarity between Pix's title character and Peter the Great can be found in the young Czar's treatment of Drury Lane actress Letitia Cross, who was procured as companion for his London visit; evidently the young nobleman was dissatisfied with the actress's attentions, while Cross, in her turn, found the Czar stingy with her fee. In any case, the impostor Czar Demetrius in Pix's play is no player at the table of world events; rather, in the first scene, which includes his wedding procession with Marina, Demetrius conceives a towering lust for Zarrianna, fiancée of Zueski, the rightful heir to the throne. The remainder

of the play concerns what kind of mistreatment Demetrius will be able to perpetrate against Marina and Zarrianna before he and his ruffians are vanquished.

Perhaps in the uncertain atmosphere of William III's last years, Pix felt especially hampered in writing about an always chancy subject for a writer who lived in a monarchy, a ruler who must be deposed. Early on, Demetrius is identified as an "Impostor" and "Usurper." We learn later that he wants to impose Catholicism (à la James II) on an unwilling populace.58 Throughout, Demetrius behaves with such a despicable combination of lust, cruelty, and inability to recognize his own impending downfall, that the play generates very little suspense. Though Pix was probably safe from charges of seditious intent in presenting a monarch who is forcibly removed from his throne, the price of that safety was the creation of an arbitrary tyrant who, from the outset, is clearly destined to be dethroned.

Since the outcome of The Czar of Muscovy is rarely in doubt, the responsibility for intriguing the audience with Demetrius's villainies, the dangers to Zarrianna and Marina, and the noble rescue attempts of Zueski and Alexander (who loves Marina) fell more squarely than ever on the New Theatre cast. Chances are that, since The Double Distress and The Czar of Muscovy were in rehearsal at nearly the same time, actors with more substantial roles in the first play were given less responsibility or kept out of the second cast altogether. Though John Verbruggen and Anne Bracegirdle might have been expected to act the dashing Alexander and the nobly struggling Marina in The Czar of Muscovy, the two roles were taken by John Boman, cast slightly out of the faithful friend type he often played in tragedy, and his wife Elizabeth, a competent performer but not Bracegirdle's equal.59

Perhaps because Pix's friend Elizabeth Barry had played a relatively small part in The Double Distress, Barry also took the role of Zarrianna in The Czar of Muscovy. Much of

what power the production possessed must have come from her steadfast refusal to succumb to Demetrius. In one of the play’s better plot twists, Demetrius orders the execution of the rightful heir Zueski/Barton Booth, but he foolishly turns his prisoner over to a general who is loyal to Zueski and refuses to carry out the order. Before Zueski’s reappearance, Demetrius suggests that he can make amends to Zarrianna for her lover’s death if she will yield to his importunities. Barry would certainly have been capable of acting Zarrianna’s reply that Demetrius could reconcile himself by tearing out his “execrable heart” so she can “see it panting at my Feet.” When Demetrius orders in a guard to help him force Zarrianna, she places a dagger against her breast, determined to die rather than surrender. As Zarrianna departs victoriously from the encounter, she suggests that Demetrius will soon be in hell to “roar amongst thy Fellow Devils.”

One of Lincoln’s Inn Fields’s non-sharing players, John Hodgson, a United Company veteran with a record of military service and a penchant for dueling, was cast as the depraved impostor Demetrius. No evidence exists concerning the level of Hodgson’s performance. Considering the one-dimensional nature of the character, even Samuel Sandford, the company’s recently retired expert stage villain, would have had difficulty rescuing the role or the play. Aside from Elizabeth Barry, the other most experienced member of the cast was Elinor Leigh, but she played the old empress Sophia, a minor role chiefly important for establishing Demetrius’s illegitimacy beyond any doubt. For the most part, the cast was peopled with journeymen performers like Mr. Berry as the loyal general and Mr. Arnold (Gloucester in Pix’s Queen Catharine) as Cardos, Demetrius’s chief henchman. Also appearing were young performers like Mr. Knapp, who would have a substantial career until 1719 at John Rich’s Lincoln’s Inn Fields, and George Pack, who would later make his

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60 Pix, The Czar of Muscovy 20-22.
reputation as Marplot in Centlivre’s The Busy Body, but they were cast insignificantly as loyal “Lords of Mosco.”

Considering how Centlivre’s early associations with Wilks and Cibber would substantially benefit her career, hindsight derives some similar hopes at seeing Barton Booth’s name in the cast for both The Double Distress and The Czar of Muscovy. If Booth had any lingering fondness for Pix’s plays when he joined Cibber and Wilks as the third Triumvir at Drury Lane, that nostalgic affection did not translate into a revival of either play. A definitive answer as to why Booth’s relationship with Pix did not flourish as well as Centlivre’s with Booth’s partners is unavailable. A number of inferences can be drawn, however, that partially explain why Pix’s plays were not revived. At this point, in Cibber’s phrase, Booth was “an Under-graduate of the Buskin”; his long climb to prominence was not complete until the combination of his political connections and his triumph as Cato in 1713 forced Booth’s inclusion in the Drury Lane management. By the end of 1713, Pix, Barry, Verbruggen, and probably Elizabeth Boman were dead; John Boman was spending a fair amount of his time at Dublin’s Smock Alley Theatre; and Anne Bracegirdle had retired in 1707. To revive these early Pix plays would have been to recast them as though they were new works. Additionally, with the return to the one theatre company system and the subsequent reduction in the need for new repertory, Booth would have been more likely to be interested in consolidating his gains from Cato, rather than reviving his lesser roles from lesser plays that had not originally been successful. Unfortunately for Pix, and for Booth as well, she did not write a role for him that was comparable to Centlivre’s Marplot in The Busy

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Body which so enhanced George Pack’s career or Farquhar’s Sir Harry Wildair in *The Constant Couple* which catapulted Wilks to stardom and made Farquhar a fixture at Drury Lane. Instead, Booth would have to toil for another dozen years to make his fortune, by which point Pix’s New Theatre plays had little chance of entering the Drury Lane repertory.

By the end of the second phase of the competition in 1702, Pix’s star had fallen considerably. The quick repertory entries of *Ibrahim* and *The Spanish Wives* were fading memories; she never had another new play done at Drury Lane, site of those early successes. Having failed to win a quick victory over the Patentees, Lincoln’s Inn Fields was no longer the best place for an author to get a new work done. The sense of melodramatic and comic theatricality that frequently enlivened Pix’s plays through *The Deceiver Deceived* appeared less often in her later works at Lincoln’s Inn Fields. In perhaps an even more serious development, of the four major players who had helped her New Theatre plays to such success as they enjoyed, Betterton, Bracegirdle, and John Verbruggen were all absent from the cast of *The Czar of Muscovy*. Even Pix’s sponsor, Elizabeth Barry, would not appear in the cast of her next play, *The Different Widows*.

**Trotter Returns To Drury Lane**

While Pix’s career was faltering at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, Trotter’s next play *Love at a Loss, or, Most Votes carry it* was staged by the Patent Company. Unfortunately, no clear explanation exists for her decision to return to Drury Lane with her third play. Perhaps since Trotter had not been the main target of *The Female Wits*, the Patent Company, still desperate for new scripts, was ready to forget old disagreements in exchange for a new play. By the end of December 1700, Powell, who as Rich’s rehearsal supervisor had been deeply involved in *The Female Wits* in addition to plagiarizing from Pix, had quit the Patent Company when it became apparent that Robert Wilks was ready to supplant him as leading man and as Rich’s deputy.
Indeed, Powell’s heavy drinking and brawling sent his career into a tailspin over the
next several years. In early May 1698, Powell assaulted a member of the Davenant family at
Will’s Coffee house. As a result, Drury Lane was closed for as much as two weeks, and Powell
did not act again until the following fall. With the arrival of Wilks, whose skills Downes
compares to those of Charles Hart, the top King’s Company actor of the 1670s, Powell’s days
were numbered. Cibber, who by this time was close enough to Christopher Rich to be
included in his “Parties of Pleasure; very often tête à tête, and sometimes, in a Partie
quarrée,” advised Rich that Wilks’s industry, despite his quarrelsome nature, was more
advantageous to the theatre than the seldom sober Powell’s convivial ability to persuade the
actors to work on short pay. Rich agreed and appointed Wilks as “Bustle-master-general” at
Drury Lane. Rather than take orders from his rival, Powell left the Patent Company in
December 1700; by May 1701 he was performing at Lincoln’s Inn Fields. Upon assuming his
new duties, Wilks immediately set about reviving plays in which he had starred at Dublin’s
Smock Alley Theatre. Initially then, little of the new manager’s considerable energy was
devoted to new play production.

On the other hand, Wilks’s friend George Farquhar was evidently quite taken with
Trotter’s personal charm and writing ability. As an admirer of Trotter’s Fatal Friendship,
Farquhar was pleased to see her in attendance at the third night of his Love and a Bottle and
later sent her a presentation copy of the play. Perhaps as Wilks assumed more authority in

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65 Highfill, BD, vol. 12, 110-111.
66 Downes 104.
67 Cibber, Apology 140-142.
68 Highfill, BD, vol. 12, 111.
69 Cibber, Apology 142.
70 Thomas Birch, “Life of the Author,” The Works of Mrs. Catharine Cockburn,
Theological, Moral, Dramatic, and Poetical, vol. 1 (1751; Ann Arbor: UMI Out-of-
Print Books on Demand, 1991) viii-ix.
the company, Farquhar was able to suggest that he give Trotter another chance at Drury Lane. Perhaps also during the production of *Fatal Friendship* at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, Trotter had failed to make the kind of personal connections that Pix had with Barry and other important members of the Rebel Company. Also, the New Theatre company, whose interest was in works written in the more ethically ambiguous style common prior to 1695, was less likely to be well disposed towards plays written in the strict reform mode which Trotter favored. As Elizabeth Barry surveyed new scripts for good roles for herself and money-making possibilities for the company, perhaps Trotter’s restrained, intellectual characters had less personal appeal to the actress than Pix’s more flamboyant heroines.

**Love At A Loss, Or, Most Votes Carry It**

In any case, *Love at a Loss* premiered unsuccessfully at Drury Lane on 23 November 1700 and was not subsequently revived.\(^71\) Reflecting in her dedication on the play’s disappointing reception, Trotter sounds both haughty and wounded:

> ‘tis common for the least vain, when oppress’d with Calumny, to assert themselves, and by reflecting on what they find of most worth in their performances, to support themselves under their ill Fate, and take their Revenge in despising the Judgments that condemn’d them.\(^72\)

This kind of defiance is a far cry from Trotter’s earlier prefatory remarks where she meekly promises to amend her dramaturgical faults. As she continues, Trotter reveals that, like Pix, she has been tinkering with the genre of what she has been writing in hopes of producing a popular success:

> I never thought of making any pretence to a Talent for Comedy, but writ this when the Town had been little pleas’d with Tragedy intire, mingled with one of mine, which since the tast[e] is mend[ed] appear’d alone; and this lay by me

\(^71\) Avery, *The London Stage*, vol. 2, 5.

a considerable time, till Idleness reminded me of filling it up, thus it was
piec'd with little Care or Concern for the success; not intending to [rest] my
Fame upon it, till some of my Friends assuring me I need not apprehend losing
any by it, and the Censure it met with since, endear'd it to me, made me
earnest to have it clear it self of the injurious Report it suffer'd under, by
appearing in Print.\textsuperscript{73}

Rather than writing what she hoped would be good plays in a genre determined by her sense
of what was appropriate to her topic, Trotter contemplated putting comic scenes into what she
felt should be the purely tragic plot of (presumably) \textit{Fatal Friendship}; she also wrote a
comedy, though she felt she had no skill in comic writing, in hopes of pleasing “the Town.”

Though the transfer of characters, scenes, and even plot lines between uncompleted
plays must be common among working playwrights, Trotter’s failure to succeed as a comedy
writer must have added extra impetus to her growing disenchantment with the theatre. Since
she resolutely believed that plays should preach moral virtue, Trotter was being flexible
where she could in terms of the means by which she delivered that message. At her friends’
urging, Trotter strayed reluctantly from the tragic form where she felt most secure as a writer,
experimented with comedy in hopes of finding favor, and found herself “condemn’d” where
she had hoped to be applauded. After her remarks about suffering calumnious oppression as a
result of the play’s reception, Trotter’s claim to “little Care or Concern” for the fate of \textit{Love at
a Loss} reads as though she is adopting an attitude of affected indifference. Instead of
promising to amend her faults with her next play, Trotter turned to a different medium, print,
to defend the failings of her current work. That she should seek redress outside the theatre is
another indicator that Trotter was growing restless with her chosen occupation.

As a stage piece, \textit{Love at a Loss} is prolix in terms of language and moral
pronouncements and short on intriguing characters and events. The plot concerns three women,
Lesbia, Miranda, and Lucilia, who are on the verge of marriage. Though she is contracted to

\textsuperscript{73} Trotter, “Dedication,” \textit{Love at a Loss} n. pag.
the wayward Beaumine, Lesbia has inclinations towards an old suitor, Grandfoy. Wishing to enjoy the thrill of a last intrigue before her pending marriage to Constant, Miranda flirts with Beaumine. Following bad advice before she met Philabell, the man she desires, Lucilia wrote encouraging letters to the foppish Cleon which are still in his possession. Eventually, Cleon is prevailed upon to give up his pretensions to Lucilia, who is reconciled with Philabell; Miranda renounces flirtation in favor of marriage to Constant; and Beaumine and Lesbia agree to wed.

The play, which J. H. Wilson dismisses as "an aimless genteel comedy, very dull," moves at a snail's pace. In Act One, the women explain their points of view to each other, and the men do likewise. In Act Two, the men and women visit each other to discuss what keeps them apart. What action occurs does not begin until Act Three, when the low comedy characters are finally introduced, and proceeds from a ring given to Lesbia by Beaumine, that Lesbia in turn has bestowed upon Grandfoy. Misunderstandings also occur between Cleon, Philabell, and Lucilia concerning an appeal she has written to the foppish Cleon to cajole him into returning her earlier notes. In the meantime, the three couples' problems are exacerbated by Bonsot, Cleon's officious and meddlesome brother.

Finally, Miranda and Lesbia agree to behave sensibly towards Constant and Beaumine, just as Grandfoy and Beaumine rationally agree not to duel over Lesbia. In both instances, Trotter's judgment of the proper way to behave causes her to choose the least dramatic of two alternative approaches to a situation. In fact, Lesbia's means of deciding which of her suitors to wed is to put the question to a vote; Beaumine wins three to two and promises to reform, while Grandfoy graciously accepts defeat and asks for the couple's friendship. Throughout, these slow moving, tame episodes are punctuated with moral

74 John Harold Wilson, Unpublished Notes, John Harold Wilson Papers, Rare Book Room, Ohio State University Library, Columbus, n. pag.
75 Trotter, Love at a Loss 1-56.
pronouncements (Lesbia’s “Deceit in marriage must be egregiously playing the fool...” is a succinct example) that remind the audience to leave the theatre and behave morally ever after.

Having admitted her doubts about her ability to write comedy, Trotter might have been able to regard Love at a Loss as a failed, but worthwhile, experiment and move on, essentially undaunted, to her next tragedy, The Unhappy Penitent. Since Love at a Loss was her first offering to the Drury Lane company since 1695, however, the comedy’s failure must have been more conspicuous and damaging because of the poor impression left with the new Patent Company power structure. A glance through the Love at a Loss cast list reveals the presence of Wilks/Beaumine and Cibber/Cleon, two of the Triumvirs who would control Drury Lane from 1710 to 1730 or so. As already noted, Wilks was about to take over management of rehearsals from Powell, a duty that, along with the acting of many leading roles, Wilks would not relinquish until his death in 1732.77 Also, present among the men were John Mills/Phillabell, who was to play second lead to Wilks for the next thirty years; Joseph Williams/Constant, a strong performer at Drury Lane ever since the Rebel Company had offered him insufficient money in 1695; and ‘Pinky’ Pinkethman/Bonsot, the heir apparent to Jo Haines as the company’s low comedian. Pinkethman was also a theatrical entrepreneur and fair booth regular who would operate summer theatres in Greenwich and Richmond after 1709.78

In addition to Frances Maria Knight/Lesbia and Susanna Verbruggen/Miranda, long-time Patent Company leading ladies, the cast also included young Anne Oldfield in her second season. If Cibber is to be believed, Oldfield had yet to show the sparkling talent which

76 Trotter, Love at a Loss 10.
77 Highfill, BD, vol. 16, 118-119.
would make her the company’s top actress. Yet already Oldfield was speaking prologues and epilogues, a mark of performer popularity, taking important roles, and well on her way to the type of influence within the company that would nearly cause her inclusion in the Triumvirate of 1710. Despite her ultimate exclusion from company management due to Thomas Dogget’s refusal to co-manage with a woman, Oldfield would become, after Elizabeth Barry’s retirement, the most influential female performer of her era. Indeed, a fair portion of Centlivre’s later success would be due to writing appropriate roles for Oldfield.

Unfortunately for Trotter, though Oldfield, Wilks, and Mills all appeared in The Unhappy Penitent, sufficient positive chemistry evidently did not develop between the performers and the playwright for them to stage further works of hers after the 1701 season. Trotter’s last play, The Revolution of Sweden, would be acted in February 1706 by the company that Betterton led to Vanbrugh’s Queen’s Theatre in the Haymarket. Just as the failure of Love at a Loss to appear at Lincoln’s Inn Fields signaled that she had not found a comfortable avenue for her works with the Rebel Company, the November 1700 disappearance of Trotter’s comedy at the Theatre-Royal, followed by the brief run of The Unhappy Penitent there the following February, indicates that Trotter was unable to achieve the insider status that Pix had managed earlier at the New Theatre and Centlivre would attain at Drury Lane.

The Unhappy Penitent

After the disappointing reception of Love at a Loss, Trotter must have been pleased to have The Unhappy Penitent go into production so soon afterwards; perhaps the two plays had even been accepted together, a conjecture which could account for the appearance of a

79 Cibber, Apology 165-166.
second Trotter script so soon after the failure of the first. Unfortunately for Trotter, though the play received a decent premiere date, 4 February 1701, Drury Lane was already offering The Tempest by Friday the seventh. Therefore, at best, Trotter received the proceeds of only one benefit on Thursday the sixth, and the play was not revived. After failing so completely with her second effort at Drury Lane in little more than three months, Trotter's playwriting career had reached a low ebb.

In her dedication to Lord Halifax, Trotter claims awareness of her limitations as a writer yet appears sadly ignorant of the reasons for her play's failure. Perhaps she hoped that after her ill-fated attempt at comedy, her return to the tragic form would rescue her reputation and career. Taking refuge in an academic tone, Trotter declares that Dryden, Otway, and Lee were most successful when "they observ'd their peculiar Talent, and confin'd themselves to it." At this point, however, her scholarly quibbles about Shakespeare's "Faults against the Rules of Poetry" give way to a bleak acknowledgment of what little claim to merit The Unhappy Penitent had:

I know too well the Bounds of my stinted Talent, and I fear may rather be accused of not having exerted the little strength I have, than of aiming beyond it in this weak Performance, which I presume not to offer your Lordship but as an object of your mercy; and like some City Ladies who are content to be the jest at Court rather than not appear there, I feel a Satisfaction in the Honour of being known to your Lordship, tho' only by my Faults.

This forthright admission sounds like the beginning of Trotter's evaluation of the play's shortcomings. Though Trotter does go on to make the straightforward comment that "The knowledge of our Transgressions may be a considerable Step towards amending them for the

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83 Trotter, "To the Right Honourable Charles Lord Halifax," The Unhappy Penitent n. pag.
future, but 'tis certainly a great aggravation of them in the Committing,84 she apparently felt a dedication was no place for a soul searching analysis of her creative failings.

Instead, Trotter raises her scholarly defenses again to claim that the "foundation of all the rest" of the play's failings is "a defect in the Plot,... the Distress is not great enough, the Subject of it only the misfortune of Lovers...." Providing her own translation, Trotter quotes from Boileau's *Art Poetique* that love is "a Frailty, and becomes a Vice, when cherish'd as an exalted Vertue." Furthermore, she states that her choice of a topic "not Noble, not solemn enough for Tragedy" was "partly design'd in Compliance with the effeminate taste of the Age...."85 This last comment points clearly at the impasse Trotter's career had reached by 1701. In an era when new tragedies rarely pleased their audience, Trotter blamed the failure of *The Unhappy Penitent* on a concession made in the planning stages based upon her misconception of audience taste. The play did not fail because "the principal Characters are indeed doting Lovers, but hurry'd by their Passion into a Fault of which their immediate punishment makes them conscious...."86 Rather, Trotter's continued insistence on didactic moralizing along with some recognizable plotting flaws accounted for the quick disappearance of *The Unhappy Penitent*.

The dedication to *The Unhappy Penitent* concludes with Trotter's rather Collier-like appeal to Lord Halifax, a famous patron of the arts, to "reform the abuses" of the stage with the same thoroughness and skill with which he had restructured the English currency system and for the same purpose, the good of the country. In suggesting that a "State Policy" would be "a Divine one to contrive that" the people's "very Pleasures be made their Instruction,"

Trotter showed how deeply she felt that moral lessons were the purpose of theatre. Trotter's proposal that a member of the government, no matter how benevolent his attitude towards

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84 Trotter, "To Lord Hallifax" n. pag.
85 Trotter, "To Lord Hallifax" n. pag.
86 Trotter, "To Lord Hallifax" n. pag.
the stage, be invited to reform the theatre like Hercules in the stables, cannot have been well received by the likes of Cibber, Wilks, and the other Drury Lane personnel who had just spent the time, money, and effort required to stage another of her plays only to see the production falter after three performances.

Among the actors, only Jane Rogers, who played Margarite of Flanders, the heroine of The Unhappy Penitent, might have been expected to support Trotter. Distressingly for Trotter, Rogers lacked the standing that made Barry such an ally for Pix at Lincoln's Inn Fields. As Cibber tells the story, after a tempestuous affair with Wilks which ended with a child and recriminations, Rogers began to demand that she be cast only in virtuous roles:

I have formerly known an Actress carry this Theatrical Prudery to such a height, that she was very near keeping herself chaste by it: Her fondness for Virtue on the Stage she began to think might persuade the World that it made an Impression on her private life.  

Although Rogers was one of the top Drury Lane performers, her difficult relationship with Wilks would have reduced any influence that her interest in reform of the theatre might possibly wield in the theatre. Later in her career, Rogers quarreled publicly with Anne Oldfield over the role of Andromache in The Distrest Mother. Rogers felt the playwright had offered her the role; Oldfield refused to act unless she played the part. Not surprisingly, Wilks sided with Oldfield. When John Rich reopened Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1715, Rogers joined his company.  

Due to her strained relations with top company personnel, any support Rogers may have shown for Trotter would have been unlikely to influence Wilks in the playwright's favor.

In her laudatory verses "To the Excellent Mrs. Catharine Trotter" published with The Unhappy Penitent, Sarah Piers, who was returning the compliment Trotter paid by dedicating Love at a Loss to her, summarized what Trotter's plays had to offer:

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77 Cibber, Apology 79-80.

By thy judicious Rules the Hero learns
To vanquish Fate, and weild his Conq’ring Arms,
The bashful Virgin to defend her heart,
The prudent Wife to scorn dishonest Art,
The Friend sincerity; temp’rance the Youth,
The Lover Chastity, and Statesman Truth.®

In addition to writing only in accordance with the views of reformers like Collier who were not theatre patrons, Trotter’s choice to create characters who are governed by an uncompromising list of succinctly stated, “judicious Rules” and reward or punish them accordingly gives her works a mechanical, predictable quality; if virgins are immodest, wives imprudent, friends insincere, youths intemperate, lovers unchaste, statesmen untruthful, just punishment will surely follow.

A look at the action of The Unhappy Penitent reveals this rote poetic justice in action alongside the same kinds of flaws in construction which mar Agnes de Castro and Fatal Friendship. Set in France, the plot of Trotter’s third tragedy focuses on the marriage options of King Charles the Eighth/Mills. Betrothed to, but not especially interested in, Margarite of Flanders/Jane Rogers, Charles begins to consider the political advantages and other charms of marriage to Ann of Brittanie/Oldfield. During the two years of her desultory engagement to Charles, Margarite has fallen in love with the Duke of Lorrain/Wilks. Unfortunately, Ann’s brother, the Duke of Brittanie/Philip Griffin, intrigues to send Lorrain on an expedition to Naples so that he can press his suit with an unsuspecting Margarite.

Faced with her lover’s impending departure, Margarite makes plans to elope with Lorrain before her betrothal to Charles is officially canceled. As confidante to Margarite, Ann becomes acquainted with their plans, but, as an advocate of strict morality, Ann informs Margarite that the very existence of her plan to abscond in secret proves that Margarite’s

® Sarah Piers, “To the Excellent Mrs. Catharine Trotter,” The Unhappy Penitent n. pag.
intentions are dishonorable. Instead, Ann persuades Margarite to write Charles a letter asking his permission to end the betrothal and marry Lorrain. King Charles's unpredictable response to Margarite's letter is a rekindling of his interest in her. When Margarite is furious with the backfired strategy, Ann reminds her that her present misery is superior to the reproaches of the "Just and Vertuous", not to mention her own remorse had she acted immorally. Not assuaged by Ann's upright counsel, Margarite and Lorrain proceed with the elopement.

After the marriage, but before his rival's departure, Brittanie gives Lorrain a forged letter purportedly from King Charles thanking Margarite for past sexual favors. Inexplicably, Lorrain believes the worst and immediately accuses his new wife of infidelity. When Margarite reveals her marriage and Lorrain's accusations to her confidante, Ann declares that Margarite has been "Corrupted by deceitful, ruinous Passions."\(^{90}\) On the condition that Margarite agree to renounce her dishonorable marriage to Lorrain when her reputation is restored, Ann does agree to help clear her friend's name. Just as tempers flare between Lorrain and King Charles, the news arrives that, upon discovering Margarite's marriage, the Duke of Brittanie has fled leaving a letter behind explaining his villainies. As a result, Charles renounces his claim to Margarite and renews his suit to Ann, who decides he is virtuous and accepts. In a scene that Hume terms "sentimental mush of the most contrived sort,"\(^{91}\) Lorrain begs and receives forgiveness from Margarite. Yet despite her love for him, Margarite holds to the vow she made to Ann and is led away to the cloister.

Unassuaged by counsel to "Bear your self like a Man, my friend, you've lost/Nothing essential to your happiness," Lorrain departs in anguish, leaving King Charles to pronounce the moral:

Unhappy Pair! let us correct our selves 
By these Examples, seeing how vainly

\(^{90}\) Trotter, *The Unhappy Penitent* 35. 
\(^{91}\) Hume *Development* 453.
They sought happiness in following
Unruly passion... 92

As this summary shows, despite Trotter’s desire to recommend logic and virtue over uncontrolled passion, the contrived plot of The Unhappy Penitent relies on the poorly handled device of a false letter delivered to a noble character who accepts the letter’s lies merely because the plot requires it. Like the protagonists of Agnes de Castro and Fatal Friendship, Margarite and Lorrain are another pair of unsuspecting central characters who are easily bamboozled by Brittanie, an opponent they never confront. Though the plot is constructed for Brittanie to work the evil that destroys Lorrain and Margarite, Trotter is not interested in punishing the lovers because they are ensnared by Brittanie’s falsehoods. Instead, Margarite and Lorrain are held accountable for valuing love above virtuous appearances. While the two lovers must live apart because they married without having the proper permission, Brittanie merely writes a letter to say he is sorry and runs away. Meanwhile, after condemning Margarite and Lorrain for choosing each other for love, Ann decides to marry the faithless King Charles.93

In the attempt to dramatize the single moral that excessive passion should be avoided, Trotter’s The Unhappy Penitent concludes with some uncomfortable loose ends. If excess of passion is such a failing, why does the villainous Brittanie, whose lust for Margarite has led him to behave criminally, escape unscathed? If the proper punishment for Margarite for breaking her betrothal with Charles, who has ignored her for two years and prefers another woman, is permanent separation from her true love, why does the play endorse the marriage between Charles and Ann? Except for the brief interest that Margarite’s letter rekindled in him, Charles has been willing to break the same betrothal agreement throughout the play. How can Ann, having been wooed by Charles while he was bound by the

93 Trotter, The Unhappy Penitent 1-48.
other agreement and having seen his affections return briefly to Margarite, marry the man who has flouted the same conditions that her friend must be punished for violating? In short, *The Unhappy Penitent* asked its audience to agree with the strictures against improper passion as applied to the play's only pair of true lovers, Margarite and Lorrain, while also accepting the marriage between two much less attractive characters, Ann and Charles, who have shown no love for each other and violated the spirit, if not the letter, of the same betrothal agreement.

Furthermore, though Margarite and Lorrain are punished because they break the betrothal agreement, Trotter does not use their offense to cause their downfall; instead they are destroyed through Brittanie’s villainies. In a sense, because of her opposition to the lovers’ plans to elope, the virtuous Ann is the real antagonist to Margarite and Lorrain's passion, but the play employs Brittanie to engineer their ruin. Therefore, instead of centering her play on the tug of war between the forces of passion, represented by Margarite and Lorrain, and the requirements of virtue as articulated by Ann, Trotter imports an extraneous villain to discredit the lovers and compromises her upright heroine by marrying Ann to the morally insincere Charles. Perhaps this combination of faulty dramaturgy and unequally applied moral standards in a play that claimed to instruct its audience to virtue, contributed to the quick disappearance of *The Unhappy Penitent*.

The prologue to *Love at a Loss* contains a statement that summarizes this frustrating phase in Trotter's playwriting career:

What must be done to make a Play succeed?  
The common Methods are all over try’d;  
We want Assurance to expect Applause,  
Or hope a kind full House without some Cause.  
Fain woul’d our Authress please, and please you so,  
That to her self you shou’d the pleasure owe. . . .”

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Paradoxically, of the four writers considered in this study, Trotter was the most concerned about theatre as an art. Yet, despite her high-minded belief in the transforming moral powers of the theatre, Trotter was never able to please an audience with her vision of what plays should be. Instead, she seems to have been genuinely surprised by, perplexed at, and unable to amend the lukewarm reception that each of her plays received in succession.

Notwithstanding her experiment with comedy, her attempt to write a crowd pleasing tragedy about love, and her willingness to submit her works to both theatres, Trotter entered the third phase of the theatrical competition with bleak prospects for her playwriting career. Unable to produce a repertory play or find a home with either company, Trotter, who was only twenty-two when The Unhappy Penitent failed, would only make one more attempt at playwriting. To continue a trend mentioned in the previous chapter, Trotter may have been dramatizing her own thoughts of renouncing the scornful theatre world, when Margarite, like Lamira in Fatal Friendship, leaves a room full of admiring courtiers and a desolated lover behind to retire to a convent at the end of The Unhappy Penitent.

On a less melodramatic note, Trotter had begun to develop other ties that encouraged her to become less involved with the theatre. When Anne became queen in 1702, she awarded Trotter's mother a £20 annuity in recognition of her husband's service to the Stuart cause. Also, Trotter's older sister had married an army physician. The couple lived in Salisbury, where Trotter, who was welcome for extended visits, wrote The Revolution of Sweden. Trotter also spent time in Kent with her friend and patron, Lady Sarah Piers. In addition to having some financial relief for her mother and having relatives and friends with the means and inclination to support her outside London, Trotter began to circulate in less theatrical circles. For instance, she made the acquaintance of Dr. Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, and his wife. Perhaps prompted by her additional leisure and new intellectual friendships, Trotter published her first philosophical writing, A Defence of Mr. Locke's Essay of Human
Understanding (May 1702). Mrs. Burnet persuaded a reluctant Trotter that the essay was strong enough for her to acknowledge its authorship, an action that resulted in a gift and a grateful letter from Locke praising the “strength and clearness of [her] reasoning.” Though her playwriting career was slowing down, by the spring of 1702 Trotter had already begun to establish a life for herself that did not include the theatre.

Slow Beginnings For Centlivre

It is fairly certain that Centlivre’s first play, The Perjured Husband, reached the stage in 1700 due to the influence of the circle of friends she acquired after her arrival in London towards the end of the century. What is less certain is the means by which Centlivre acquired her interest in the theatre and the education and skill necessary to pen a play. Biographical sources concerning Centlivre are not scarce; as a matter of fact, John Wilson Bowyer’s full-length biography and F. P. Lock’s recent study have a number of contemporaneous accounts to draw upon. Among these are works by four people who knew Centlivre: The Poetical Register, 1719, by Giles Jacobs, Abel Boyer’s 1723 obituary notice in The Political State of Great Britain, her occasional collaborator John Mottley’s ‘A Compleat List of all the English Dramatic Poets,’ printed at the conclusion of Thomas Whincop’s Scanderbeg (1747), and Drury Lane prompter W. R. Chetwood’s account in The British Theatre (1750). Unfortunately, even these early sources sometimes contradict each other and too often prefer a good story over the truth.

Not much is known of her childhood as Susanna Freeman in the market village of Holbeach, Lincolnshire or her opportunities for education there. Boyer’s account states that

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95 Birch ii-xx
97 Bowyer 5.
she came from "a mean Parentage, and Education" but "at last, so well improved her natural
Genius, by Reading and good Conversation, as to attempt to write for the Stage." Jacobs
offers the standard anecdote of youthful writing proclivities: "She was inclined to Poetry
when very Young, having compos'd a Song before she was Seven Years old..." Chetwood
proposes that a neighboring "French Gentleman" was kind enough to instruct her in that
language. Bowyer thinks she may have learned French after she came to London from Abel
Boyer, a Huguenot refugee from Louis XIV's intolerant revocation of the Edict of Nantes who
became tutor to Princess Anne's son, the Duke of Gloucester. However she learned the
language, Centlivre had acquired a skill that came in handy later when she began to use
French dramas as sources for her plays.

Centlivre does seem to have left home in Lincolnshire at a fairly early age, possibly
due to mistreatment from her father's second wife. The most picturesque account of her early
life casts the future playwright as a damsel-in-distress discovered weeping by the roadside
by Cambridge student Anthony Hammond. As the story goes, Hammond comforted her, won
her heart, and took her on to the university where she lived with him disguised as his male
cousin for several months. When the college authorities became suspicious of 'Cousin Jack,'
Centlivre with Hammond's good wishes, a few guineas, an introduction to his friends in
London, and some sort of education from her stay at the college is supposed to have set off
merrily for the Metropolis. After her arrival in London, Centlivre seems to have contracted
two short-lived marriages which fall under the heading of what Abel Boyer dubiously calls

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98 Sutherland 169.
99 Giles Jacob, The Poetical Register: or, The Lives and Characters of the
English Dramatick Poets, With an Account of their Writings (London: E. Curll, 1719) 32.
100 Sutherland 172.
101 Bowyer 7.
103 Sutherland 171-72.
"several gay adventures."

In the first relationship, she was "married or something like it" for perhaps a year to a nephew of Sir Stephen Fox; the second marriage to an army officer, Mr. Carroll, was terminated violently after eighteen months when he was killed in a duel. When Centlivre began to write for a living, her initial plays appeared as the work of Mrs. Carroll.

The most unlikely point in the story of Centlivre's Cambridge adventure is the opening tableau of the distraught maiden and the scholar. A more plausible scenario proposed by Chetwood is that Centlivre left home, for whatever reason, to join a company of strolling players at Stamford which is about twenty-five miles from Holbeach and relatively near both Cambridge and Anthony Hammond's home in Somersham. Bowyer agrees that Centlivre was at some point a strolling actor, possibly in the employ of John Power's Newmarket company which is known to have acted in nearby Norwich after Power took over the company in 1687; later Power headed the Duke of Grafton's servants with whom Centlivre worked in 1706.

If this is so, Centlivre is the only one of the four writers considered in this study to have some form of theatre training before she began writing. Later on, when London income was short, Centlivre might logically be expected to have sought out her former employer for strolling work. She may have done so at intervals before her marriage to Joseph Centlivre, a member of the royal kitchen staff, and her success as a playwright made touring unnecessary after 1707.

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104 Sutherland 169.
105 Sutherland 171.
106 Sutherland 172.
107 Bowyer 11.
Once established in London, Centlivre met some of the city's literary and theatrical personalities, and these contacts figure prominently in the beginning of her literary career. Centlivre was acquainted with journalist Tom Brown, whose 1703 reference to Centlivre as Pix's "Sister-Adventurer in Print" is an early acknowledgment of the friendship between the two women. As his statements concerning Pix, Trotter, and Centlivre (Mrs. Carroll) in The Players turn'd Academicks (1703) and A Letter from the Dead Thomas Brown to the living Heraclitus (1704) are uniformly derogatory, Brown seems an unlikely figure to have given Centlivre's career even a slight boost. Yet Brown edited Centlivre's first appearance in print, five letters in an epistolary collection called Familiar and Courtly Letters (1700) which was similar to the volume in which Trotter's Olinda's Adventures appeared and published by the same Samuel Briscoe. With Centlivre disguised under Aphra Behn's famous nickname 'Astraea,' Abel Boyer was to publish more of her correspondence in July 1701 in his Letters of Wit, Politicks and Morality.

Also included in this collection was correspondence from Centlivre's friend, Jane Wiseman, another aspiring woman playwright. Though a servant of William Wright, Recorder of Oxford, Wiseman had the double pleasure of light duties and full access to Wright's library where she read many plays and began her own Antiochus the Great. Having moved to London, Wiseman saw her tragedy performed at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1701, but soon afterwards she married a vintner named Holt; they used the proceeds from her play to purchase a tavern in Westminster.

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109 Sutherland 177.
110 Bowyer 15.
111 Bowyer 19.
112 Bowyer 19, 24, 28.
Centlivre and hint at collaboration, but though Antiochus was revived several times during the succeeding years, Wiseman did not write another play.

Abel Boyer was much more useful to the beginning of Centlivre’s career than Brown or Wiseman. Though Boyer is better known as the author of a French-English dictionary, he was also a produced, if undistinguished, playwright with connections at Drury Lane. As noted earlier, his Achilles, or Iphigenia in Aulis had been acted there in a competitive attempt by the Patent House to undermine the production of John Dennis’s Iphigenia that was staged at Lincoln’s Inn Fields at the same time. The productions seem to have negated each other, making sure that both houses were sparsely peopled, and allowing the author of A Comparison to declare that “After this trial of skill between the two Houses and the two Poets, things return’d to their former Posture; the Stages were still upon the square, both losers by their Iphigenias…”

Although his play evidently closed in four nights and was not revived, Boyer still had practical knowledge about turning a manuscript into a production and may have actively peddled Centlivre’s script to both theatres. If the chronology of Boyer’s letter collection can be believed, Centlivre spent a good deal of the summer of 1700 outside of London and left a copy of The Perjured Husband with Boyer. About the middle of May, Boyer wrote that he had shown the play to a “Mr. B.—,” (either Betterton or playwright William Burnaby) who thought “the Catastrophe too abrupt.”

In the letter quoted above, Boyer also struck a note of encouragement in reference to a possible production for The Perjured Husband when he mentioned that “Mr. F.—” and “Mr.

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114 Lonsdale 73.
115 F. P. Lock, Susanna Centlivre, Twayne’s English Authors Ser. 254 (Boston: Twayne, 1979) 20.
116 Milhous, Thomas Betterton 131.
117 A Comparison, 25.
118 A Comparison, 24-25.
W——-” intend to “stand your Friends in this affair.” The letters “F” and “W” refer to Farquhar and Wilks. Perhaps Boyer had made their acquaintance during the staging of Iphigenia, though the Duchess of Marlborough’s request for a performance of Farquhar’s The Constant Couple: or, A Trip to the Jubilee had actually caused the closing of Boyer’s tragedy after its fourth night. In fact, Farquhar’s immensely successful The Constant Couple, with an unprecedented fifty performances over five months, had saved Drury Lane from a lackluster season and established Wilks, who played Sir Harry Wildair, as an up-and-coming star. Centlivre was to have significant relationships with both Wilks and Farquhar. Though Wilks did not appear in The Perjured Husband, during the course of his distinguished career he acted in ten of Centlivre’s plays. Wilks and Centlivre disagreed in 1709 over the merits of The Busy Body and again in 1712 over the stageworthiness of The Perplexed Lovers, but Bowyer notes that Centlivre and the actor were friends. In any case, the transformation of the unknown Mrs. Carroll into the ‘Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre’ began when her connections with Boyer, Farquhar, and Wilks resulted in the acceptance of her first play for production in the late summer of 1700.

Oddly enough, the fact that few new plays were succeeding around the turn of the century worked to Centlivre’s advantage. She was able to develop her craft at a time when failed plays were the norm rather than conspicuous exceptions. Consequently, along with her second play, The Beau’s Duel: Or a Soldier for the Ladies, The Perjured Husband served as Centlivre’s playwriting apprenticeship as well as her introduction to the personnel of both London companies. Despite a number of challenging crises, Centlivre’s long successful career

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120 Sawyer 34.
121 Hume, Development 446.
122 Milhous, Thomas Betterton 142.
would be marked by a combination of writing skill, perseverance, astute observation of political and playwriting trends, and fortunate timing.

As an example of this last quality, Centlivre began writing when both companies were still actively competing with each other and on the lookout for new plays. Since her career began four years after The Female Wits, Centlivre had the advantage of allowing the other three women to widen the trail already blazed into the profession by Katherine Philips and Aphra Behn. Also, as she avoided the notoriety that marked the early careers of Manley, Pix, and Trotter, Centlivre was able to enter a profession that was slightly more accustomed to women playwrights without having to suffer the estrangement from Drury Lane that the other three women had endured. Either by shrewd choice or by happy accident, The Perjured Husband was not printed with the kind of laudatory dedications which had proclaimed the Female Wits’ impending victory over the men in a contest for poetic laurels. Instead, the prologue to Centlivre’s play uses the contest metaphor to slyly suggest that Centlivre, the “Fair Inviter,” will prosper in a most traditional way: “Whate’re her fate, she’s sure to gain the Field,/For Women always Conquer when they yield.”

The Perjured Husband: Or. The Adventures Of Venice

Centlivre’s debut did generate controversy in one respect. At the start of Act Two, Scene Two, Lady Pizalta delivers the following comments which unfavorably compare the transgressors of her day with the offenders in Eden:

Not come yet! Ungrateful Man! must a Woman of my Quality wait?
How have we lost our Pow’r since the Creation?
When the whole World had but one single Lord,
Whom every Creature readily obey’d?
Yet he, that mighty he, caught with a smile,
Flew to th’embraces of the tempting Fair.

Lady Pizalta's negative reference to Adam prompted the reformers to complain sufficiently for Centlivre to counter the criticism in her preface. Rather than meekly apologizing for her language, Centlivre set about demolishing her critics:

> These Snarling Sparks were pleas’d to carp at one or two Expressions, which were spoken in an Aside by one of the Inferiour Characters in the Drama; and without considering the Reputation of the persons in whose mouths the language is put, condemn it strait for loose and obscure: Now... I cannot believe that a Prayer-Book shou’d be put into the hands of a woman, whose Innate Vertue won’t secure her Reputation; nor is it reasonable to expect a person, whose Inclinations are always forming projects to the dishonour of her Husband, shou’d deliver her Commands to her Confident in the words of a Psalm. I heartily wish that those that find fault with the liberty of my stile, wou’d be pleas’d to set a Pattern to the Town, by Retrenching some of their Debaucheries, for Modesty thrives best by Example.  

Though poetic justice is strictly applied in *The Perjured Husband*, Centlivre here defends her artistic freedom to create characters who neither live nor speak virtuously. Centlivre’s declaration that immorality cannot be defined by passages quoted out of context (a favorite Collier tactic) distances her from the most strident of the reformers and leaves her on a middle ground where she can write plays, that in Hume’s phrase, aim “to amuse, but decorously.”

Centlivre’s combative tone also shows that she was able to fight for her convictions and did not ally herself strictly with the reformers. Instead, the suggestion that Collier and his allies begin their reformation with themselves is echoed in the “Epilogue, By Mr. B—”:

> So long the Poets brought before the Bar,  
> Have with their bold Accuser wag’d the War;  
> They now plead Guilty: And confess the Stage  
> Has been immoral, and debauch’d the Age.

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126 Centlivre, “To the Reader,” *The Perjured Husband* n. pag.
127 Hume, *Development* 121.
Nay, They will mend--But wish that in their station,
All Men were pleas'd to forward Reformation. 128

From the beginning of her career then, Centlivre takes the stance that the stage has learned
its lesson and is now free to go about entertaining the people while taking care not to offend
their sense of decorum. This important distinction separates Centlivre from the reform-

minded Trotter. Centlivre acknowledged the need to write modestly, but, for the most part,

refrained from Trotter's didacticism, a fact which in some measure accounts for both

Centlivre's success and Trotter's failure.

Of course, getting The Perjured Husband accepted for production was only the first step
towards eventual success for Centlivre; appropriate casting and the timing of the premiere
were also crucial. While acknowledging that the production did not reach a second benefit,

Centlivre's youthfully overconfident preface blames the actors and the premiere date, not the
writing:

I shall say little in Justification of the Play, only desire the Reader to judge
impartially, and not condemn it by the shortness of its Life, since the season of
the year ne're promis'd much better success. It went off with general
Applause; and 'tis the opinion of some of our best Judges, that it only wanted
the Addition of good Actors, and a full Town, to have brought me a sixth
night. 129

The play was staged in late September or early October of 1700 which was several weeks
before the beginning of a full production schedule as well as the return of the audience and the
star actors from their summer vacations. Since the death of Abel Boyer's pupil, the Duke of
Gloucester, occasioned an order issued 6 August 1700 by the Lord Chamberlain prohibiting
acting for a six-week mourning period, the Drury Lane headliners had little reason to rush
back to town. 130 The Duke of Gloucester's untimely death may have provided an opportunity

128 Mr. B---, "Epilogue," The Perjured Husband n. pag.
for the junior actors to get Centlivre's play ready for the stage in hopes of advancing their careers by playing roles their superiors would have taken had they been in town. Conceivably, the play only reached the stage because the period of mourning gave the company extra time to rehearse the work of an untried writer.

Several times during her career, Centlivre would have to face the consequences of her sometimes over-blunt evaluations of the quality of the players' work in her plays. In this case, however, her forward assertion that the Drury Lane company's best actors did not appear in *The Perjured Husband* appears to be valid. Conspicuously absent among the women players were Susanna Verbruggen and Jane Rogers; Powell, Wilks, Cibber, Pinkethman, and William Bullock are not among the men in the cast. The colorful Jo Haines spoke the epilogue, but took no role in the play.

Of the actors that did appear, John Mills, as the title character Count Bassino, was, in Wilks's absence, making one of his rare appearances as male lead. As Bassino's wronged wife Placentia, Mary Kent was a valuable, though not first-rank player who would not get the chance to play leading roles on a regular basis until she worked at Pinkethman's Greenwich summer theatre in 1710. Just beginning their distinguished careers were Anne Oldfield/Aurelia, who disastrously forsakes her father's deathbed choice for her husband, and Henrietta Moore/Lady Pizalta, who attempts to cuckold her contemptible husband. As the senile lecher Pizalto, Henry Norris, an Irish transplant who had just earned the nickname 'Jubilee Dicky' for his acclaimed performance of that role in *The Constant Couple*, was the most popular cast member, but he too was just beginning his London career.

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Centlivre may have learned an important lesson about theatrical politics from another member of the company, Jane Lucas. A singer and dancer whose career had begun with the United Company, Lucas played the important role of Lucy, Lady Pizalta’s ambitious servant and go-between. Lucy contrives the play’s best comic moment when Lady Pizalta’s would-be lover, the foppish Ludovico (played by the undistinguished Henry Fairbank instead of the more appropriate Cibber)\(^ {134}\) disguises himself in Lucy’s clothes to have access to her mistress. Instead, Ludovico is mistaken for Lucy and accosted amorously by Lord Pizalto, who has given Lucy a small fortune for her promise to become his mistress. The episode embarrasses both the Lord and his Lady into silence; Lucy rejects Ludovico and absconds with the cash. Lucas was evidently a competent enough performer to play the role. For reasons that are unclear, however, at about this time Lucas caused the increasingly influential Cibber to be imprisoned and forced to call upon the Lord Chamberlain for his release from the Gatehouse. Though Lucas sang and danced in entr’actes and appeared as an actress through 1707, her status at Drury Lane never improved, and Cibber seems to have made at least one attempt to have her removed from the company.\(^ {135}\) In contrast, when Cibber rejected Centlivre’s *Love at a Venture* (1706) and subsequently plagiarized the play for his *The Double Gallant* (1707), Centlivre did not publicly protest his behavior.\(^ {136}\) Perhaps she had seen first-hand evidence of vengeful behavior in Cibber’s treatment of Lucas and decided that, despite his obvious offense, she needed his good will more than her own vindication. Certainly she refrained from the kind of sharp rebuttal she administered to the critics of Lady Pizalta’s language in *The Perjured Husband*.

\(^ {134}\) Highfill, *BD*, vol. 5, 137-138.
\(^ {135}\) Highfill, *BD*, vol. 9, 376-377.
Whatever lessons Centlivre may have learned about how to deal with Drury Lane management, her first play is obviously a beginner’s work, a strange amalgam of overwrought emotion and low comedy. The tragic main plot, where Bassino forsakes Placentia for Aurelia who is already betrothed and is unaware that Bassino is married, occupies most of the action and is burdened with clumsy construction. The bloody catastrophe is caused by a misplaced letter, and features an over-long scene where all the dying beg forgiveness of each other.137

The livelier secondary plot where Lord and Lady Pizalto make fools of themselves in their failed attempts at adultery is connected to the main plot by a very thin thread. The Pizaltos are invited to a mask at Bassino’s house. Lucy finishes gulling the Lord and Lady on the first page of Act Five, however, and all the subplot characters quickly depart without having spoken to any of the characters from the tragic plot.138 Nor is Centlivre’s first of only two tragedies during her long career blessed with her later skill in creating appropriate language for her characters. The Venetian setting and the stilted language of tragic romance prohibit Centlivre from all but the briefest displays of the topicality and colloquial ease that would enliven her subsequent comedies.

The Drury Lane management seems to have thought The Perjured Husband was good enough to stage, but was unwilling to risk a full-scale production with its best actors at a more advantageous time in the season. An early premiere, even a low-profit premiere, however, was still an important beginning for a new author. While acknowledging that The Perjured Husband was not a runaway success like her friend Farquhar’s The Constant Couple, Centlivre’s optimistic view of her play’s reception was that “tho I hit not a Wildair for the humour of the Town in my Play, I may boldly say I have copied the greatest part of

mankind..."  

139 Centlivre was certainly encouraged enough to continue writing, though nearly two years, and possibly more strolling in the provinces, passed before her next play. 

The Beau's Duel was acted at Lincoln's Inn Fields in June of 1702.  

140 The Beau's Duel: Or A Soldier For The Ladies 

The prologue to The Beau's Duel begins on a familiar note of frustration: "What Hazards Poets run, in Times like these, /Sure to Offend, uncertain whom to please... "  

141 Yet, despite the insecurity this statement betrays, Centlivre's second play advanced her career and craft in a number of important areas. Among the positive developments in The Beau's Duel were the start of relationships with junior members of the Lincoln's Inn Fields company who would become important players later and the beginnings of what would eventually become Centlivre's formula for playwriting success. 

Where Pix, Manley, and Trotter were forced to move from Drury Lane to Lincoln's Inn Fields, the staging of Centlivre's second play at the New Theatre was an encouraging development. No evidence explains why Centlivre switched theatres. Both companies endured special hardships during the spring of 1702 because William III's death closed their doors for six weeks. In fact, The London Stage performance calendar records only one new play at Drury Lane after the coronation but prior to the premiere of The Beau's Duel.  

142 Lincoln's Inn Fields was no hotbed of activity either; the advertisement in the Daily Courant for the play's revival in October 1702 calls The Beau's Duel "the last new comedy."  

143 Maybe The 

139 Centlivre, "Epistle Dedicatory," The Perjured Husband n. pag.  
143 Bowyer 43.
*Perjured Husband* had generated some interest at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, but perhaps the New Theatre just happened to be on the lookout for one more comedy to finish their abbreviated spring season. Whatever the reasons, the Rebel Company was willing to stage *The Beau's Duel* as well as Centlivre’s next play, *The Stolen Heiress: Or the Salamanca Doctor Outplotted* (December 1702). Yet, unlike Pix and Manley, Centlivre had no recorded trouble returning to Drury Lane with her fourth play, *Love's Contrivance* (June 1703).\(^{144}\) Since the opportunity to submit scripts to two theatres had been a large component in the emergence of new writers after the Actors’ Rebellion of 1695, Centlivre, as an apparent non-combatant in the struggle between the two companies, held a significant advantage over Manley and Pix; in some ways Trotter was at even more of a disadvantage as she seems to have been unable to find a niche at either theatre.

To Centlivre’s possible consternation at the time, *The Beau’s Duel* was staged at Lincoln’s Inn Fields with a relatively inexperienced cast. The absence of Barry, Bracegirdle, John Verbruggen, and Betterton from the cast of her second play, however, would eventually work in Centlivre’s favor. Since all four Rebel Company mainstays would be retired by 1710, Centlivre’s career was better served, if the production went well, by her association with future Drury Lane manager, Barton Booth/Captain Bellmein, along with Bracegirdle and Barry’s protégé, Mary Porter/Emilia, because Booth and Porter were star actors into the third decade of the century.\(^{145}\) Other serviceable performers in the cast were John Boman/Sir William Mode and John Corey/Colonel Manly. Corey was active as a playwright and actor in the London theatre until the mid-1730s.\(^{146}\) Recent addition George Powell was typecast as

\(^{144}\) Avery, *The London Stage*, vol. 2, 30, 37.


\(^{146}\) Highfill, *BD*, vol. 3, 491-493.
Toper, "An Enemy to Matrimony, and a Friend to the Bottle."\textsuperscript{147}

The Beau's Duel marks the first appearance of George Pack in a Centlivre play. Cast as Ogle, "A Fortune-hunter, a conceited Fellow, that fancies every body is in Love with him," Pack would eventually appear in ten Centlivre casts.\textsuperscript{148} Their relationship seems to have been mutually beneficial; because Pack had a special felicity for playing the madcaps, inept blunderers that Centlivre wrote into a number of her plays. Pack's signature role would be the bumbling Marplot in The Busy Body (1709) and its sequel, Marplot (1710). Years later, when Pack joined John Rich's revamped Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1715, Centlivre, by then an established playwright, offered A Bold Stroke for a Wife to the new company; Pack, of course, appeared in the cast. After his last benefit appearance as Marplot in The Busy Body in 1722, Pack retired to become the keeper of a tavern aptly named 'The Busy Body' with a drawing on its sign depicting Pack as Marplot.\textsuperscript{149} Only Pix's relationship with Elizabeth Barry bears any resemblance to the long-standing collaboration between Pack and Centlivre. In addition to her close relationships with Wilks and Oldfield, Centlivre's long fruitful relationship with a relatively minor player like Pack shows just how much of a theatrical insider she would eventually become.

In October 1702 Lincoln's Inn Fields revived The Beau's Duel "With the Addition of a New Scene" and a "Whimsical Song" by George Pack.\textsuperscript{150} No further performances are recorded, but in becoming the first of the four women to have a play revived since Pix's The Spanish Wives (1696), Centlivre had begun to employ some of the elements that would make her later plays repertory staples into the nineteenth century. Among these characteristics

\textsuperscript{147} Centlivre, "Dramatis Personae," The Beau's Duel n. pag; Cibber, Apology
\textsuperscript{144} Cibber notes that when Booth, a heavy drinker early in his career, saw first-hand how drink was destroying Powell, the younger actor became abstemious. Perhaps Booth became a teetotaler as a result his association with Powell on this production.
\textsuperscript{149} Hightill, BD, vol. 11, 137-139.
\textsuperscript{150} Avery, The London Stage, vol. 2, 27.
were colloquial comic language, Whiggish patriotism, engaging and unusual characters, characters in disguise, taking advantage of fads or current event news items for topicality, and writing in the humane comedy style while observing a strict enough morality to satisfy the reformers. Although these characteristics do not apply equally to every Centlivre play, they occur frequently enough to suggest that Centlivre knew what ingredients were successful for her. After the failed experiments of Pix and Trotter in their search for an audience, Centlivre's glimmer of success with her second play suggests that she was more in tune with writers like Steele, Farquhar, and Cibber who had some sense of what the developing Augustan taste would be.

The Beau's Duel concerns Colonel Manly and Captain Bellmein, two dashing officers, who have come to the mistaken conclusion that they are courting the same woman. Actually, Manly's favorite, Clarinda, has received a visit from her cousin Emilia, a country heiress who has taken a fancy to Bellmein at the playhouse. Later on, Emilia makes the same mistake when she concludes that Manly, not Bellmein, was the man she met at the theatre. Meanwhile, the two handsome officers, along with the dissolute Toper and Bellmein's former mistress, Plotwell/Elinor Leigh, must contrive the discomfiture of Careful, Clarinda's stodgy father, and the two meddlesome fops, Sir William Mode and Ogle.

This last paragraph points to why The Beau's Duel was not more of a success. The primary story line concerning the double mistaken identities among the four young lovers does not occupy enough space in the play. Instead, moving by fits and starts, Centlivre's invention flies off in several directions. The play has a hard time gaining momentum because long conversational scenes are used to introduce the charms of Toper and Plotwell and the foibles of Sir William and Ogle. A great deal of time is then spent ridiculing the two fops, for their cowardice must be revealed first by the soldiers, then by the ladies, and finally by Ogle's embarrassing encounter with a recruiting officer. In addition to being included in the plot to be
gulled out of his daughter and niece, Careful must also be tricked into a false marriage with Plotwell disguised as a Quaker in a ceremony performed by Bellmein disguised as a parson. Once ‘married’ Plotwell attempts to smuggle Toper into the house inside a covered portrait to be her lover. That the play abounded with humorous character studies and incidents augured well for Centlivre’s future, yet in The Beau’s Duel she was not sufficiently skilled as a writer to concentrate her creativity on her central comic situations.

Although the plot lacks focus, the virtues of The Beau’s Duel outweigh its defects. All the elements listed above as contributors to Centlivre’s success are present to some degree. The gallantry and courage of the two soldiers are patriotically touted as the reasons why they deserve to marry the fine young women. Perhaps like a number of soldiers in the audience that spring, the Captain Bellmein character has recently returned from Irish garrison duty. The inflated language of Venetian romance in The Perjured Husband has been replaced with lively English prose. Borrowing a page from Cibber’s Love’s Last Shift (and Vanbrugh’s The Relapse), Centlivre arms her ridiculous nobleman with appropriately ridiculous oaths; Sir William Mode is quite proud of using “impair my vigor” for “to use another Man’s Oath, is, in my Opinion, as undecent, as wearing his Cloths . . .” Later in the same scene, Mode secretly delights his companions with a preposterous explanation of why he should be allowed to kill an unarmed man for wearing soiled clothing:

I have a new suit on that cost me Fifty Pound, here comes thundering by a dirty Drayman with his Cart, that puts me in bodily fear, and rushing rudely by, daubs all my Clothes, so that I can’t wear them any more; now here’s Fifty Pound lost by this Rascals dirty Clothes, if I don’t prevent it by running him through the body.

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151 Centlivre, The Beau’s Duel 19.
152 Centlivre, The Beau’s Duel 12.
Though this is not the kind of sparkling prose that enlivens The Man of Mode, as Shirley Strum Kenny points out, the language of humane comedy was not based on the “brilliant witticisms of Restoration drawing-room comedy.”

As Hume notes: “One may quibble over whether a given Centlivre play is humane or reform comedy.” A number of the characteristics of humane comedy that Kenny’s essay lists, however, do apply to The Beau’s Duel. Humane comedy heroes according to Kenny “are usually sparks who have some flaw, be it prodigality or timidity or a strong libido...” Captain Bellmein, who takes time out from his pursuit of Emilia to attempt the seduction of his old mistress Plotwell, fits Kenny’s description nicely. In a gesture which would fit into a reform comedy, however, Centlivre protects herself neatly from charges of immorality by having Plotwell declare that she has recently inherited enough money to forgo the necessity of taking lovers.

Kenny also argues that the less satirical nature of humane comedy led to “proportionately more physical action used for plot development as there were fewer scenes of repartee.” In its rowdier scenes, The Beau’s Duel relies heavily on physical knockabout. Sir William and Ogle are maneuvered into a comical duel of cowards reminiscent of Twelfth Night; later Clarinda and Emilia, disguised as men to visit the park unobserved, give the fops a thrashing. While secretly visiting Emilia at Careful’s house, Bellmein, to avoid Careful’s sudden return, finds himself rolled up in a mat. When Careful tells the servants to toss the mat into the horse pond, Emilia quickly bribes them to say that a dog has crept into the mat. In order to make his escape, Bellmein must literally exit barking.

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155 Hume, The Rakish Stage 226.
156 Kenny 31.
158 Kenny 40.
Yet, for all the hijinks, the play closes on an extremely moral note. The fops renounce their pretensions to the women; the false marriage between Plotwell and Careful is dissolved when Careful promises to allow the young officers to marry the young ladies; and Plotwell and Toper agree not to begin an affair.\textsuperscript{159} Instead, promising to "Devote my self to Virtue", in hopes that "Heaven will Pardon the follies of my past Life", Plotwell delivers a tidy reformist coda:

\begin{verbatim}
Oh happy she, that can securely say
Folly be gone, I have no mind to Play,
My Fame is Clear, I have not Sinn'd to Day.\textsuperscript{160}
\end{verbatim}

With the brief revival of \textit{The Beau's Duel}, Centlivre's career would begin its long, uneven, upward motion. Though neither of her first two plays were as successful as Pix's \textit{Ibrahim} or \textit{The Spanish Wives}, Centlivre was the only one of the four women to move into the next difficult stage of the competition with both theatres interested in staging her plays.

**Summary**

By 1702, the competition had frustrated the expectations of both companies. At Drury Lane, Christopher Rich had hoped his legal right to both Patents would eventually force the closure of Lincoln's Inn Fields; at the New Theatre, the lofty Rebel Company had expected their rebellion to cause the quick collapse of their adversaries. Instead, a debilitating war of attrition between the two companies dragged on into the eighteenth century. Faced with their rival's unexpected staying power, both Patentees and Rebels began to search for ways to make their own operations profitable. The competition was inevitably altered in the spring of 1703, when playwright and architect John Vanbrugh began acquisition of the site which

\textsuperscript{159} Centlivre, \textit{The Beau's Duel} 1-55.
\textsuperscript{160} Centlivre, \textit{The Beau's Duel} 55.
would eventually become the Queen’s Theatre in the Haymarket.161 As events turned out, Vanbrugh’s new construction project would have more important consequences for the London theatre than the accession of Queen Anne the previous spring.

For the four women playwrights, continued career success would still be measured by their ability to appeal to both the theatre companies and their audiences. As noted above, Centlivre’s positive relationships with both companies gave her the best chance to prosper after 1702, but for the three Female Wits, the prospects looked increasingly bleak. Absent from the theatre since 1696, Manley had neglected the opportunity to either improve her connections with Lincoln’s Inn Fields or make a positive impression on Wilks, Oldfield, and the new generation of performers at Drury Lane. Committed to writing plays that supported theatrical moral reform, Trotter was discovering that audiences and theatre companies were not particularly interested in either her message or her plays. With the apparent advantage of being a stock dramatist at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, Pix had at least been able to get her works acted, if not revived, with regularity. As Lincoln’s Inn Fields and Drury Lane forged an uneasy truce prior to the construction of the Queen’s Theatre, Pix, as author of seven consecutive plays which had failed to enter the New Theatre repertory, begins to seem more and more like a writer whose works would not survive the reduction in opportunities that would result when the Haymarket became an opera house in 1710 and Drury Lane became the only place to see a play in London.

CHAPTER V

THE FOUR WOMEN IN A SLOW MARKET FOR NEW PLAYS

During the relatively quiet years between 1702 and the opening of the Haymarket in the spring of 1705, the career momentum of the three Female Wits slowed considerably. Neither Manley nor Trotter would have another play staged until 1706. In 1703 Pix's energetic but unfocused The Different Widows failed to enter the New Theatre repertory. On the other hand, after one more false start Centlivre began producing new works which had a good chance of becoming, in Downes's phrase, "living plays." As the careers of the other three women were faltering, Centlivre continued her successful collaborations with both companies.

A Brief Truce And Managerial Profits

During the period between the Actors' Rebellion of 1695 and the establishment of the first Triumvirate in 1710, the years 1702-1705 represent the closest approach to the reluctant attitude towards new play production characteristic of the United Company in the 1680s and the Triumvirs after 1710. The reasons for this repertory conservatism are complicated and obscured by a lack of information; contemporary accounts are few, and the two theatres, particularly Lincoln's Inn Fields, had yet to fully exploit the power of newspaper advertisement though publication of the Daily Courant began in March 1702.¹

¹ Judith Milhous, Thomas Betterton and the Management of Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1695-1708 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1979) 151-188. Unless otherwise noted, all information in this section is taken from this source.
Basically, however, the two companies were less interested in new plays because the competition tapered off. The death of William and the accession of Anne in the spring of 1702 proved to be another theatrical watershed. Perhaps fearing that the new Queen might take a dim view of her fractious servants, both theatres withdrew from the bitter rivalry which had marked the previous seven seasons. Instead, in a rapidly growing London, the two theatres began to seek out different factions of the old audience. With a larger theatre to fill, Rich sought the more working-class, summer-fair crowd, while Betterton, Barry, and Bracegirdle, as leaders of the Lincoln's Inn Fields collective, sought to fill their smaller theatre with a more exclusive audience. Time had also begun to take its toll on the Rebel Company; in 1702 Betterton was sixty-seven, and Elizabeth Barry was forty-four.2

By 1702 the two theatres had retreated from the destructive competitive strategies which had been in use since the 1695 breakaway; head-to-head repertory confrontations, parody, and scurrilous prologues and epilogues were all set aside. Drury Lane even reduced its number of playing days which suggests that some effort was made to increase the number of days when the companies did not directly compete. Several actors were allowed to switch companies without the cries of protest that had accompanied Rich's 1696 efforts to retain Dogget and the Verbruggens. When Powell returned to Drury Lane in 1704, Rich even agreed to honor tickets purchased at Lincoln's Inn Fields for Powell's benefit prior to the actor's departure. Three times between February and April 1704, and once more for the queen's birthday (5 February 1706), casts made up of players from both companies performed at court for Queen Anne.3 These activities suggest that, whether by explicit agreement or tacit common sense, the two theatres had adopted a live-and-let-live attitude towards each other.

which would last until Rich began to perceive Vanbrugh’s Haymarket theatre project as a threat.

In the meantime, some evidence from the period indicates that both companies had also begun to turn a profit. When a disgruntled group of Dorset Garden and Drury Lane building shareholders sought years of back rent from Rich, the Patentee claimed no profits existed but refused to produce his books for an audit. Rich also continued to keep his actors on half-pay while encouraging them to hustle tickets to make up the arrears on their benefit performances. Unscrupulous as ever, Rich seems to have been taking profits from the pockets of both his investors and his employees.

Yet the Drury Lane employees were not clamoring to work at Lincoln’s Inn Fields. In fact, the likelihood is that, as Betterton, Barry, and Bracegirdle took more responsibility for the Rebel Company, they began to skim profits themselves. In 1702 A Comparison suggested that Betterton was finding ways to put some authors’ third night benefit money into his own pocket. The following year, John Verbruggen, representing several other actors, submitted a petition to the Lord Chamberlain to order an audit of the Lincoln’s Inn Fields books. The petition notes that, although actors’ salaries were kept low and expenditures were under control, the company debt had quadrupled from £200 to £800 at a time when box office receipts were good. Though Verbruggen implied that the ‘Three B’s’ were keeping the extra cash, the Lord Chamberlain took no action, which suggests that the actor’s claims were settled privately. Milhous also quotes a preface written by ‘Franck Telltroth,’ a “disgruntled hanger-on” at Lincoln’s Inn Fields which accuses the “Three Ruling B—s” of a lengthy catalogue of “Clandestine Sharing betwixt You without the rest” including maintaining double account books, claiming to pay company debts while actually keeping the money, and grabbing all the best benefit days for themselves. None of the claims against Rich or

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4 A Comparison 25.
5 Milhous, Thomas Betterton 162-163.
Betterton and company can be proved conclusively, but the evidence suggests that the top personnel of both companies had found ways to operate in the black.

Had the increased profits come from a renewed commitment to new plays, the four women writers might have been able to expect chances both to improve their craft and earn steady incomes. Both companies had discovered, however, that adding variety acts (singers, dancers, jugglers, afterpieces, etc.) to an evening’s entertainment was a more successful means to sell tickets and required less investment of time, money, and energy than a new play. Hindsight reveals that when new plays were attempted, humane and reform comedies were more likely to succeed than exemplary or hard-style comedies while tragedy was out of fashion altogether. In the midst of the day-to-day struggle to attract audiences, however, the managers at Drury Lane and Lincoln’s Inn Fields were unable to perceive this clearly. Instead, they chose to stage a minimum of new plays while investing their money in the likes of Mr. Evans, “lately arrived from Vienna,” who supplemented a 27 April 1703 performance of Oroonoko at Drury Lane. As advertised, Evans would

Vault on the manag’d Horse, where he lyes with his Body extended on one Hand in which posture he drinks several glasses of Wine with the other, and from that throws himself a Sommerset over the Horses Head, to Admiration.

Except in the case of some of the more expensive Lincoln’s Inn Fields imports, this process had the advantage of being both cost effective and making fewer demands upon the performers. When not struggling to rehearse a whole spate of new plays, actors would be less likely to complain about short pay; in the meantime, the managers of both theatres maintained their truce and quietly made their profits.

After John Vanbrugh began to acquire land in June 1703 for the construction of the Queen’s Theatre in the Haymarket, the days of détente between the two existing companies

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were numbered. Of course, peace had never been made between Rich and Betterton. When Rich was sued for back rent, he tried to foist both companies' debts onto his adversary by claiming that Betterton was liable for the deficits because his name had never been removed from United Company documents. Though Rich's ploy failed, his continued opportunism showed that any cooperation with Lincoln's Inn Fields was caused only by a temporary confluence of mutual interests. For his part, Betterton must not have taken kindly to Rich's use of a legal technicality to try to ruin him.

Initially, Vanbrugh's Haymarket project proceeded without opposition from Rich; perhaps the Patentee had hopes that the two companies could be reunited under his control in Vanbrugh's fancy new building. After all, Rich had produced all of Vanbrugh's plays but one. In the fall of 1704, however, Vanbrugh began to plan productions of all-sung Italian operas at the Haymarket. He also started contract negotiations with the Lincoln's Inn Fields acting company and tried to lure the best performers away from Drury Lane. When Rich became aware that Betterton and company were about to obtain a thoroughly equipped, modern theatre, something he had taken pains to prevent them acquiring, he felt sufficiently threatened to resume the competition with all its old rancor. An immediate sign that the struggle was on again occurred shortly after Powell's return to Drury Lane in 1704. Whether Powell, who made the decision to parody the Lincoln's Inn Fields actors in 1696, was involved cannot be determined, but Drury Lane did stage a production of Henry IV with talented Irish newcomer Richard Estcourt mimicking Betterton's Falstaff. So much for the live-and-let-live policy.

Manley And Trotter At Odds

Though Manley and Trotter did not have plays staged during this period, some evidence indicates that they were actively trying to get their works performed. Trotter's
correspondence reveals that she was often out of London, actively seeking the patronage of the Marlborough family, and bothered by chronic illness. As she told her friend George Burnet:

This weakness of body is a great hindrance to me in the employments of the mind; nor have I finished any thing for the public, since the Defence of Mr. Locke's Essay . . . .

While convalescing in Salisbury with her sister's family in the summer of 1703, she found time to work on The Revolution of Sweden and sent an outline of the play to Congreve for suggestions. In discussing the "agreeable entertainment of [Trotter's] scheme," Congreve reveals that Trotter had worked out the play's sequence of events in some detail:

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

Two references Congreve makes to the play's unfinished dialogue demonstrate that The Revolution of Sweden was not quite ready to submit to the theatre:

I think the design in general very great and noble; the conduct of it very artful, if not too full of business, which may either run into length or obscurity; but both those, as you write, you have skill enough to avoid.

And again: "my objections are none but such, as you may provide against, even while you are writing the dialogue." Though Congreve examined the play in draft form, Trotter's biographer notes that the script was completed in early February 1704. In addition to whatever frustration Trotter experienced at the two year delay between the completion and the staging of The Revolution of Sweden, the hiatus in her theatrical career also provided her with the opportunity to carry on a long correspondence with George Burnet, write her

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9 Birch xxi.
11 Birch xxiv.
verse tribute to Marlborough’s victory at Blenheim, pursue her patronage options, and give serious consideration to converting from Catholicism to Anglicanism.¹²

For Manley the years 1702-1705 were marked by the composition of her Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians and the end of her relationship with John Tilly. Their affair ended ironically because the death of Tilly’s wife necessitated his remarriage to a jealous widow to repair his fortunes.¹³ Diane Clarke Duff also suggests that by 1702 Manley’s affections towards Tilly had cooled because of her growing attachment to Richard Steele.¹⁴ Unfortunately, Manley’s relationship with Steele collapsed in 1702 as well; the only reason ever given for the beginning of their long feud was that Steele refused to lend Manley money to travel to Bristol to recoup her spirits after Tilly’s remarriage. Whatever the nature of Manley’s relationship with Steele or the more complex causes of their enmity, the two engaged in a bitter journalistic war, exacerbated by Manley’s Tory sympathies and Steele’s loyalty to the Whigs, which was not settled until Steele as Drury Lane Patent holder accepted Manley’s Lucius for production in 1717.¹⁵

The sequence of events that led Manley from her Bristol retreat to the publication of Queen Zarah is also obscure. During the summer of 1704, she was staying in Buckinghamshire with her friend, poet Sarah Frye Egerton, but the two quarreled; Egerton later testified against Manley in a lawsuit where, as matters turned out, Manley was unable to obtain a lifetime settlement of £100 per year.¹⁶ With no hopes of support from her legal efforts or personal affairs, Manley evidently elected to return to London and begin writing again. At some point, Manley decided that the gossip she had heard years ago from the Duchess of

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¹² Birch xxiv-xxx.
¹⁵ Duff 143.
Cleveland concerning the duchess’s dalliance with young John Churchill (Charles II magnanimously acknowledged the child of the affair)\(^{17}\) could be combined with scandalous chatter about Churchill’s wife, Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, to the detriment of the Whig cause.

The Marlboroughs also provided the occasion for the final severing of ties between Trotter and Manley, ties which had been strained initially, according to Manley, when she supplanted Trotter as John Tilly’s mistress.\(^{18}\) After Anne’s accession in 1702, Trotter derived significant benefit from her association with the Marlboroughs. As the queen’s Groom of the Stole and Keeper of the Privy Purse, Sarah had charge of Anne’s private accounts; thus, Sarah authorized the £20 that were paid yearly in compensation to Trotter’s mother. Additionally, Trotter’s sister was married to the “physician general” of Marlborough’s army while the husband of Trotter’s close friend Lady Piers was one of the duke’s officers.\(^{19}\) Furthermore, Trotter was sufficiently impressed by Marlborough’s great victories at Blenheim (1704) and Ramillies (1706) to publish verse tributes in his honor and dedicated The Revolution of Sweden to Lady Harriet Godolphin, the Churchills’ eldest daughter who was married to the Lord Treasurer’s son, Francis. A life-long friend of John Churchill, Lord Godolphin was the nearest thing to a prime minister in Queen Anne’s government. A moderate Tory at the beginning of the new reign, Godolphin began to rely heavily on Whig support to continue the War of the Spanish Succession, especially after 1705.\(^{20}\) Though Trotter disclaimed political allegiances, by dedicating her play to Henrietta Churchill née Godolphin, “Thus Happily Ally’d, and Descended on both Sides, from Persons whom the Best Princess in the World so judiciously distinguishes,” Trotter was endorsing the war policies.

\(^{18}\) Morgan, A Woman of No Character 94-99.
\(^{19}\) Birch iv, x.
\(^{20}\) Edward Gregg, Queen Anne (London: Routledge, 1980) 199-201.
which Manley and the Tories opposed.

As the years passed, Manley was not content with vilifying the Duke of Marlborough with charges of using his military offices to advance his avarice or charging Sarah with an affair with Godolphin as she did in Queen Zarah. Party enmities were running so high when Manley published The New Atalantis in 1709, that she felt some political advantage could be derived from defaming the Marlboroughs' supporters as well. Perhaps Manley was also paying off an old score with Trotter for refusing to admit her original intimacy with Tilly. In Manley's opinion, Trotter was "the most of a prude in her outward professions and the least of it in her inward practice, unless you'll think it prudery to allow freedoms with the air of restraint. . . ."

In any event, in The New Atalantis Manley took her revenge on Trotter's association with the Marlboroughs by accusing Trotter, under the pseudonym of Daphne, of being a member of what Manley insinuates is a lesbian "Cabal":

They vow eternal tenderness, they exclude the men, and condition that they will always do so. What irregularity can there be in this? 'Tis true, some things may be strained a little too far, and that causes reflections to be cast upon the rest.

Manley also alleges that Trotter was Marlborough's mistress prior to joining the Cabal, that her one playwriting success (Fatal Friendship) was due only to Betterton's skill, that she manipulated "the excellent mask called religion" to suit her changing needs, and that she "assumed an air of Virtue pretended and was ever eloquent (according to her stiff manner) upon the foible of others." Lastly, Manley ridicules Trotter's marriage to clergyman Patrick Cockburn as "the only means to prevent her from falling (when her youth and charms were upon the wing) into extreme contempt."

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23 Morgan, Woman of No Character 95.
Both the degree of truth in Manley's aspersions and Trotter's reaction to them are unknown. In 1751 Thomas Birch attested rather primly that Trotter's only provocation to [Manley's anger] was the withdrawing herself from the slight acquaintance, which she once had with Mrs. Manley, on account of the licentiousness both of her writings and conduct.

Birch also claims that Manley had at some point offered to apologize but never made good on her offer:

indeed the libeller herself was so conscious of the injustice and enormity of her calumnies, that, upon a remonstrance to her upon that account, she promised to make the proper acknowledgments in person to Mrs. Cockburn for her offence; but failed of her engagement in that respect, from an excusable reluctance to see one, whom she had so highly injured.  

In regard to Manley's larger goal in *The New Atalantis* of ascribing moral depravity to the Whig party, historian George Macaulay Trevelyan, writing in 1930, was still angrily complaining that the publication that did most harm to the ministry in [1709] was a book of the lowest order, the *New Atlantis* [sic], wherein Mrs. Manley, a woman of no character, regaled the public with brutal stories, for the most part entirely false, about public men and their wives, especially whigs and above all the Marlboroughs.

*The New Atalantis* also sheds some light on Manley's theatrical activities which revived briefly when she began her political writing. The passage cannot be dated specifically; for Manley's description could apply to Drury Lane after November 1704, when Cibber officially assumed repertory selection duties, but prior to the 1709 publication of the *Atalantis*. According to Manley, Cibber's treatment of writers and new plays is unflattering:

The favourite poet (in concert with the master) has of course the reading of all new pieces brought to him for his approbation which he is sure never to give to what seems more meritorious than his own, lest he should put their reputations upon a level. Hence the poor poet is forced with infinite patience

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26 Birch xlviii.


and humility (though he be doomed [sic] in the beginning) to dance attendance for two or three years together. They refer him to one, then to another, so to a third, till they have run the whole round with him and then dismiss him with an 'It won't do,' when they have already plundered it of all that was either new or well-expressed, to dress up their own collections.\(^{29}\)

In addition to resembling the circumstances of Cibber's plagiarism of Centlivre's Love at Venture (1706),\(^{30}\) this excerpt provides tempting grounds for speculation that Manley may have attempted to have a play produced at Drury Lane prior to the appearance of Almyna at the Haymarket in 1706. Of course, if Manley contemplated a return to the theatre prior to 1705, the 1704 publication of The Female Wits must have been an irritating reminder of the Patent Company's humiliating portrayal of Manley in 1696. Despite the reappearance of The Female Wits, Manley may still have offered Almyna to Cibber or perhaps one of the unproduced scripts mentioned later on in her will.\(^{31}\)

If such an incident ever took place, Manley's contact with Cibber probably occurred prior to 1706. During the 1706-1707 season Cibber appeared in an enlarged acting company at the Haymarket under Owen Swiney's direction. Throughout that season and until the end of 1707, Rich subsisted at Drury Lane mostly on profits from operas and variety entertainments supplemented by only a few plays. Even when Cibber resumed all his old duties when he returned to Rich's employ in the spring of 1708,\(^{32}\) Manley may have been too involved in writing the voluminous Atalantis to be shopping plays around London. Unfortunately, Manley's account of a playwright's frustrated dealings with Cibber is not specific enough to prove that she was attempting to revive her theatrical career between 1702 and 1705, but the

\(^{29}\) Manley, \textit{New Atalantis} 112-113.


\(^{32}\) Philip H. Highfill, Jr., Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhans, ed., \textit{A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800}, vol. 3 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1973-1993) 218-221. All subsequent references to this work will be listed as: Highfill, \textit{BD}.
description certainly explains why Drury Lane continued to be an unlikely place for Manley to have a play acted and why *Almyna* appeared at the Haymarket.

**Pix’s Career Begins To Wind Down**

After her repeated failures to produce a repertory play at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, Pix and the New Theatre management must have derived some encouragement from performances of her *Ibrahim* and *The Spanish Wives* at Drury Lane during 1702 and 1703. At the least, the performances were a reminder that Pix had produced profitable work in the past. Despite these encouraging tidbits, little personal information exists for the latter stages of Pix’s career. She was associated again with Elizabeth Barry and Susanna Centlivre (Carroll) in Tom Brown’s satiric portrait of the Lincoln’s Inn Fields company’s summer 1703 trip to Oxford:

> The first that took Coach, and had often took — —  
> Was the fam’d Mrs. B— with P—x at her A— — —  
> A Tool of a Scribe, and a Poetress great,  
> Who was said to Write well, because well she could Treat,  
> And for her sake had written her husband in Debt.  
> While Carrol, her sister-Adventurer in Print,  
> Took her Leave all in Tears, with a Curt’sie and Squint,...

In addition to repeating the charge that Pix was wasting her husband’s money to get her plays acted, the passage reaffirms her friendship with Elizabeth Barry and suggests collaboration between Pix and Centlivre.

Pix is sometimes credited with revising William Mountfort’s *Zelmane: or, The Corinthian Queen* for the stage in 1704. Though the dedication says the play was the unfinished work of “M—t,” The Diverting Post for 28 October 1704 refers to “Zalmayna, or, the Corinthian Queen, Written by Mrs. Pix.” If the revision is indeed Pix’s the sudden drop in

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her productivity between 1702 and 1705 would be at least partially explained by her acquisition of the benefit income from Mountfort's manuscript. Pix might have acquired the play from Susanna Verbruggen, an actress who had appeared in several of her plays.

Mountfort had been Susanna's first husband until 1692 when he was murdered by Captain Richard Hill, acting in behalf of Lord Mohun, who believed Mountfort was obstructing Mohun's conquest of Anne Bracegirdle. Susanna Mountfort probably acquired the script of Zelmae through her duties as executrix of her husband's will. Susanna, who had married John Verbruggen in 1694, probably died in childbirth in early September 1703. If the revision of Zelmae is to be attributed to Pix, she probably received the play in unfinished form in a bequest at that time.

The Different Widows

Pix is credited with writing The Different Widows: or, Intrigue All-A-Mode. First acted in early November 1703 for an unknown number of performances, the play was published without the author's name the following month. The anonymous printing coincides with Pix's attempts to give her plays every chance of success, even if that meant the removal of a woman's name from the title page. Her frustration at the difficulties of finding a popular formula is echoed in the prologue where the unpopularity of tragedy is blamed on the desire of the soldiers in the audience to escape from the harsh realities of the war in Europe:

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What Arts have we not try'd? What Labour ta'en,
To Reconcile you to our House again?
One while, in Mournful Tragedy we strove,)  
T'Inspire You with the tender Thoughts of Love;) 
But never cou'd your drowsy Passions move,) . . .
Since Flanders and the Fighting Trade came up,
"Tis thought Effeminate one Tear to drop.
Damn Tragedys says one, I hate the strain,)  
I got a Surfeit of 'em last Campaign;)
Come, prithee let's be gon to Drury-Lane.)
Thither in Crouds ye flock'd to see, Sir Harry,)  [The Constant Couple]
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37 Highfill, BD, vol. 15, 136-140.
38 Avery, London Stage, vol. 2, 47.
After conceding that the Patent Company's has had better success with their comedies, Pix sets out to make *The Different Widows* into a high-spirited, morally clean farce that will win the audience back from Drury Lane.

No surviving commentary explains why *The Different Widows* failed to enter the New Theatre repertory. Opinions are split among modern critics. Milhous calls the play "a lively exercise in the reform mode," while Linda Payne notes that "the comedy bustles with physical humor. . ." On the other hand, Hume dismisses *The Different Widows* because of the shocking turnabout that occurs when the reformed Sir James Bellmont marries Angelica after almost raping her earlier in the play. Paula Barbour notes that "It would be impossible to give a precis of the action," because the play "lacks a unifying main plot and presents eighteen characters arranging and re-arranging themselves into couples."

Certainly the comedy is lively, but Hume points to a moment where the actors may have had to work against the stridency of the situation in order to maintain the necessary audience sympathy with the male hero.Pix does help the performers a little. Just prior to when Sir James "seizes" Angelica while declaring "I'm so sharp Set, I shan't be very Nice at present --," Angelica has tempted him with the prospect that she "may give loose to longing Love, and wind my self about your panting heart." In addition to prompting his lust as a means to a marriage proposal, Angelica also remains in control of the encounter. Even after Sir James menaces her, she dismisses him with "You would not accept of so poor an Entertainment, as Love compell'd would give." When she informs him that "One stamp of my Foot, with ease

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40 Milhous, *Thomas Betterton* 184; Payne, "Mary Pix" 176.

41 Hume, *Development* 467-468.

42 Barbour 112.
can set me Free”, Sir James professes himself “Conquer’d.”  Having pointed out such safeguards as Pix employs to defuse the situation, the fact remains that Sir James threatens to rape his future wife. Even given the possibility that the 1703 audience might not have been as repelled by a groom’s threats to rape his future bride as a modern audience, if the scene were improperly handled in performance, The Different Widows could still have been damned on that account alone.

Though reasons for the failure of The Different Widows may not be conclusively evident, Barbour’s criticisms of the play’s sprawling plot and large cast point towards difficulties that may have hindered the original audience’s enjoyment and forestalled any possibility of the play’s revival. Hoping perhaps to outdo Drury Lane’s success with comedies, Pix crammed The Different Widows with an excess of plot lines and comic incidents which overpowers the title characters and gives the impression of parts of separate plays hurriedly grafted together. The complicated plot leads to four marriages while also examining the peccadilloes of three married couples. A summary gives an impression of just how confusing the action is.

The two main plot strands are: 1) the reclamation of Sir James Bellmont by his widowed mother, Lady Bellmont and country fiancée, Angelica, and 2) the welter of intrigues surrounding Lady Gaylove, Lady Bellmont’s widowed sister. When Sir James is not drinking or gambling, he is attempting to seduce Lady Courtall, Mrs. Draul, or Lady Loveman. Though he is proud of his libertinism, Sir James is increasingly beleaguered by the demands of his lifestyle. He pursues all three women, yet circumstances prevent any of them from yielding; Lady Courtall even asks him to duel for her. The more he protests that he is leading a free and natural life, the more he is constrained by the demands of that life. Finally, Sir James succumbs to the bewildering strategies of Angelica who claims to be his Spanish sister, flirts with him sometimes, interrupts his seductions, has him carried about in a darkened sedan

43 Pix, The Different Widows 45.
chair, refuses him in front of a bridal bed, has him imprisoned for debts, fools him into believing his best friend is dead, and finally forces his reclamation.

At Lady Gaylove’s chambers, where there are plenty of places to hide but no back door, Lord Courtall tries to seduce Lady Loveman while also attempting to avoid being cuckolded. Hypocritically pious Mr. Draul disguises himself as an “essence woman” to catch his wife in dalliance with Careless or Sir James while hoping to bed Lady Gaylove’s maid, Lucy. Sir Anthony Loveman, aided and angered by the meddler Dandle, pursues Lady Loveman, who considers affairs with Lord Courtall and Sir James, but chooses instead to dress as a man, beat Dandle and her husband, and woo both Courtalls in order to make fools of them. In between times, Valentine, Sir James’s one true friend, rescues Lady Gaylove’s two neglected children, exhorts Sir James to abandon his vices, then marries Lady Gaylove’s daughter, Mariana. Under the pretense of performing a sham marriage with Lady Gaylove to mollify Mr. Draul’s suspicions of his wife, Careless, Sir James’s dissolute companion, marries Lady Gaylove in earnest which provokes her fury. Just for good measure, Lucy, who happens to be pregnant, tricks Dandle into marrying her. When all the turmoil subsides, we are informed that Lady Gaylove is a poor example to follow while Widow Bellmont is a pattern to emulate.44 As the plot takes an unexpected shift in emphasis from Sir James’s follies to Lady Loveman’s intrigues, Lady Gaylove happily predicts that “we shall have Banter upon Banter, and Mirth in abundance.”45 Her comment summarizes Pix’s indiscriminate piling up of incidents to, as the prologue says, “reconcile” the audience to Lincoln’s Inn Fields. Though The Different Widows possesses considerable energy, the play falters because of numerous and confused intrigues. Perhaps the play would have worked better on-stage had Pix focused on Sir James’s reformation and Lady Gaylove’s comeuppance rather than interpolating the foibles of the Courtalls, Drauls, and Lovemans into an already complicated scenario.

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44 Pix, The Different Widows 1-62.
45 Pix, The Different Widows 40.
An examination of the cast list gives further clues to the play's failure. Amazingly, five years after he plagiarized from Pix and she called him her enemy in the dedication to *The Deceiver Deceived*, George Powell was cast as Sir James. History is frustratingly silent on Powell's behavior, and the degree of Pix's involvement, in rehearsals. Probably Pix did not have final casting approval, as her choice of Powell for her leading man is difficult to imagine. Whether they became friends, bickered, or refused to talk to each other, or whether Betterton had charge of rehearsals and Pix remained as anonymous in the theatre as she did in the publication of her play, is unknown. Since actors could be fined heavily for refusing roles, Powell may have been reluctant to protest his casting. Two years later, however, Powell refused to act one evening at the Haymarket which forced the management to dismiss the audience and led to Powell's enforced retirement for over a year.46

Presumably, Powell, after his defection from Drury Lane, and Pix, without a Lincoln's Inn Fields repertory play to her credit, found that their best interests coincided in concentrating on the show in rehearsal and forgetting the transgressions of the past. Conceivably, Powell, who had acted the ne'er-do-well Toper in Centlivre's *The Beau's Duel* the year before, may have enjoyed being typecast again as the dissolute, amorous, and witty Sir James. More important for the fate of *The Different Widows*, Powell would return to Drury Lane seven months after Pix's play was staged.47 Had Pix hoped to revive the play the following season, large sections of the script would have had to be rehearsed anew to integrate Powell's replacement.

Powell's departure points to the almost transient nature of *The Different Widows* cast. Without previous Pix mainstays Barry, Bracegirdle, Betterton, and John Verbruggen, *The Different Widows* most accomplished cast member was Elinor Leigh who was given only a small role as Widow Bellmont. In fact, a surprising number of the performers were nearing

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46 Highfill, *BD*, vol. 12, 112-113. Neither the *Biographical Dictionary* nor *The London Stage* gives the name of the play in which Powell refused to appear.
47 Highfill, *BD*, vol. 12, 111.
retirement. Among the important roles, Mrs. Prince/Angelica left the stage at the end of the 1703-1704 season. Abigail Lawson/Lady Gaylove would retire in 1705. Of the roles with less responsibility, Angelica's maid Harriott was played by Mrs. Fieldhouse who appears in only three cast lists of the period, the last in 1705. Mrs. Parsons who played Lucy is mentioned only once more, as Betty in The Gamester 1705. Cast as Mrs. Draul, Mrs. Allison was yet another minor performer whose career ended in 1705. The only mention that the Biographical Dictionary gives for Mr. Lloyd is his role as Lord Courtall in The Different Widows.\textsuperscript{48} Of the eighteen original-cast members, then, seven were no longer available at Lincoln's Inn Fields little more than a year later.

Additionally, among the younger women in the cast were Lucretia Bradshaw and Mary Porter, two protégés of Elizabeth Barry, who would soon start to specialize in tragedy. Quickly outgrowing roles like Lady Gaylove's submissive daughter Mariana, Bradshaw would begin taking over Barry's leading Shakespearean roles in 1708. Though she began her career in comic roles like the mercurial Lady Loveman in The Different Widows, Porter would move increasingly into tragic roles after Barry's retirement as well.\textsuperscript{49}

Minor problems existed among the more permanent members of the cast as well. Ambitious Barton Booth cannot have been thrilled with his assignment as the stodgy, relatively unimportant Valentine. Though he later became a competent comedian, Elinor Leigh's son, Francis, may have been too inexperienced in 1703 to play the irksome Dandle.\textsuperscript{50} Since Dandle is the sidekick to Sir Anthony, played by George Pack, who specialized in comic bumbling, Leigh may have felt the extra pressure of acting opposite a superior performer in a role more suited to Pack's usual line.

\textsuperscript{50} Highfill, BD, vol. 9, 229-231.
Since *The Different Widows* was Pix’s only original effort between 1702 and 1705, the unfortunate temporary qualities of the casting and the overstuffed nature of the script combined to help keep one of her liveliest efforts out of the Lincoln’s Inn Fields repertory. Despite these difficulties, the play’s disappearance may not have been entirely Pix’s fault. As discussed in the Introduction, the practice of scheduling all benefits in the spring was not codified until 1712. Interestingly, the only other Lincoln’s Inn Fields premiere listed for early November 1703 is William Walker’s *Marry, or, Do Worse*. Walker’s preface complained that his play “was so hem’d in between the Benefits that it seem’d meerly Confin’d to the Limits of a Single Night before hand.”\(^{51}\) Perhaps *The Different Widows*, like Walker’s play, received less attention from the New Theatre actors because they were all intent on making their own benefits as profitable as possible. The conspicuous absence of Barry, Bracegirdle, and Verbruggen in particular may well be attributable to this cause. In spite of a slow period between 1702 and 1705, however, at the opening of the Haymarket, Pix would prove to still have strong connections with the actors who joined Vanbrugh’s company.

The End Of Centlivre’s Apprenticeship

During this brief period between the waning of the initial theatrical competition in 1702 and the opening of the Queen’s Theatre in the spring of 1705, Centlivre began to make the reputation which would soon surpass all three Female Wits. She began humbly enough with the Lincoln’s Inn Fields premiere of *The Stolen Heiress* (31 December 1702), which was not revived after its initial run. The following spring, however, Centlivre scored a success with *Love’s Contrivance* (4 June 1703) at Drury Lane. Due to the late spring premiere, the run of the play was interrupted by a benefit performance of *Theodosius* for Mrs. Elford. In fact, Centlivre received only one benefit herself during the initial run, but her play was revived for

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\(^{51}\) Avery, *The London Stage*, vol. 2, 47.
the benefit of the boxkeepers on 14 June and again on 23 June for the benefit of Mrs. Campion. Further revivals are recorded the following October and February.\textsuperscript{52}

In January 1704 Centlivre returned to Lincoln’s Inn Fields with The Gamester, her first full-scale commercial success with twelve performances during the initial run.\textsuperscript{53} Perhaps because The Gamester had made Centlivre’s writing a valuable commodity and because Love’s Contrivance had proved itself useful to the company, Drury Lane took the unusual step of reviving Love’s Contrivance for a second author’s benefit 28 April 1704, almost a year after the initial performance. The second Love’s Contrivance benefit could well be evidence of how Centlivre’s good relationships with both companies caused them to compete for the opportunity to stage her work. Whether the extra benefit was influential or not, Centlivre’s next play, The Basset-Table, premiered at Drury Lane in November 1705.\textsuperscript{54}

\textbf{The Stolen Heiress}

Set in a fictional Sicily where the death penalty awaits anyone who marries an heiress without paternal permission, Centlivre’s third play, The Stolen Heiress, concerns two brothers, Gravello and Larich, who try to force their daughters to marry rich men that the daughters despise. In defense of the play, Centlivre’s biographer points out that because both the serious main plot and comic subplot use one of the intolerant brothers as a blocking character, the two sections of The Stolen Heiress are more closely connected than the parts of Centlivre’s earlier split plot tragicomedy, The Perjured Husband.\textsuperscript{55} In his analysis of the play, F. P. Lock also praises the structural improvements that Centlivre employed in her adaptation of Thomas May’s The Heir (1620).\textsuperscript{56} Among the play’s detractors, though he points out some of the high points in the serious plot, Hume concludes that The Stolen Heiress

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\begin{itemize}
  \item Bowyer 49.
  \item Lock 41-42.
\end{itemize}
was "a rather mechanical exercise." Milhous summarily pronounces that the play "deserved oblivion."

Despite advances in Centlivre's storytelling skills, the melodramatic tale of how Lucasia elopes with her true love only to see him almost executed appears stilted alongside the farcical story of how Lavinia and her beloved confound the gullible pedant that her father wants her to wed. Intent on forcing Lucasia to marry the Governor's deformed nephew Pirro, Gravello counterfeits his son's death, arrests his daughter when she tries to elope, and demands the death sentence for her lover. Meanwhile, Larich attempts to impose the dimwitted scholar Sancho upon Lavinia, and Francisco tricks Sancho, "the Salamanca doctor," into making an ass of himself in front of father and daughter. Though Francisco's attempt to impersonate a scholar and marry Lavinia is foiled, he finally wins her because he inherits from a rich uncle. Back in the main story line, just after the merciless governor has refused all pleas for clemency, Lucasia and Palante are rescued by two contrived plot twists. First, Palante is discovered to be of noble birth, a circumstance obscured by his imprisonment among pirates as a young man. Second, Gravello's son Eugenio comes out of hiding to reveal Pirro's villainous attempt to poison him. Of course, since Eugenio is still alive, Lucasia is free to marry because she is no longer an heiress. Still finding her way as a playwright, Centlivre apparently needed additional proof after The Perjured Husband that her writing talent was best suited for colloquial comedy, not pathetic distress.

Although The Stolen Heiress probably did not merit a revival at Lincoln's Inn Fields, Centlivre also had several reasons to be encouraged about the play. Even though the two plots are incongruous in juxtaposition and resolved in contrived fashion, Centlivre does avoid the chaotic rush of incidents which marred her previous comic effort, The Beau's Duel.

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57. Hume, Development 470-471.
58. Milhous, Thomas Betterton 182.
Instead, *The Stolen Heiress* moves very quickly to the gist of Gravello's scheme to counterfeit his son's death in order to snare the dowry-hungry Pirro for Lucasia. Shortly thereafter, Lucasia's distaste for Pirro and love for Palante are revealed. With the two opposing forces in the main plot in place, Centlivre wastes no time introducing Larich's uninformed reverence for the appearance of learning which causes him to order Lavinia to marry Sancho. Almost immediately, the unsuspecting Sancho encounters his rival Francisco, who sets the comic subplot in motion. Though *The Stolen Heiress* develops unsatisfactorily after this promising beginning, Centlivre had begun to employ the economical plotting skills which would serve her so well later on in *The Busy Body*, *The Wonder*, and *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*. Another remarkable feature of the play is the number of impostures the characters undertake. Eugenio pretends to be a serving man; Francisco pretends to be Sancho; Sancho pretends to be a beau and man about town. Of course, Gravello is pretending his son is dead. As early as 1702, then, Centlivre was experimenting with disguise which would become the major plot device for *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*.

A second reason for Centlivre to feel pleased with *The Stolen Heiress* is that the play makes good use of the revamped Lincoln's Inn Fields company. As noted in Chapter Four, when Betterton acquired limited authority over the New Theatre company, he cut back his own acting load and employed Barton Booth and George Powell as leading men. *The Stolen Heiress* offers good roles to both Powell, as the fiery and nobly suffering Palante, and Booth, as Eugenio who must disguise himself in order to free Palante and frustrate his father's plan to marry Lucasia to the scheming Pirro. Among the Lincoln's Inn Fields leading women, Centlivre probably had Pix's friend Elizabeth Barry in mind when she wrote the role of Lucasia. The role seems tailor-made for Barry who did indeed play Lucasia. Following Pix's example, Centlivre makes sure that Barry's physical beauty is praised. The role also

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60 Centlivre, *The Stolen Heiress* 1-17.
contains plenty of opportunities for Barry to display her range: Lucasia is noble, steadfast, desperate, loving, contemptuous, and abject by turns.

Centlivre was also fortunate in the Lincoln’s Inn Fields comedians available for The Stolen Heiress. Appearing at the New Theatre between 1702 and 1704, the talented and litigious Thomas Dogget had been a top comic actor since the early 1690s. Dogget was called upon to prepare three separate set pieces for the role of Sancho. When the character first appears, he is a foolish pedant with no practical, and little scholarly, knowledge. After some subversive coaching from Francisco, Sancho’s next incarnation is a ridiculous beau who convinces Larich that he has betrothed his daughter to a witless fop. Third, Sancho becomes an entirely pliable suitor, “tractable as a Monkey,” willing to be cuckolded and accept another man’s child before his marriage. Dogget was aided by Francis Leigh as Sancho’s wisecracking servant Tristram, a role more appropriate to Leigh’s developing talents than Pix’s more demanding Dandle in The Different Widows. Also complementing Dogget was George Pack as Francisco, an enterprising rather than stalwart young lover. In a humorous attempt to marry Lavinia, Francisco impersonates the Salamanca Doctor as a double-talking phony scholar. Jean Gagen dismisses The Stolen Heiress with the faint compliment that “to readers with a tolerance for even second- or third-rate plays, this play is not a trial to read.” With the support of strong leading players and comedy specialists, however, The Stolen Heiress probably provided a more credible entertainment in the New Theatre than today’s reader can imagine.

One other point regarding Centlivre’s third play needs mention. The Stolen Heiress was published without the author’s name on the title page and dedication. Not content with

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62 Centlivre, The Stolen Heiress 15-17, 21-23, 41-43.
keeping a woman's name from the printed version of the play, the prologue begins with the deliberately misleading statement that

Our Author fearing his success to day,
Sends me to bribe your Spleen against his Play,
And if a Ghost in Nelly's time cou'd sooth ye,
He hopes in these that Flesh and Blood may move ye, . . . .

Several years later Centlivre would protest angrily because publisher Bernard Lintot had removed her name from the dedication to Love's Contrivance. Like Pix in The Different Widows, however, at this point in her career Centlivre was willing to disguise her involvement in the play. Apparently she hoped to forestall any adverse reaction that public knowledge of female authorship might have caused.

Love's Contrivance

With a late spring premiere and a benefit performance of someone else's play scheduled for the third night after opening, no one, including Centlivre, seems to have expected much success for Love's Contrivance. Initially, as Centlivre's preface explains, she was interested in combining scenes from several Molière plays (Le Médecin Malgré Lui, Le Mariage forcé, and Sganarelle) into a three act farce. As she began to "touch the [French] Colours with an English Pencil," however, Centlivre was persuaded by "some very good Judges" to fill the play out into a five act comedy. As matters turned out, Love's Contrivance is plotted throughout with the same economy that characterizes only the first act of The Stolen Heiress. Centlivre also makes use of the bustling intrigues and disguises which aided the subplot of her previous play. Where The Stolen Heiress bogs down in ponderous melodrama, however, Love's Contrivance borrows energetic incidents from Molière that

65 Centlivre, "Prologue," The Stolen Heiress n. pag.
66 Lock 43.
Centlivre weaves into her comic tale of how Bellmie and Octavio win Lucinda and Belliza with the help of Bellmic's former servant, Martin.

In her preface, a surprised Centlivre happily declares that "I confess it met a Reception beyound my Expectation: . . . " Centlivre also admits that "I must own my self infinitely oblig'd to the Players." She singles out Wilks for his work as Bellmie, the fiery young spark who impersonates two contrasting 'astrologers' in order to discourage his rival, Sir Toby. As Centlivre says, Wilks

extended his Faculties to such a Pitch, that one may almost say he out-play'd himself; and the Town must confess they never saw three different Characters by one Man acted so well before . . .

Centlivre also had high praise for Sir Toby Doubtful/Benjamin Johnson as "the best Comedian of the Age." In addition to Wilks and Johnson, Centlivre had the benefit of Drury Lane's best actresses, Jane Rogers and Anne Oldfield, as the two heroines. Other standouts in the cast were the tall, thin farceur William Bullock as Selfwill, the irascible father; the energetic and diminutive "Jubilee-Dicky" Norris as Martin (the 'doctor in spite of himself'); and John Mills, in the first of many appearances as Wilks's sidekick in a Centlivre play. In fact, as Centlivre makes clear, the players should be given credit for helping transform Love's Contrivance from a light farce played during benefit season for variety's sake into a repertory play.

Though the Drury Lane company undoubtedly made a positive contribution to the success of Love's Contrivance, Centlivre's fourth play also provides some interesting examples of the ticklish problems sometimes facing playwrights in rehearsals. As noted in the introduction, the playwrights of the era were involved to some degree in staging their own plays. Though comic exaggerations like The Rehearsal and The Female Wits give some notion of how writers could be responsible for coaching the actors, blocking, and supervising rehearsals, both satires focus on the excessive behavior of the playwright in contrast to the

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sensible behavior of the players. With the cast of *Love's Contrivance*, Centlivre was faced with potentially the reverse of this situation, a cast of actors with ample reasons to dislike each other.

Though the passionate affair between Jane Rogers and Robert Wilks had ended with bitterness on both sides several years earlier, they were cast as the lovers Bellmie and Lucinda in *Love's Contrivance*. Centlivre was probably well aware that the two actors were not on good terms as she prepared the play for the Patent Company. Significantly, she contrived the plot so that Bellmie must overcome all the obstacles to his marriage before he can talk to Lucinda. The two lovers never even have a conversation in the play and do not appear on stage together until the last scene. Their entire interaction consists of asking pardon from Lucinda's father. When Selfwill spurns them, Wilks as Bellmie responded with lines that are ironic considering his relationship with Rogers:

> Come, my Dear, — in me  
> You shall both Father, Friend, and Husband find,  
> I ne'er can want of ought while you are kind.

Rogers as Lucinda was not required to reply.\(^70\)

Having constructed her play to keep Wilks and Rogers as separate as possible, Centlivre had also to contend with the presence of both Henry Norris and his wife Sarah in the cast. 'Jubilee-Dicky' had a reputation for learning his lines sloppily and supplying the gaps in his memory of the text with his own impromptu comedy.\(^71\) On a more touchy note, though Sarah Norris acted very little, her sister Elizabeth had married Robert Wilks in the early 1690s.\(^72\) Thus, Mrs. Norris as Martin's Wife in *Love's Contrivance* was forced to watch her sister's husband paired up with his old mistress at the end of the play. Even though Wilks and Rogers were merely playing characters, Centlivre may have been grateful that the use of three plot strands from the Molière plays allowed her to keep some actors at a distance.

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\(^70\) Centlivre, *Love's Contrivance* 66.
\(^71\) Highfill, *BD*, vol. 11, 50-53.
from each other. Though Martin's Wife is on stage at the end of the play, she and Lucinda never interact with one another.\textsuperscript{73}

Though the famous quarrel between Jane Rogers and Anne Oldfield over who would play Andromache in \textit{The Distrest Mother} did not occur until 1712, Oldfield had already begun her rise to prominence. In addition to Oldfield's rivalry with Anne Bracegirdle which hastened the latter's retirement in 1707, Oldfield, aided by Wilks in particular, was given increased prominence in the Drury Lane repertory after 1710 while many of Rogers's roles were given to Lucretia Bradshaw and Mary Porter.\textsuperscript{74} Since she was supplementing her stage talents with theatrical politicking against her rivals between 1707 and 1712, Oldfield may well have regarded Rogers as a rival in 1703. For her part, Rogers had already shown herself capable of bringing her offstage anger into the theatre when she bit Wilks's cheek during a performance of \textit{Venice Preserved}.\textsuperscript{75} To add one more detail to this volatile mix, Robert Gore-Browne, Oldfield's biographer, suggests that the actress and Centlivre had been rival objects of George Farquhar's affections around 1700.\textsuperscript{76}

In short, the \textit{Love's Contrivance} rehearsals were fraught with potential personal conflicts. What if Wilks showed a renewed interest in Rogers in front of Mrs. Norris? Would Wilks indulge his famous temper at Rogers's expense to gratify Sarah Norris and excuse his own failings? Since William Bullock and Benjamin Johnson eventually left Drury Lane because they felt themselves mistreated by the Triumvirate management,\textsuperscript{77} had their resentment of Wilks already begun? What if Henry Norris replaced too many of Centlivre's comic lines with his own stock routines? What if Rogers and Oldfield became too competitive

\textsuperscript{73} Centlivre, \textit{Love's Contrivance} 66.
\textsuperscript{75} Highfill, \textit{BD}, vol. 13, 68-71.
\textsuperscript{77} Highfill, \textit{BD}, vol. 2, 408-412; Highfill, \textit{BD}, vol. 8, 171-175.
with each other to appear on stage as friendly cousins? Though Oldfield and Centlivre later became friends, what if, at this early stage, Oldfield refused to comply with Centlivre's instructions because of their rivalry over Farquhar? Though complicated personal relationships are commonly overcome in collaborative endeavors, the catalogue of potential sources of conflict on the Love's Contrivance set provides a clear reminder that Centlivre and her contemporaries had to have additional skills beyond the creation of actable scripts. That Centlivre and the Drury Lane company negotiated all the possible pitfalls without apparent detriment to the production is a tribute, at least on that occasion, to their collective good sense.

The Gamester

In February 1705 the Rebel Company, now under Vanbrugh's uncertain management, had the good fortune to present Centlivre's The Gamester as they prepared to transfer to the new Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket. The production came at a propitious time for both playwright and company. When Christopher Rich discovered that Vanbrugh's new theatre was likely to house his old rivals as well as bring all-sung Italian opera to London, he retaliated by successfully staging Arsinoe, an all-sung English opera, three months before the Haymarket's first play appeared. In the suddenly renewed competition, the Lincoln's Inn Fields troupe needed some means to offset the success of Arsinoe and gain some momentum for the opening of the new playhouse.

As a result, when Centlivre's The Gamester was accepted for production, the play received the full attentions of the company's strongest actors. In fact, Betterton, Barry, Bracegirdle, and Verbruggen, the four Lincoln's Inn Fields mainstays who helped sustain Pix's early career, all appeared in the original production of The Gamester. To her credit, Centlivre had also produced a strong script on a timely topic with just the proper mixture of...
fun and moralization. As Hume notes, Centlivre had written a reform play which "satisfied a genuine taste for didacticism without forcing authors into the sterility of exemplary comedy." The play's twelfth performance on 22 February was another author's benefit, probably her third during the run, and The Gamester gained a firm place in the repertory.

The Gamester concerns the reawakening of the better nature of a compulsive gambler, Valere/Verbruggen, through the loving forgiveness and clever stratagems of his fiancé, Angelica/Bracegirdle. Lady Wealthy/Barry, Angelica's widowed sister, is also in need of reclamation from her own vanity and her refusal to realize that marriage to virtuous Mr. Lovewell/Betterton is her best chance for happiness. The sisters must fend off the advances of Valere's elderly Uncle Dorante/John Corey, who believes Angelica should marry him, and a footman disguised as the Marquess of Hazard/William Fieldhouse, who has pretentions to Lady Wealthy's fortune. Sometimes aided, sometimes thwarted by his impertinent servant Hector/George Pack, Valere must contend with an array of sharpers, creditors, usurers, and his increasingly unindulgent father in his struggle against his vices. Yet for all the play's condemnations of gambling, one of the liveliest scenes is the colorful dice game where Valere loses his fortune and his token of Angelica's love, a valuable miniature, to Angelica herself in disguise.

Centlivre also nicely suits the roles to the performers. Verbruggen as Valere has plenty of wild oats to sew before he is rescued by the wiles, faith, and beauty of Angelica/Bracegirdle. Likewise, as Lady Wealthy, Barry was allowed to scheme for her sister's ruin, entertain fops, and even contemplate the seduction of Valere. While she considers an ill course, however, Wealthy's misbehavior never produces adverse consequences. Furthermore, her conscience reminds her of the rewards of virtue, while Betterton, in the relatively small role of Lovewell appropriate to his decreased work load, stalwartly redeems her from her failings and overcomes her reluctance to matrimony. As Hector,

79 Hume, Development 470.
Centlivre favorite George Pack provided much of the play's comic energy while striving to keep his master's visits to the game rooms secret from Angelica and his father.

In The Gamester Centlivre successfully combined the sentimental strain which she handled so awkwardly in The Stolen Heiress with the comic business and intrigues which worked so well in Love's Contrivance. The fifth act conversions of Valere and Lady Wealthy have as much pathos as anything in The Stolen Heiress. In The Gamester, however, both plots have comic and serious elements which contribute to the characters' reclaims, and Centlivre contrives to keep the play's tone light. As Centlivre explains in her dedication:

> The Design of this Piece [was] to divert, without that Vicious Strain which usually attends the Comick Muse; and according to the first Intent of Plays, recommend Morality, and I hope I have in some measure, perform'd it. ...  

With her fortunate combination of luck, talent, and timing, Centlivre found herself in a strong position to advance her career as the end of the decade approached.

**Summary**

Having developed her playwriting competence and professional relationships with both companies, Centlivre was in the enviable position of being able to adapt to the turbulent series of management and company reshufflings that ensued after 1705. When a crisis threatened her career over The Man's Bewitch'd (1709), Centlivre would have the skills and standing to overcome both adverse publicity and the displeasure of the actors. As the competition and the demand for new plays resumed, Pix, Manley, and Trotter were all preparing new works as well. For the Female Wits, however, the reception of their forthcoming plays would nearly conclude their theatrical careers. Sometime after The Adventures in Madrid (1706), Pix's health failed; she would be dead by 1709. When Manley's Almyna (1706) and Trotter's The Revolution of Sweden (1706) were not well received, both women were poised to pursue other opportunities. Manley would hit her stride as a political

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journalist and author of *romans a cléf*, thinly disguised fictional portraits of the great political figures of Anne's reign. Trotter, on the other hand, after receiving some satisfaction from her efforts to attain patronage, would move ahead to her marriage with Reverend Patrick Cockburn. Until the 1740s when she began to prepare her complete works for publication, Trotter's literary efforts would consist of privately circulated philosophical writings and correspondence.
CHAPTER VI
PATRONAGE AND PUBLICATION

Before proceeding to the reception of the women's plays from 1705-1710, patronage and publication, two more means by which the women earned a living, should be discussed. Much of this study has already been concerned with three types of patronage: mutual support among the women, audience support, and the degree to which the writers' relationships with members of the two theatre companies hindered or helped them. Two other forms of patronage require some attention: aristocratic/party support and income from printed dedications and publishing fees. To begin, some account of how political patronage had largely supplanted royal patronage after the Restoration will be useful.

The Failure Of Royal Patronage

Even in the storied days of Charles II, royal patronage was likely to take the form of personal attention from the monarch as opposed to cash, because Charles's Privy Purse was consistently too poor for his gifts to authors to match his generous temperament.1 The three year reign of James II, Charles's brother and successor, was too brief and troubled for royal patronage to improve. After the Glorious Revolution, when James's daughter Mary and her Dutch husband William III ascended the English throne, they scarcely took an interest in

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the artistic life of their new kingdom. In addition to never really learning English and spending six months each year in Holland, William was extremely asthmatic and preferred to reside at Hampton Court some distance from smoky London, after Mary's death in 1694, the king took increasing refuge in his companions of the bottle and the hunt.

Despite the encouraging news that Elizabeth Barry was hired to give elocution lessons to her as a young princess, from the time Anne became heir to the throne, she took very little notice of the theatre. Her indifference has several explanations: between 1688 and 1702, as she became more and more likely to succeed William, Anne was also a focal point of opposition to William's government. Clergy who rejected William's Calvinism could look to Anne for strong Anglican support; Tory politicians (or moderate Whigs like Harley) who were out of favor in William's staunch Whig ministries could approach the princess in hopes of preferment after William's death. Also, Anne and Mary began to dislike each other personally; Anne's great favorite, the Duke of Marlborough, developed an intense rivalry with William Bentinck, William's most important advisor, and William snubbed Anne's husband, Prince George of Denmark, by refusing to give him any military responsibility in putting down the revolt in Ireland.

In 1692, believing that Marlborough was undermining the Dutch generals in his army, secretly corresponding with the exiled James II, and turning Anne against him, William barred him from court; Mary subsequently had him briefly imprisoned in the Tower. When Anne brought the Duchess of Marlborough to court as a member of her retinue, Mary angrily demanded that Anne dismiss Sarah. Anne defiantly refused; the sisters were never

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5 Gregg 12.
6 Gregg 75-78.
reconciled; and Anne spent the remaining two years of Mary’s life in near seclusion.� Though William and Anne were superficially reconciled after Mary’s death, William never appointed Anne to the councils of regency he left behind to govern while he was in Holland; for her part, Anne privately referred to William as “Mr. Caliban” and, in the future, resolved to forestall any similar opposition from her Hanoverian heirs by refusing to allow them to visit or reside in England during her reign.ậ

In addition to being politically out of favor and personally at odds with William and Mary before her accession, Anne’s poor health made her increasingly unlikely to patronize the theatre. As a near-sighted child Anne had been treated unsuccessfully for “defluxion” of the eyes; as queen she was still consulting eye-doctors. Her sight remained poor, however, and she “seemed to squint perpetually.”öl Perhaps because of her deficient eyesight, the queen preferred musical entertainments over plays. Anne attended the dedication of the partially completed Queen’s Theatre in the Haymarket in 1705, but Vanbrugh arranged that the opening performance in her honor was a concert.佬 Anne also suffered increasingly from gout which afflicted both her hands and legs and forced her to walk with two canes. The night before she became queen, Lord Treasurer Godolphin asked Robert Harley, Speaker of the Commons, if accommodations could be made for Anne: “She is very unwieldy and lame; must she come in person to the House of Lords, or may she send for the two houses to come to her?”öl If, on the eve of her coronation, arrangements were being contemplated to oblige Parliament to travel to the new queen for the occasion, the future prospects for Anne to visit Drury Lane or Lincoln’s Inn Fields were dim indeed.

� Gregg 86-99.
ậ Gregg 87, 106, 123.
öl Gregg 6-7.
öl Gregg 152.
Anne also occupied the years between her father's ouster in 1688 and her own accession in 1702 with a series of failed attempts to produce a healthy heir. In addition to gout, rheumatism, and poor eyesight, Anne's strength was depleted by as many as eighteen real and hysterical pregnancies. She and George of Denmark produced only one child, the Duke of Gloucester, who lived beyond the age of ten. After Gloucester died of smallpox at the end of July 1700, Anne spent most of the next eighteen months in secluded mourning. A year after Gloucester's death, Parliament ratified William's Protestant choice, the Electress Sophia of Hanover, for Anne's successor in the likely event that she should die childless.¹²

Several writers, including Pix, Trotter, and Congreve, tried dedicating works to Princess Anne before she became queen. They may have received a cash gift or expensive token for their pains. Having dedicated her novel The Inhumane Cardinal to Anne in 1696, Pix, in her dedication to The Deceiver Deceived (1698), hints as much when she says, "Nay even her royal Highness shew'd such a benign condescension as not only to pardon my ambitious daring, but also encouraged my Pen."¹³ None of them earned the royal gratitude that Centlivre received after she dedicated The Wonder (1714) to Anne's successor, George, Duke of Cambridge. True, Centlivre was taking more of a chance than her predecessors, because, despite the ill will between Anne and William III, Anne was always heir to his English kingdom. As Anne's final illness progressed, however, some question existed as to whether the Hanoverian succession would actually take place or whether the Old Pretender, Anne's Catholic half-brother, would arrive from France to become James III. As events turned out, George I had an orderly accession to the throne, and Centlivre was subsequently rewarded financially and with command performances of her plays. Though Pix and Trotter had dedicated works to Anne before her crowning when she was in political disfavor, no subsequent

¹² Gregg 120-124.
marks of the queen's patronage are recorded for them; significantly, most of the theatrical careers of the three Female Wits was past when Anne became queen in 1702. Physically weakened by the years of childbearing and illness, devoted to a quiet, pious lifestyle, and focused on her personal relationships and duties as queen, Anne's chief contribution to the theatre of her era was to keep the playhouses open despite the reformers' cries for their suppression.

Party And Club Patronage

With the gradual withdrawal of royal support, writers in search of patronage began to seek favor from members of the aristocracy who were involved with the Whig or Tory parties. Queen Anne began her reign determined to govern with a mixed ministry from both parties, but the difficulties of sustaining the war effort pushed both Anne and her moderate ministers, Godolphin and Marlborough, to rely increasingly on the Whigs. Closely involved in the operation of the queen's household as both groom of the stole and keeper of the queen's privy purse, Sarah Churchill began the destruction of her friendship with Anne through her strident advocacy of Whig appointments to ecclesiastical and governmental vacancies.

The 1694 Triennial Act mandating the holding of parliamentary elections every three years kept partisanship at a high pitch throughout Anne's reign. In the hard fought election of 1705, Marlborough and Godolphin were forced to side with the Whigs, while Robert Harley, the most trusted of Anne's two secretaries of state, supported the Tories. With Sarah clamoring, Godolphin threatening to resign as Lord Treasurer, and Marlborough ready to give up command of his victorious armies if Godolphin left the government, Queen Anne was grudgingly forced to accede to an increasingly Whig ministry.

In fact, Anne was prevailed upon to give governmental postings to all five of the most influential lords of the Whig party, known as the Junto, who had been removed from office at

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14 Foss 57.
15 Gregg 158-164, 181.
her wish when she became queen. The Junto members were Lord Somers, Baron Halifax, Lord Wharton, the Earl of Orford, and the Earl of Sunderland. Particularly galling to Anne was having to accept Sunderland as secretary of state. In addition to personally detesting both the earl and his parents and having probably opposed the earl’s marriage to Lady Anne Churchill, Anne had been especially angered by Sunderland’s opposition to a bill which would have given her husband the right to sit in Parliament and in the Privy Council if she predeceased him. Godolphin and Sarah Churchill’s advocacy of Sunderland’s appointment did much to estrange them from the queen, and, though Harley and his supporters would be forced from power in 1708, the return of the Tories in 1710 was precipitated by the insistent Whig demands for office against the queen’s inclinations.

The Women And Political Patronage

Writers could, of course, choose a side in the Whig-Tory tug of war or attempt to stay neutral. Pix’s friendship with Centlivre may argue in favor of Whig sympathies as might the Tory Alexander Pope’s inclusion of Pix in an early draft of The Dunciad. In keeping with her genial temperament, however, Pix appears to have avoided the political fray. Constance Clark does point out that an usurper is deposed in The Czar of Muscovy and a true king restored in The Double Distress. Conceivably, these incidents might argue for Pix’s Tory support of the Old Pretender’s claim to the throne. Clark also notes that Pix provided commendatory verses to Bevil Higgon’s Tory play, The Generous Conqueror (1702). On the other hand, the prologue to Pix’s Adventures in Madrid (1706) does compliment Marlborough

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16 Gregg 134, 157.
17 Gregg 166, 219-231.
18 Gregg 219-319.
19 F. P. Lock, Susanna Centlivre, Twayne’s English Authors Ser. 254 (Boston: Twayne, 1979) 21.
as "our Great Chief upon the open Plain...Who, like another Scipio leads us on/And merits all the Wreaths the Romans won,"

Marlborough was at the peak of his popularity after his second great victory, Ramillies, however, and Pix may have just been contributing to the overwhelming public acclaim of his valor. Finally, the paucity of details concerning Pix's political allegiances makes any attempt to designate her a Whig or a Tory an exercise in speculation.

Trotter's Search For Patronage

Unlike Centlivre and Manley, whose party preferences are clear, or Pix, who appears to have been neutral, Trotter's political position was ambivalent. Trotter was the Catholic daughter of a naval officer who had served Charles II and James II; in 1708 she converted to the Church of England and married Patrick Cockburn, an Anglican clergyman who subsequently refused to take the oath of allegiance to George I.

Trotter's response to a 1705 request from her friend George Burnet to write something in praise of the Electress Sophia of Hanover was a polite refusal which could be the act of a Tory avoiding to print a compliment to a non-Stuart heir. Her Stuart, High Church, and even Catholic affiliations (along with Cockburn's decision to become a non-juror) suggest Toryism or even Jacobite support of the Old Pretender and the divine right of kings. Yet Trotter's friendship with Lady Piers, the wife of one of Marlborough's officers, her sister's marriage to Marlborough's physician-general Dr. Inglis, and her mother's pension from the queen, paid through Sarah Churchill's offices, all


23 Birch 188. Birch's edition of Cockburn's Works has some irregular pagination. The volume reaches page 192 and then begins again at page 177. The references to the 7 July 1705 letter to Burnet are to the second pages numbered 186-188. The references to pages 190-192 are to the first pages with those numbers.
indicate Whig associations. As early as 1701, Trotter had dedicated The Unhappy Penitent to Lord Halifax, a member of the Whig Junto. As already noted, Trotter's dedication of The Revolution of Sweden to Harriet Godolphin connoted support for the policies of the Whig majority.

In February 1704, in her correspondence with George Burnet, Trotter came close to stating her feelings about the two factions. After expressing her sorrow on the passing of John Locke and chiding Burnet for suspecting that an excellent account of Locke's final days could not have been written by a woman, Trotter writes:

Mr. Locke's place is given to Mr. Addison, (famous for his poetry) and as it is said, in reward of a poem he has wrote to the duke of Marlborough on his last glorious campaign. It is hard to tell you the reputation of it; for, as most people's judgments are biassed in all things by a party, we have our whig and tory poets too, who are accordingly approved or condemned by different sets of men. Mr. Phillips . . . is admired by the tories: I have not read him yet, but there are a few unprejudiced men, that judge only by the merits of a cause, who are of that party, and of another opinion; and I, though not a whig, cannot help liking Addison's poem.24

Perhaps the key to understanding Trotter's political beliefs lies in the circumspection which would have been necessary for her to function as a Catholic in Anglican Britain. In writing to George Burnet, a member of the Whig Bishop Burnet's family,25 Trotter would have found any admission beyond her guarded remark that she was "not a whig" to be inadvisable. Her statement also shows that Trotter rejected party loyalties as defining factors in assessing merit.

Later in the same letter, Trotter relates that Marlborough "is indeed every way a truly great man, of which I have such a sense, that I could not forbear paying my little tribute to his merit in some verses..."26 Trotter was genuinely impressed by Marlborough's

24 Birch 190.
26 Birch 191.
accomplishments and probably inspired by Addison’s reward for his verses in praise of the duke. Unlike Addison, however, Trotter’s reward was mainly praise for her poem:

The answer I received was, that the duke, and duchess, and lord treasurer, and several others, had read my verses; that they all liked them, and that those, who were judges of such things, said there were some lines in them better than any that had been written on the subject.27

Of course, the approbation of both Marlboroughs and Lord Treasurer Godolphin would have been personally satisfying as was the attendance of the Duchess of Marlborough at the premiere of The Revolution of Sweden (1706),28 but Trotter apparently sought to make use of the patronage system to obtain a more substantive reward.

The February 1704 letter to Burnet also contains a cryptic reference to Trotter’s business affairs:

I have been above a month past employed in an affair, in which all the satisfaction of my life, and the establishment of my fortune depends; which so took up my mind and my time, in considering the measures I should take in writing to, and interviews with persons concerned in it, that it was impossible for me to turn my thoughts on any other thing not of immediate necessity.29

Writing to Burnet in July 1705, Trotter explained herself further:

The business I was engaged in, was to obtain a gift by an interest I have at Court, which would have been a settlement for my life; but, though I did not succeed in the particular I aimed at, another favour was done for me, which will make me easier than I was, at least for some time.30

Too little is known about Trotter’s life to speculate accurately on the nature of her attempt to use court influence to make herself financially independent. One possibility, however, does presents itself: through her connections with and dedications to the Marlboroughs, Trotter could have been attempting to secure compensation for the money that her father’s early death prevented him from earning for convoysing “the fleet of the Turky company”; or, she

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27 Birch 191.
29 Birch 191-192.
30 Birch 186.
may have hoped for recovery of Captain Trotter's investments that were lost when their "goldsmith" keeper went bankrupt.\[^{31}\]

Though she was not granted a "settlement for life," Trotter apparently attained compensations which could support her "at least for some time." Though unlike Addison and other male writers, Trotter was not awarded a political sinecure for her literary achievements, she may have quietly negotiated more financial rewards than either Manley, with all her Tory propaganda, or Centlivre, with her vociferous support of the Hanoverians, ever received. According to Manley's unlikely allegations, Trotter made money through promiscuous affairs with John Churchill and the women of the "Cabal." In a more credible scenario, her father's service to the Stuart monarchy and Trotter's own poetic tributes and personal connections (via Dr. Inglis and Lady Piers) to the crown's latest defenders were repaid in more than verbal praise. Unfortunately, the actual source of Trotter's hopes of a fortune, and the amount to which her hopes were realized, remain obscure.

Manley As Tory Partisan

After the appearance of Manley's Queen Zarah (1705), the list of her political writings rapidly expanded to include: her two volumes of The New Atalantis (1709), followed by the two volume sequel, Memoirs of Europe (1710), a derogatory pamphlet about John Churchill, "The D. of M——h’s Vindication" (1711), and Court Intrigues, in a Collection of Original Letters, from the Island of the New Atalantis, &c. (1711). Manley was also responsible for a number of other pamphlets and several issues of The Examiner, the Tory journal associated with Jonathan Swift and begun by Henry St. John (later Viscount Bolingbroke) in 1710. In addition to mingling truth with hearsay in reviling Steele, Godolphin, and the Marlboroughs, Manley also took aim at the Whig Junto's character failings. She ridiculed their impeachment of Tory divine, Dr. Henry Sacheverell; their

\[^{31}\] Birch iii-iv.
opposition to the army appointment of John Hill, brother of the queen's Tory favorite, Abigail Masham; their attempts to counter the Tory peace process; and their accusations that Anne secretly hoped for a Stuart restoration at her death.32

Despite this impressive list and Manley's justified claims that with the *New Atalantis* she was "throwing the first stone, which might give a Hint for other Persons . . . to examine the Defects and Vices of some Men who took a Delight to impose upon the World,"33 Manley received only one recorded cash reward and no political appointments for her labors in the Tory cause. In fact, Manley, her lover John Barber who printed the books, and John Morphew, the publisher of the *Atalantis*, were all jailed briefly for their trouble. Arrested on 29 October 1709, Manley was granted bail on 5 November, but not discharged until the following February after she had been interrogated by Lord Sunderland, the man the Queen despised for his rudeness.34 According to Manley, her clever replies in court caused the charges to be dropped.35

Like Trotter, Manley sought patronage as a reward for her services; Swift records that when he visited Lord Peterborough,

I met Mrs. Manley there, who was soliciting him to get some pension or reward for her service in the cause, by writing her *Atalantis*, and prosecution, etc. upon it. I seconded her, and hope they will do something for the poor woman.36

Proof of the book's effectiveness can be found in the stir the *Atalantis* caused at the highest levels. Incensed by the portrait of her family and suspecting that Manley was aided by Peterborough, Harley, and Abigail Masham, Sarah Churchill sent excerpts of the *New Atalantis* to Queen Anne. Claiming that "there is stuff not fit to be mentioned of passions

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33 Needham 258.
36 Needham 265.
between women, . . ."37 Sarah sought to undermine Anne’s relationship with Abigail Masham, but only succeeded in further damaging her own relationship with the queen.38 Though the duchess’s anger, her association of Manley’s work with the Tory leadership, and her attempt to use the book to goad the queen on public policy and private behavior all testify to the effectiveness of the Atalantis as Tory propaganda, no record exists of Peterborough having complied with Manley’s request.

In 1710, along with a copy of her Memoirs of Europe, Manley sent Harley a note which reveals that she had not been acquainted with, or employed by, him a year earlier when the Atalantis was published. Manley explains that she decided not to deliver the Memoirs in person “lest I be thought to have the honour of your acquaintance, which I can only covet, never hope.”39 Until Harley’s fall from power, Manley continued to write for the Tories. In 1714 as Harley (now ennobled as Lord Oxford) saw his secret negotiations with the Old Pretender rebuffed by James’s refusal to renounce Catholicism, a decision which made the accession of George I and the end of the Tory ministry inevitable, Oxford appears “to have been making a final effort to reward his propagandists while it remained in his power to do so.”40 At this point, with the cause they had both supported facing defeat, Oxford’s response to Manley’s request for £100 was a £50 payment with accompanying instructions to keep the transaction secret.41 Unlike Defoe who received quarterly installments of £100 for his full-time propaganda labors,42 Manley’s one-time payment resembles modern severance pay. Still loyal and grateful, Manley offered to write a vindication of Oxford, who was reviled in print after the queen’s death, but Oxford declined.43

37 Needham 261-3.
38 Gregg 295.
40 Downie 182.
42 Downie 13.
43 Downie 185-186.
Prior to these occurrences, the phenomenal success of *The New Atalantis*, her living
arrangement with Barber, and the hopeful prospects of the Tory party allowed Manley to
further burn her theatrical bridges with the Patent Company. Payments for the hastily
 penned *Memoirs of Europe* and her pamphlet and journal work must have exceeded any amount
she could have earned from playwriting. Manley is also mentioned as one of the likely
contributors to *The Female Tatler*, a 1709-1710 journal in imitation of Steele’s *The Tatler*, that
appeared under the pseudonym of Phoebe Crackenthorpe, “a lady that knows everything.”
*The Female Tatler*, which changed authorship during Manley’s incarceration because of the
*Atalantis*, is full of derogatory references to the players’

parties, cabals, divisions, unions, arrests, outlawries and excommunications,
the birth and education of the stage ladies, their real and supposed
marriages, comical intrigues, tragical lyings-in, and the disposal of their
progeny.45

Christopher Rich is referred to as “Volpone,” Wilks as “Dorimant,” Cibber as “Colly-my-
Cow” and (because of his plagiarism) a “Janus of dramatic poetry,” and Estcourt as “Serjeant
Kite.” Anne Oldfield, whose lover Arthur Maynwaring was Sarah Churchill’s private
secretary and an active Whig propagandist, is referred to as “being now down in the straw
with her fourth and last child without any father for it.”46 While Manley was vilifying the
Marlboroughs (and the players) in print, Maynwaring was writing a libelous ballad about
Abigail Masham which the Duchess of Marlborough showed to the queen:

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Her Secretary she was not
Because she could not write
But had the Conduct and the Care
Of some dark Deeds at Night.47
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44 Duff 145.
71, 75, 86.
46 Morgan, *Female Tatler* 86.
47 Gregg 275.
With Betterton and Barry retired by 1710, Wilks, Cibber, and Oldfield in particular were essential figures for hopeful playwrights to cultivate, and Manley, intent on the Tory cause, chose to alienate or ignore them.

Manley seems to have begun to move in new circles anyway. By 1705 she was living with John Barber, the Tory printer of *Queen Zarah*. A particular associate of Swift's, Barber would be among the minority to make his fortune in South Sea stock and would later become Lord Mayor of London. Though the intimacy of their relationship may have lessened over the years, Manley maintained her apartment in Barber's house until her death in 1724, and her sister resided there until 1731. As the Tories began to form gentleman's clubs in rivalry with the great Whig Kit-Cat Club, Barber developed a special relationship with Swift and the Brothers Club. After dinner was finished at the Brothers meetings, Barber would arrive with the latest Tory propaganda pieces for the club to examine. Also, Barber and Swift frequently discussed business over dinner, and Swift arranged for Barber to print *The Examiner* and receive a substantial number of government printing contracts. Though not quite the exalted sponsorship that publisher Jacob Tonson exerted over the Kit-Cats, Barber's Tory connections certainly kept his presses busy and allowed Manley access to the heart of the Tory propaganda effort.

A fact to remember about Manley's political activities and hopes for Tory patronage is that they effectively postponed any further playwriting efforts. Two examples illustrate this separation between Manley's theatrical and political writing careers. Manley chose to have *Queen Zarah and the Zarazians*, her Tory attack on the Duchess of Marlborough and the Whigs during the divisive political campaign of 1705, published anonymously. This decision helped make possible the appearance of *Almyra* (also anonymous, but the title is an anagram of Manley) at the Whig-financed Haymarket Theatre the following year. Though

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48 Duff 363-409.
49 Allen 251.
50 Downie 169-170.
he feuded famously with Sarah Churchill later and eventually reduced his involvement with the Queen's Theatre to the collection of building rent, in December 1706 when Almyna was acted, John Vanbrugh was actively involved in the management of the Haymarket and had just been engaged to construct Blenheim Castle for the Marlboroughs. In this instance, Manley had to actually keep her political writings secret from her theatrical associates.

The second example concerns Manley's last play, Lucius, the First Christian King of Britain, which did not appear until 1717. In addition to marking the end of a long theatrical hiatus for Manley, the play also signaled the patching up of her acrimonious relationship with Richard Steele, who got the play accepted at Drury Lane where he now held the Patent. Steele also contributed an epilogue, while Manley affectionately dedicated Lucius to her former adversary. Significantly, while Manley worked tirelessly for the Tories, Steele had championed the Whigs. The coronation of the pro-Whig George I in 1714, however, brought about the end of the Tory ministry. After Viscount Bolingbroke's flight to France in 1715 for fear that his Jacobite connections would lead to his arrest in England, the Whig triumph was so complete that Manley and Steele no longer had the struggle between the two parties to prolong their quarrel. With the Tory cause in ruins, Manley could try to make some money from the theatre again, and Steele, no longer worried that Manley's pen might help return an opposition majority in the next election, could afford magnanimously to accept his old adversary's play for production.

Centlivre Picks The Winning Side

Despite Centlivre's borrowing of French plots for her plays, she was a most adamantly member of the anti-French Whig party. Jacqueline Pearson argues persuasively that Whig

ideology underlies much of Centlivre's writing, "centering on her insistence that women's role in the family was analogous with the subject's role in the state, and that both had certain rights to liberty and self-determination." John Loftis notes that Centlivre's positive presentation of the merchant class follows the Whig rejection of the idea that landed gentry were intrinsically superior to business owners and financiers.

With two notable exceptions, however, until after the Whigs came to power under George I, Centlivre was much less politically active in an overt sense than Manley. Perhaps her husband's employment in the royal kitchens made more open partisanship an impolitic activity. Unlike Manley, however, Centlivre's Whig sympathies were evident in a theatrical epilogue and a dedication. Angered by Marlborough's removal from the European command, Centlivre aroused Tory opposition by trying to make a positive reference to the duke in her epilogue to The Perplex'd Lovers (1712). Two years later Centlivre dedicated The Wonder to the Electoral Prince of Hanover, another risky gesture as Queen Anne, though committed to the Protestant succession, was adamantly opposed to her heir's presence in Britain. The Perplex'd Lovers ran for only three nights, but Centlivre had dedicated The Wonder to the next king of England.

Though Centlivre made sure that the epilogue reference to Marlborough appeared in the published edition of The Perplex'd Lovers, the statement in question is rather circumspect. The compliments to Marlborough, the "ONE" referred to below, and his co-commander Prince Eugene of Savoy, who had recently made a diplomatic visit to England, were as follows:

None but true Heroes shall their Favours gain;  
Such as that Stranger who has grac'd our Land,  
of equal Fame for Council, and Command.  
A Prince, whose Wisdom, valour, and Success,  
The gazing World with Acclamations bless;

54 John Loftis, Comedy and Society from Congreve to Fielding (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1959) 64-68.
By no great Captain in past Times outdone,  
And in the present equal'd by ONE.55

Despite a successful military campaign the previous summer, Marlborough, who refused to support the Tory peace initiatives, had been removed from command in December 1711.56 For Centlivre to praise him, even in a guarded fashion, on 19 January 1712 when The Perplex'd Lovers opened57 was taking a large chance.

Though Centlivre cannot have known the full particulars, in 1712 Harley, St. John, and their envoy, poet Matthew Prior, were engaged in behind-the-scenes contacts with Louis XIV which would greatly affect the Treaty of Utrecht (1713). Advantageous terms between the English and the French were secretly negotiated at the expense of the other allies; St. John prevailed upon the queen to give "restraining orders" which prohibited Marlborough's successor from overrunning France before the peace was concluded; and the European allies, without English support, were driven back from the borders of France. England gained trade advantages as well as possession of Gibraltar, parts of Canada, and Dunkirk. The Tories, and even Queen Anne, were suspected, however, of trying to bring over James III from France, while the English abandonment of the Habsburgs and the Dutch made Great Britain suspect as an ally for the rest of the century. In November 1712, Marlborough, followed in February by Sarah, traveled to Europe where they attempted without success to secretly incite George of Hanover, the Dutch, and the Habsburgs to invade England, overthrow the Tories, and secure the Protestant succession by force.58

With all these events in the offing, Centlivre was taking a dangerous chance in praising Marlborough, even though she did not mention his name. As her preface to The

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56 Gregg 348.
58 Gregg 338-362.
Man’s Perplex’d indicates, when the show opened, the epilogue was still unlicensed, and the Drury Lane management prudently refused to have the piece delivered. Instead, Henry Norris was deputized to improvise a brief speech, but the audience, apprehending that that was the Epilogue design’d for the Play, were pleas’d to shew their Resentment. It is plain the want of an Epilogue caus’d the Hiss, because . . . a general Clap attended the Conclusion of the Play.

Though Vice-Chamberlain Coke licensed the epilogue for the second performance, “a Rumour spread about Town, that it was a notorious whiggish Epilogue.” When Anne Oldfield received letters threatening her if she performed the piece, another epilogue was substituted, and Centlivre’s play closed on the third night. Professing herself shocked that her reference to Marlborough could be perceived as anything but a patriotic tribute, Centlivre’s preface continues:

The sinking of my Play cut me not half so deep as the Notion I had, that there cou’d be People of this Nation so ungrateful as not to allow a single Compliment to a Man that has done such Wonders for it. I am not prompted by any private Sinister End, having never been oblig’d to the Duke of Marlborough, otherways than as I shar’d in common with my Country. . . . I know not what they call Whigs, or how they distinguish between them and Tories: But if the Desire to see my Country secur’d from the Romish Yoke, and flourish by a Firm Lasting Honourable Peace, to the Glory of the best of Queens, who deservedly holds the Ballance of all Europe, be a Whig, then I am one, else not.59

Though Centlivre insists that she had not been expressly seeking any form of patronage from Marlborough, the passage reveals her Whiggish opposition to any Tory dealings with Catholic James Stuart or any pro-French bias in the peace negotiations. On the other hand, Centlivre tries to at least give the impression that she does not relish political debate. After claiming that “we Women are incapable of serving our Country in the Discharge of weighty Affairs”, her dedication reinforces the perception that she was shocked by the stir her epilogue caused:

I confess, I cou'd never have thought it criminal to speak the Praises of those Heroes from a British Stage, to whom the greatest Part of Europe owes its Safety.\textsuperscript{60}

To what degree Centlivre's modest claims are disingenuous is difficult to determine. Perhaps fearing reprisals from those who had already threatened Anne Oldfield, she may have thought the best defense was to protest that she thought nothing amiss about innocently complimenting the war heroes. In fact, Centlivre's remarks sound similar to Manley's description of her appearance before Lord Sunderland after her arrest for the Atalantis:

Her Defence was with much Humility and Sorrow, for having offended, at the same Time denying that any Persons were concern'd with her, or that she had a farther Design than writing for her own Amusement and Diversion in the Country; without intending particular Reflections or Characters: . . . \textsuperscript{61}

When challenged with meddling in partisan politics, Centlivre and Manley took refuge in a disclaimer of authorial intentions; both maintained that they had only meant innocent compliments or diversions and were not responsible for other people's political interpretations of their works. The defense worked to the degree that Manley was discharged from prison without charges being filed, and Centlivre, though her play closed swiftly, was able to continue working in the theatre.

Printed at the back of her The Perplex'd Lovers, Centlivre's verse salute to Prince Eugene's visit contains more revealing evidence of her support for Marlborough:

\begin{quote}
Eugene and Marlbrô, Names to Europe dear,
True Heroes Born, and Brothers of the War
Their innate Worth immortal Life shall give,
And make their Fame in spight of Envy, Live, . . .
\end{quote}

And:

\begin{quote}
... ANNA's Court appear'd, to welcome Great Eugene.
Foremost in Worth, did Graceful Marlbrô stand,)
Whose Wondrous Conduct sav'd the British Land,)
And Europe's Ballance fix'd in ANNA's Hand.\textsuperscript{62}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{60} Centlivre, "Dedication," The Perplex'd Lovers n. pag.
\textsuperscript{61} Needham 264.
\textsuperscript{62} Centlivre, "To his Illustrious Highness Prince Eugene of Savoy," The Perplex'd Lovers 57-58.
These more straightforward partisan statements indicate that Centlivre was merely backing away from the controversy over the epilogue in order to continue her support of the Whigs in other ways.

Over the years, Centlivre had received her share of Whig support in the form of prologues and epilogues by fellow party members. Dramatist Nicholas Rowe wrote the prologue for *The Gamester*; poet and playwright Ambrose Philips contributed the epilogue for *The Wonder*, while Thomas Burnet, son of the famous Whig divine, gave her the prologue. Steele failed to deliver on his promised epilogue for *The Busy Body*, but praised the play in *The Tatler*. As her early biographer John Mottley says, "She made herself some Friends and many Enemies by her strict Attachment to Whig Principles even in the most dangerous Times. . ." In her praise of the allied war policy and the Protestant succession, Centlivre must have felt hers was just one voice among a number of powerful speakers with similar ideas.

A little more than three months before the death of Queen Anne and the accession of George I, Centlivre dedicated *The Wonder: A Woman keeps a Secret* to the heir to the throne. The dedication coincided with Whig attempts, over the ailing queen's objections, to bring George to England to take his seat in the House of Lords. While lauding George's hoped for arrival, Centlivre shows that she was aware of the purpose behind the invitation for the Elector to come to England:

> If it is possible there shou'd be a Sett of Men among us who can wish to see their Country become a Province of France, it is, I think, pretty evident that your Residence in Great Britain will soon put an End to such Impious Expectations.

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63 Lock 20.
64 Bowyer 233.
65 Bowyer 152-153.
Centlivre would have been unaware at the time that the Tories' secret negotiations with James Stuart had already collapsed, a circumstance that would lead peacefully to George's coronation. In addition to having the good fortune to pick the winning side and do her part to insure the Hanoverian succession, Centlivre also cleverly reminded the monarch-to-be of the timing of her risky action:

tho' I am, perhaps, the most unworthy, I have at least one Advantage, that I am the first who have shewn my Respect in this Manner, and sued for your Protection.67

Though Centlivre did not receive outright cash gifts or lucrative postings, the Prince of Wales (the future George II) ordered a command performance of The Wonder on 16 December 1714. The prince also attended performances of Centlivre's The Cruel Gift and The Busy Body, while the king commanded a benefit performance for Centlivre of The Busy Body on 17 March 1720. The playwright would repay the royal favors with a number of commendatory verses.68

As was the case when Centlivre was fortunate enough to begin her career on good terms with both theatres, Centlivre's political convictions happened to be those of the winning party.

In her 1720 poem "A Woman's Case: in an Epistle to Charles Joye, Esq; Deputy-Governor of the South Sea," an argument for patronage for Whig as well as Tory poets, Centlivre provided some interesting details concerning her decision to write the dedication. After indicating that she knew the risks of dedicating to the heir because "then at Court I knew him Hated," Centlivre states that, though Steele had counseled her to refrain, "Yet spight of Steele's Advice I did it." She also reveals the strain her action put on her husband Joseph's employment in the royal kitchens:

Nay tho' my Husband's place forbid it;  
For he these Forty Years has been  
The Servant to a King or Queen:  
Nor will I here the Truth dissemble;  
This Action made his Post to Tremble;

67 Centlivre, "Dedication," The Wonder n. pag.  
68 Bowyer 154-159.
And he had surely been turn’d out,
Had not good Fortune wheel’d about. 69

In the same poem, Centlivre comments upon her motivation for both praising Marlborough and dedicating to George of Hanover:

Soon after Spouse and I were Chain’d,
At Helm the Tory Party reign’d.
The QUEEN I lov’d, but hated those
Who prov’d themselves my Country’s Foes:
Vex’d to see what Corporal John [Churchill]
Was Nine Years doing, all undone;
And those that trembled at his Name,
On Cockhorse mounted up again;
I now and then, to ease my Spleen,
Lash’d these Misleaders of the Q—n.70

While Trotter was ambivalent in her politics but personally attracted to the Marlboroughs and to their patronage, Manley was fervently committed to, and earning a living from, her Tory propaganda. In contrast, Centlivre appears to have held such strong Whig convictions about the war effort and the throne succession that she felt bound to express them whatever the consequences. She was not unaware of the potential benefits. In “A Woman’s Case” she says she reminded Joseph that: “When all the Whigs in Post you see,/You’ll thank, instead of chiding me.”71 Her chief method of earning money, however, remained her playwriting.

Dedications

Having chronicled the women’s different approaches to political patronage, mention should be made of the economic aspects of an appeal for patronage that they all had in common, the dedication of the printed play. Pix’s The Different Widows begins with an amusing scene in which dissolute Sir James Bellmont is greeted with the news that amongst the various creditors at his house that morning is “a Poet, which outstays all the rest with a

69 Bowyer 153.
70 Bowyer 226
71 Bowyer 227.
Dedication: he has been here Eleven times. . . .” When he establishes that the poet does not know him, Bellmont takes a cynical view of the likely contents of the dedication:

Do you take my Character from Truth, or Fancy? If from Truth, it will upon Examination be call’d a Dedication most Impudent, for it will tell me, I am a Man of a loose Conversation, without Morals, without Honour or Conscience, Debauch’d in my Life, Debilitated in my Person and Fortunes: Now what the Devil had you to do, to proclaim all this?

When the poor poet protests to his “worthy Patron” that his composition contains nothing of the sort, Bellmont advises him to “never debase thy Muse to groveling Flattery, nor meanly wait at great Men’s Doors, for the small Alms which they bestow on wit; Starve rather in a Noble Pride. . . .” Despite this advice, Bellmont gives the poet money: “Twenty Guineas! I am confounded with your Honour’s Wit and Bounty.” After the poet’s departure and his servant’s grumbling comment that Bellmont “has not Twenty more left in the World,” Bellmont orders “a Glass of Mountain Wine, to prevent Thinking, that Antipathy to pleasure.”

In his own estimation, as well as his servant’s and even the poet’s, Bellmont is extremely generous in giving a writer twenty guineas for a dedication. Even so, in order to receive his “small Alms,” the poet has been forced to “meanly wait” at Bellmont’s door, been turned away eleven times, and resorted to fawning compliments to a self-confessed debauchee. While Pix has certainly heightened the passage for satiric effect and apparently has no illusions about the sanctity of the process, she is correct in the essential facts about printed accolades. Dedications could be personal tributes like Trotter’s dedication of Love at a Loss to Lady Sarah Piers or open declarations like Centlivre’s “To all the Generous Encouragers of Female Ingenuity” for The Platonick Lady, but most often, they were formulaic panegyrics written to the wealthy in hopes of useful, though not inordinate, financial rewards. As

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74 Korshin 466-467.
Milhous notes, playwrights could seek prior approval from the dedicatee which “sometimes entailed a fee, but not always, and the amount was entirely up to the patron.”75 Additionally, dedications had some value in supplementing the author’s composition with the luster of the patron’s name as a means to attract a publisher, increase sales, or protect the writer should the work prove controversial.76

On the purely economic level, however, though exact figures are unavailable, £10 appears to have been a typical compensation, if money was forthcoming, for a dedication. Exceptions were possible, of course, but unlikely. For instance, Laurence Echard received £300 from George I for dedicating his History of England (1720) to the monarch.77 No dedication fee receipts are available for Pix, Trotter, and Manley. Centlivre, who had more financial success than the other three women, did record some of her rewards. Using John Mottley as his source, Bowyer notes that Centlivre’s dedication of Marplot to the Earl of Portland brought her £40. For dedicating The Cruel Gift to Addison’s cousin Eustace Budgell, she was given “a diamond ring worth about twenty guineas.” According to Mottley:

The Gotham Election . . . [was] dedicated to Mr. Secretary Craggs, who made her a Present of twenty Guineas, by the Hands of Mrs. Bracegirdle, who had got leave for her to dedicate it to him; and when she told him he was very liberal, and sent the Author more than she could reasonably expect, especially as her Farce had never been acted, he told her, he considered not so much the Merit of the Piece, as what was proper to be done by a Secretary of State.78

Though Bowyer adds the caveat that Craggs assumed his office three years after the play was printed, the anecdote shows once again the importance of Centlivre’s playhouse connections. Despite the similarity between Bracegirdle’s reaction to Craggs’s twenty guineas and the astonishment of Pix’s fictional poet at receiving the same amount from ‘Sir James

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76 Kendall 101-105.
77 Korshin 467.
78 Bowyer 162, 207-208.
the retired, but still famous Bracegirdle was willing to act as go-between in obtaining both fee and permission for Centlivre.

Bowyer also quotes Mottley’s list of gifts that Centlivre received for her poetry: “a large gold Medal in a Shagreen Case” from the Duke of Newcastle; a “very handsome and weighty Gold Snuff-box” from Prince Eugene for her commemorative verses printed in The Perplex’d Lovers; and a “fine repeating Gold Watch” for a poem in praise of Lord Halifax. As Mottley summarizes, Centlivre could show (which I believe few other Poets could, who depended chiefly on their Pen) a great many Jewels and Pieces of Plate, which were the Produce of her own Labour, either purchased by the Money brought in by her Copies, her Benefit-Plays, or were presents from Patrons.

Of course, Mottley was writing about Centlivre after her twenty-year career which included hit plays like The Gamester, The Busy Body, The Wonder, and A Bold Stroke for a Wife that none of the Female Wits could match. Centlivre was also more secure because of Joseph Centlivre’s employment as royal Yeoman of the Mouth at a salary of £60 per year plus a number of perquisites. Though Manley and eventually Trotter attained a measure of monetary security after they stopped writing plays, the benefit performance of Centlivre’s The Busy Body announced for Pix’s estate after her death suggests that Pix died in financially straitened circumstances.

Clubs And Sinecures

In contrast to the relatively minor gifts and cash sums received by the women from the patronage system, the activities of the men’s political clubs, particularly the Whig Kit-Cat Club, give a clear demonstration of the patronage possibilities available to men. As outgrowths of the great coffee house boom and the increase in political fervor at the end of the

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79 Bowyer 143, 147, 158.
80 Bowyer 233.
81 Lock 19.
82 Clark 202.
eighteenth century, the gentlemen’s clubs provided a gathering place where men with similar literary, philosophical, and economic tastes could review events, transact business, and formulate strategies to advance their mutual interests. Among the famous Tory establishments were the Brothers Club, the October Club, and later the Scriblerus Club. For the Whigs, Addison presided over the ‘little senate’ of wits and poets at Button’s Coffee-House. The more influential Kit-Cat Club, however, was composed of influential Whig politicians including three of the five Junto members (Wharton, Somers, and Halifax) and young Robert Walpole. Prominent writers like Congreve, Vanbrugh, Steele, Addison, and Maynwaring were also members, and the club meetings were presided over by Jacob Tonson, the leading publisher in London.

When not engaged in affecting the course of English war policy, parliamentary elections, ecclesiastical appointments, et cetera, the Kit-Cats, whose name apparently derived from tasty mutton pies baked in the kitchen of a certain Christopher Cat, gave their time to lighter amusements. In addition to their convivial dinners and versifying, the Kit-Cats took a substantial interest in the theatre, particularly Lincoln’s Inn Fields and the Haymarket. As early as 1700 the Kit-Cats along with a related group, the Knights of the Toast, booked both side boxes at Lincoln’s Inn Fields for Betterton’s benefit performance of the title role in his The Humours of Sir John Falstaff. Along with the acknowledgments for their frequent theatre attendance as a group, the club received favorable mention in prologues and the dedication of Durfey’s Wonders in the Sun (1706). In contrast, Christopher Rich alienated the Kit-Cats because of his insensitive behavior concerning Dryden’s funeral in May 1700. The club had paid for the funeral, and many of its members had been Dryden’s

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83 Allen 234.
84 Allen 240.
85 Kathleen Lynch, Jacob Tonson: Kit-Cat Publisher (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1971) 42-44.
86 Lynch 41.
87 Lynch 56-57.
close friends and business associates. On the day of the funeral, Lincoln's Inn Fields postponed its performance as a mark of respect for Dryden. Because Rich rented out the Dorset Garden theatre for bear baiting that same day, the Kit-Cats felt that the Patentee had shown contempt for the departed poet.\(^8^8\)

Though not exclusively a Kit-Cat project, the Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket involved both Vanbrugh and Congreve as business partners and managers. Much of the capital for the purchase of the property and construction of the building was raised through a sale of subscriptions to patrons willing to provide £100 in exchange for a lifetime pass to the new building. Of the twenty-nine original contributors listed in the subscriber's agreement, Milhous notes that thirteen were Kit-Cats.\(^8^9\) In 1707 the Kit-Cats, led by Lord Halifax with his "generous Concern for the Reputation, and Prosperity of the Theatre", also sold enough subscriptions at £3 each to pay for sumptuous revivals of *Julius Caesar*, Fletcher's *King and No King*, and a combination of the comic scenes excerpted from Dryden's *Marriage a' la Mode* and *Maiden Queen*.\(^9^0\) As noted in Chapter Four, in dedicating *The Unhappy Penitent* to Halifax, Trotter included an appeal for him to apply his reforming zeal to the theatre. Perhaps by using his influence and energies to finance classical revivals, Halifax was pursuing a different means than Trotter for improving the stage.

In addition to helping the theatre companies, the Kit-Cats also used their influence to advance the careers of writers who belonged to the club. The list of Whig, frequently Kit-Cat, patronage for writers is impressive. Though some of the positions listed below involved a considerable amount of work, many were lucrative sinecures that provided financial security for minimal effort on the officeholder's part.\(^9^1\) Besides their support for his Haymarket

\(^8^8\) Allen 232-233.


\(^9^1\) Foss 139.
project, the Kit-Cats also furthered Vanbrugh’s career as an architect. He was commissioned by the Earl of Carlisle and Lord Manchester, both Kit-Cats, to build Castle Howard and rebuild Kimbolton Castle respectively. Most memorable, Vanbrugh was chosen to build Blenheim Castle, the queen’s tribute to the Duke of Marlborough for his war victories.92 Other appointments naturally followed these famous projects, and through “a piece of transcendent political jobbery,” Carlisle arranged for Vanbrugh to be appointed Comptroller of the Royal Office of Works.93 Later, Carlisle got Vanbrugh appointed as Clarenceux King at Arms, a position in the heraldry office. Vanbrugh was also the first man to be knighted by George I.94

Having discovered the young Addison’s talents and intelligence at Oxford, Halifax arranged for Addison to receive a yearly pension of £300 and spend four years traveling in Europe to further his political education. When Halifax and the Whigs became more powerful after the battle of Blenheim, Addison was in line for a series of political appointments including Under Secretary of State, Secretary to the Earl of Wharton while he was Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and membership in the Irish Parliament. At the height of his power as Secretary of State in 1717, Addison was earning close to £10,000 a year. Bringing in an average of £2000 per year, Richard Steele’s list of positions and honors included editorship of the Gazette, Commissioner of Stamps, the theatrical Patent at Drury Lane, Deputy Lieutenant of Middlesex, Surveyor of the Royal Stables, Commissioner for Forfeited Estates, and a knighthood.95

Though Congreve’s involvement in the Haymarket project was financially ruinous enough for him to complain of being “dipt,”96 his Kit-Cat and Whig associates arranged a

92 Foss 125.
93 Foss 38, 118.
94 Huseboe 17.
95 Foss 138-143.
number of comfortable appointments for the writer's easement. Never very active in the Whig cause, at various times Congreve still held the following positions: commissioner for licensing hackney and stage coaches, customs collector at Poole, wine licenser, Undersearcher of Customs at the Port of London, and Secretary to Jamaica. The wine licensing position, for which Congreve was paid £200 per year, worked out particularly well; though his presence was sometimes required, the office was staffed with ten assistants who did most of the work and was only a two-minute walk from his house. In addition to being lucrative, the Port of London and Jamaican positions consumed little of his time, because he was able to hire deputies to do the work; if his representative in Jamaica had not feuded with the colony's governor, the situation would have been ideal. Even while the Tories were in power Halifax and Swift lobbied successfully for Congreve to keep his profitable employments.97

Unfortunately for writers in the Tory cause, the party did not remain in power long enough to match the Whig record for patronage. Certainly Defoe, Swift, and Manley were paid for their writing, but they did not receive government appointments that paid far more than they demanded. One exception was George Granville who began as a dramatist and wrote The British Enchanters (1706).98 After faithful service prior to the Tory victory of 1710, Granville was rewarded with an appointment as Secretary of War. In 1712 he had the good fortune to be one of the twelve peers that Queen Anne created in order to insure ratification of the Treaty of Utrecht. As Lord Landsdowne, he became Comptroller of the Queen's Household and a member of the Privy Council. The new lord's meteoric rise was particularly timely for Barton Booth who used his connections with Landsdowne and Viscount Bolingbroke to procure a share in Drury Lane management.99

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97 Hodges 83-88.
This impressive catalogue of club and party patronage for men makes Centlivre's list of snuff boxes, watches, and £40 dedication gifts appear paltry. Certainly the key reason for the disparity was that women were not allowed to hold political or ecclesiastical appointments; as Bowyer quaintly phrases matters, "Susanna was a woman, and the political plums were not thought proper for a woman's table."\(^{100}\) Because they were women, Pix, Manley, Trotter, and Centlivre were ineligible for the leisure, income, and security that the sinecures in the political patronage system made available to their male contemporaries.

Of course, the men's benefits had a price. Parties lost power; Swift never got the preferment he sought, and Matthew Prior spent time in jail for his part in the Tory peace negotiations with the French. Furthermore, the patronage that the male writers received held other dangers. Congreve's writing pace slowed, then stopped altogether. Swift's energies were so focused on the partisan struggle that twenty-four years passed between Tale of a Tub and Gulliver's Travels.\(^{101}\) Had the women been offered lucrative rewards for their poetic accomplishments, perhaps their output would have declined as well. Since that opportunity was unavailable, perhaps Pix and Centlivre, to the detriment of their reputations, hurriedly adapted more French plays than they should have. Certainly Trotter and Manley were forced to find other ways to support themselves when their plays were not succeeding.

As an overall image of how the patronage system worked for the women, a comparison between the advancement of the male Kit-Cat writers and the salutations accorded to the women associated with the club is instructive. Where women were concerned, the Kit-Cats were renowned for engraving the names of their favorite "toasts" on glasses to be raised in each woman's honor while honorary verses were recited.\(^{102}\) For the men, the Kit-Cats built

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\(^{100}\) Bowyer 154.  
\(^{101}\) Foss 158-159.  
\(^{102}\) Lynch 50-53.
the Haymarket for Vanbrugh, advanced the careers of male writers, and financed revivals of classic plays.

Changes In The Publishing World

Beginning in 1616 with the publication of Ben Jonson's *Works* and continuing with the appearance of the Shakespeare *Folio* (1623), the importance of the published play steadily increased. The Puritans discouraged the publication of plays during the Interregnum, but, since they also prevented theatrical performances, printed plays were the only theatre available. Following the Restoration, the practice of publishing plays soon after they were staged became common; hence, play scripts were no longer the closely guarded property of theatre companies. As playwright Edward Howard noted as early as 1668,

> the Impression of Plays, is so much the Practice of the Age, that few or none have been Acted, which fail to be display'd in Print; where they seem to put on the greater formality of Authors. . . .

By 1699 Dryden was able to record the first use of the author's name to advertise a performance of Congreve's *The Double Dealer*. Dryden himself was often a selling point; after 1700 playbills often boasted of works by "The Late Great Mr. Dryden." Indeed, play scripts were well on their way to becoming literature. Jacob Tonson's handsome publications of the works of Congreve (1710), Beaumont and Fletcher (1712), Otway (1712), Jonson (1716), Dryden (1717), Vanbrugh (1719), and Shadwell (1720) began the formation of the theatrical part of the literary canon.

As this study's reliance on authors' prefatory material makes clear, publication also allowed playwrights to comment upon their work's purpose, presentation, and reception in the

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105 Milhous, *Thomas Betterton* 139-140.
107 Holland 102-132
theatre. Usually playwrights were not heavily involved in proofreading the texts of their plays for publication. In unusual instances, however, authors insisted upon revising the acting version before the play appeared in print; this was particularly important in a case like Cibber's Richard III where the Master of Revels removed the entire first act before licensing the play for performance. As part of his renunciation of the stage, Congreve revised his plays for his published Works, not to make them more actable, but to convert the scripts into "reading matter for gentlemen." Extremely displeased with the sloppy printing of Love at a Loss (1701), Trotter revised and retitled the play as The Honourable Deceivers; or All right at the Last well after she had married and retired from the stage, but the play was never reprinted.

Along with the rise in the importance of the printed play, the publishing industry experienced a decentralization more extreme than the dissolution of the theatrical United Company in 1695. After several attempts to amend the regulations, the Licensing Act of 1662, which mandated that copyrights were the perpetual property of those who purchased them, was allowed to lapse in 1695 and not legally amended until the Copyright Act of 1710. Hume and Milhous note that after James II had the Licensing Act renewed and vigorously prosecuted during his short reign, very little enforcement occurred between the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the new act of 1710.

Therefore, the lapse of the Licensing Act gave publishers a second reason to hurry plays into print. In addition to being interested in quick printing to sell books through the publicity generated by theatrical production, publishers were now anxious to get their works into print before pirated editions appeared which they had no legal means to oppose. The only restriction to quick publication was the theatre managers' desire that publication not

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108 Cibber 151-152.
109 Holland 126-131.
110 Birch ix.
interfere with the public's urge to see the play in the theatre; consequently, an interval of about one month between production and publication became common after 1690.\textsuperscript{112}

At first glance the turmoil of the publishing world in the years 1695-1710 seems to offer the same type of advantageous, wide open characteristics that facilitated the beginnings of the theatrical careers of the Female Wits in 1695. Unfortunately, where the break-up of the United Company created a demand for new plays, the 1695 lapsing of the Licensing Act allowed publishers merely to cling to their copyrights while awaiting new legislation. Playwrights were left in a relatively weak bargaining position; even after 1710, a writer who held out for a higher fee risked not having a play published.\textsuperscript{113} When the Copyright Act of 1710 was finally ratified, the new law mandated that rights to all works published prior to 10 April 1710 were the property of the current owner for twenty-one years. For all works published after that date, copyright belonged to the author for fourteen years and could be renewed for fourteen additional years.\textsuperscript{114} Authors were not particularly effected by the legislation, however, until renegotiations began when the twenty-one year rights to works sold to publishers began to expire in the 1730s.\textsuperscript{115}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[114] Kenny, "Publication" 311-312.
\item[115] Feather, \textit{History of British Publishing} 77.
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Essentially, the relationship between playwright and bookseller\textsuperscript{116} was analogous to the relationship between playwright and theatre company. In both cases, authors were compensated for the initial use of the play via benefit performances in the theatre and one-time fees from booksellers. After those initial earnings, all profits from subsequent performances or editions of the play belonged to the theatres or publishers. The acceptance of a play for production seems to have been the important factor in leading to publication.

Frequent complaints are registered concerning Cibber's approach to embarrassing authors while rejecting their plays, a process that Cibber referred to as the "Choaking of singing-birds,"\textsuperscript{117} but publication of at least one edition of 1,000 to 1,500 copies seems to have regularly followed for plays performed in London.\textsuperscript{118} With the standard price of a printed play at 1s 6d, booksellers needed to sell some 135 copies of a play to earn back the minimal £10 payment to authors. Of course, when a playwright received a larger fee, like the £21 10s. paid by Tonson to Joseph Trapp for \textit{Abra-Mule} in 1704,\textsuperscript{119} the publishers needed to sell more copies to recoup their investments. Aware of the possibilities for modest earnings, publishers often arranged the rights to publication prior to performance. For example, Bernard Lintot, Tonson's rival in publishing prominence, paid Farquhar eight weeks in advance for the rights to \textit{The Recruiting Officer}.\textsuperscript{120}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[116] Terry Belanger, "Publishers and Writers in Eighteenth-Century England," \textit{Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England}, ed. Isabel Rivers (Leicester: Leicester UP, 1982) 8-9. In 1700 the difference between printer, publisher, and bookseller was less distinct than it later became. Often booksellers both owned copyrights and sold the books they published in their own shops. For the more limited purposes of this study, the terms publisher and bookseller will be used interchangeably, and all booksellers will be assumed to have some role in publication.
\item[118] Feather, \textit{History of British Publishing} 94; Kenny, "Publication" 323.
\item[120] Kenny, "Publication" 315.
\end{footnotes}
Earnings From Play Publication

Only in rare cases did playwrights receive large sums for selling publications rights. In 1718 Cibber was paid £105 for the rights to The Non-Juror, while four years later Steele sold Tonson the rights to The Conscious Lovers for a respectable £40. In both these unusual cases the writers made substantially more money (£200 for Cibber, £500 for Steele) by dedicating their plays to the king. Twenty years earlier, however, when the Female Wits were writing and Centlivre’s career was beginning, the standard £10 fee for a dedication seems also to have been the customary payment for rights to publish a play. Established writers did a little better. Though Tonson lured Dryden away from an earlier publisher by offering him £20 for his Troilus and Cressida (1679), twelve years later Tonson was only paying £30 to the famous poet for his Cleomenes (1691). Cibber, who sold Lintot a one-third interest in his first play, Love’s Last Shift (1696) for £3 4s. 6d, received £36 11s. for Perolla and Izadora (1705); and Farquhar sold Lintot the rights to The Recruiting Officer (1705) for £16 2s. 6d. and The Beaux Stratagem (1707) for £30. In practice, once authors sold their copyright to a play, they rarely retained an interest in subsequent profits for their printed work. A second edition of a Pix play might be pleasing for her to hear about, but the book sales would bring her no more profits than any of the Drury Lane revivals of The Spanish Wives and Ibrahim after 1696.

As was the case with dedication earnings, no publishing receipts are available for Pix, Manley, and Trotter, but a number of Centlivre’s publication fees are known. Until after 1710, available figures show that Centlivre earned the £10 minimum. Love’s Contrivance in 1703 brought £10 from Bernard Lintot; in 1709 Lintot paid her the same amount for The Busy

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121 Kenny, “Publication” 310.
124 Kenny, “Publication” 311.
Body. After she became more successful, Edmund Curll paid £21 apiece for The Wonder (1714), The Cruel Gift, (1717), and The Artifice (1722). Centlivre's recorded publication earnings were significantly lower than the more substantial sums Cibber earned for his later work or the £75 5s. that Rowe received for Lady Jane Grey (1715), Addison's £50 for The Drummer (1716), or Southerne's £120 for The Spartan Dame (1719). In the unfortunate absence of any figures for Pix, Trotter, and Manley, their earnings for having their plays printed must be assumed to be at or near the £10 minimum.

Tonson And Lintot

With only one exception, Jacob Tonson took no apparent interest in plays by the four women. Though Tonson lent Aphra Behn money, wrote anonymous verses in her praise, and published her Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister (1693), he did not publish any of Pix, Manley, or Trotter's plays. After Centlivre had several successful productions and Tonson's rival, Bernard Lintot, published a number of her plays, Tonson did publish Marplot (1711), Centlivre's sequel to her popular The Busy Body. Her subsequent works all went to other publishers, however, and Tonson never published any collected edition of Centlivre's plays as he did with Dryden, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and the Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights.

Among contemporary playwrights, Tonson published Rowe's The Fair Penitent (1703), Philips's The Distrest Mother (1712), and Addison's Cato (1713). As Kathleen Lynch notes:

Of contemporary drama after 1700 Tonson had a poor opinion. In a letter to Vanbrugh in 1722 he lamented that Congreve and Vanbrugh had stopped

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125 Bowyer 58, 98.
126 Lock 18.
127 Bowyer 98-99.
writing plays. He seems to have been aware that many of the plays and operas he published (his interests were increasingly elsewhere) were inferior productions.130

Considering Tonson’s social and political influence as proprietor of the Kit-Cats along with his prominence as a publisher, the reputations of Centlivre and the Female Wits would probably have been substantially enhanced had he taken more than a passing interest in their works.

Centlivre’s business dealings with Lintot may originate in her relationship with Pix. Ibrahim and The Inhumane Cardinal, Pix’s first play and only novel, were both published in 1696 by John Harding; among Harding’s apprentices at the time was Bernard Lintot, who later rose to prominence with his publications of Alexander Pope’s works. After his apprenticeship, Lintot was involved in the publication of Pix’s The Double Distress (1701), The Czar of Muscovy (1701), and The Different Widows (1703). The Perjured Husband, Centlivre’s first play, was published by minor bookseller Bennet Banbury, while Brown and Cox, more substantial booksellers without strong play publishing interests, published her The Beau’s Duel.131 Lintot, who was developing a considerable interest in play publication, brought out Centlivre’s third play, Love’s Contrivance (1703). Quite possibly, Pix became acquainted with Lintot early in his career and made the necessary introductions for the eager young publisher to work with Centlivre.

Centlivre’s business relationship with Bernard Lintot began unusually with the playwright’s decision to sign away the £10 that she would have received from Lintot for Love’s Contrivance to actress Frances Maria Knight.132 Though the action hints at a friendship between Knight and Centlivre, the reason for Centlivre’s generosity is unknown. Perhaps the Love’s Contrivance money was the only cash Centlivre had available. Also,

130 Lynch 111, 150.
131 Henry R. Plomer, A Dictionary of the Printers and Booksellers who were at work in England, Scotland and Ireland from 1668-1725 (n.p.: Oxford UP, 1922) 18, 53, 84-85.
132 Pearson 206.
Knight, a top tragedian at Drury Lane, might conceivably have provided some form of assistance in putting together Centlivre’s adaptation from Molière.

Unlike Tonson’s long-term associations with Dryden and Congreve, Centlivre’s dealings with Lintot were sporadic. The six-year gap between Lintot’s publication of Love’s Contrivance (1703) and his edition of The Busy Body (1709) may have been due to Centlivre’s anger with Lintot for printing Love’s Contrivance with false initials at the end of her dedication. In 1706, after the success of The Gamester had given Centlivre a more secure career, she chose to dedicate her The Platonick Lady “To all the Generous Encouragers of Female Ingenuity.” The dedication begins with some pointed criticism for players, audiences, and booksellers concerning gender-based prejudices against women playwrights:

A Play secretly introduc’d to the House, whilst the Author remains unknown, is approv’d by every Body: The Actors cry it up, and are in expectation of a great Run; the Bookseller of a Second Edition, and the Scribler of a Sixth Night: But if by chance the Plot’s discover’d, and the brat found Fatherless, immediately it flags in the Opinion of those that extoll’d it before, and the Bookseller falls in his Price, with this Reason only, It is a Woman’s. Thus they alter their Judgment, by the Esteem they have for the Author, tho’ the Play is still the same.

According to Centlivre, so long as a woman’s name is not associated with a play, the public feels free to judge the work on its own merits. She also notes an important detail that is impossible to measure for the period: how easily the loss of positive word-of-mouth from performers and publishers could have a detrimental effect on a play. Centlivre’s preface continues with

a Story which my Bookseller, that printed my Gamester, told me, of a Spark that had seen my Gamester three or four times, and lik’d it extremely: Having bought one of the Books, ask’d who the Author was; and being told, a Woman, threw down the Book, and put up his Money saying, he had spent too much after it already and was sure if the Town had known that, it wou’d never have run ten days.133

Working from the logical assumption that a play will sell better in the theatre or book shop when actors and booksellers express positive opinions as the work is being produced, Centlivre

133 Centlivre, “Dedication,” The Platonick Lady n. pag.
makes a strong case that prejudices towards women’s plays based on the writers’ sex imposed artificial limits upon the women playwrights’ ability to prosper in their craft.

Having generally castigated those who used female authorship as a reason to dismiss a play, Centlivre specifically refers to Lintot,

him that Printed my Comedy call’d, Love’s Contrivance; . . . [he] put two Letters of a wrong Name to it; which tho’ it was the height of Injustice to me, yet his imposing on the Town turn’d to account with him; and thus passing for a Man’s it has been play’d at least a hundred times.134

Without Centlivre’s permission, Lintot had changed the signature on the play’s dedication to the Earl of Dorset to read “R. M.”135 Since Dorset was famous for his generosity to authors,136 Centlivre may have had difficulty getting, or even may have lost, a sizable payment for the dedication. Like Trotter complaining about the sloppy printing of Love at a Loss, Centlivre could only fume after the fact at Lintot’s misrepresentation of the authorship of Love’s Contrivance to increase his own sales. She could also reflect upon the bittersweet knowledge that Lintot’s dishonesty contributed to her play’s longevity on the stage. Some of Centlivre’s indignation may even have been directed at herself for allowing the prologue for her earlier play, The Stolen Heiress, to refer to the author with masculine pronouns.

Six years would pass before Lintot published another Centlivre play. Seemingly the relationship was mended by 1709 when he published Centlivre’s The Busy Body. Lintot subsequently brought out Centlivre’s The Man’s Bewitch’d (1709), A Bickerstaff’s Burying (1710), and her poem “The Masquerade” (1712). With the business connection between Centlivre and Lintot apparently healthy, William Lewis, one of Lintot’s associates, was among the three publishers of Centlivre’s The Perplex’d Lovers (1712). Lewis, however, was an “old schoolfellow” of Alexander Pope and had published Pope’s Essay on Criticism (1711).137 After 1714 Pope’s name was increasingly associated with Lintot through the

134 Centlivre, “Dedication,” The Platonick Lady n. pag.
135 Centlivre, “Dedication,” Love’s Contrivance n. pag.
136 Foss 34-36.
137 Plomer 188.
publisher's subscription editions of Pope's Homeric translations. At what point Pope, who was a Tory, and Centlivre, who was a Whig, developed an antipathy for each other is unclear. As matters turned out, Lintot did his last publishing for Centlivre in 1712, and her next publisher was Pope's bitter enemy, Edmund Curll.

At the least, Centlivre's choice of Curll to publish three of her later plays would probably have distanced her from Lintot. Centlivre may have been acquainted with Curll as early as 1707 when Egbert Sanger, a sometime partner of Curll's, was co-publisher of her The Platonick Lady. As events proceeded, Centlivre found herself in the midst of the trivial and vicious bickering between Pope and Curll. In 1716 Curll acquired some satirical poems by Pope's friends, John Gay and Lady Mary Wortley Montague, that he published without the authors' permission. Encountering Curll at Lintel's shop two days later, Pope first chastised Curll for printing the works, then, under the guise of making peace with a toast, gave the publisher an emetic in a glass of sack in order to, in Pope's phrase, "save a fellow a beating by giving him a vomit." In his pamphlet "A Full and true Account of a Horrid and Barbarous Revenge by Poison on the Body of Mr. Edmund Curll, Bookseller," Pope claimed that Curll, believing himself mortally ill, bequeathed "a Week's Wages Advance to each of his Gentlemen Authors, with some small Gratuity in particular to Mrs. Centlivre."

In 1718 Pope was convinced that Centlivre, had written a "scurrilous attack" upon his Homer in a ballad called "The Catholic Poet" written to the tune of "Which no Body can deny." Though she did not write the ballad, Pope included Centlivre among his targets in The Dunciad where she appears as "The Cook's Wife in Buckingham Court" and is pictured as dull enough to talk herself to sleep. Ironically, in 1726 Lintot also quarreled with Pope over

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138 Plomer 261.
140 Bowyer 191.
141 Bowyer 192-193.
the publication terms for The Odyssey, an incident which precipitated his own appearance as one of Pope’s dunces.\textsuperscript{142}

By finding herself on the other side in petty arguments with which Lintot was associated, Centlivre also missed whatever chance she may have had with his involvement in the kind of profitable subscription publications he arranged with Pope. For his translation of The Iliad, begun in 1714, Pope negotiated extraordinarily generous terms with Lintot. In addition to a £200 payment for each of the six volumes of the translation, Pope received all £4500 of the profits generated by 750 of the subscription copies.\textsuperscript{143} A lucrative and innovative form of obtaining patronage a few guineas at a time, subscription publication lent itself to more collectible undertakings than plays;\textsuperscript{144} Tonson’s editions of Milton’s Paradise Lost are another example of the type of gentleman’s library works that did well by subscription.\textsuperscript{145} Even though a subscription publication of Centlivre’s plays was unlikely, since Lintot had published only four of her plays, he was probably not inclined to pay her a larger fee to publish her complete works in a handsome edition. Like most of her contemporaries, Centlivre never generated substantial income from publication; the first edition of her works would not appear until 1760.\textsuperscript{146}

Other Publishers

The one constant in the women’s relationship with publishers was frequent change. With the lapsing of the Licensing Act, the restrictions which had previously fixed the number of London printing presses at twenty were suddenly removed. Also, the Stationer’s Guild, which prior to the Interregnum had been extremely influential in regulating the

\textsuperscript{142} Roberts 211-212.  
\textsuperscript{143} Mack 266-267.  
\textsuperscript{144} Korshin 463.  
\textsuperscript{146} Gagen 15-16.
number of publishers, became increasingly ineffectual after 1695. The increase in the number of presses accompanied by a void in regulating agencies caused an expansion in the number of publishers as well as a considerable scramble for the available business. Another interesting feature of the period is the frequent changes in the locations of the booksellers' shops as they jockeyed for the best addresses as well as the best copyrights.

Perhaps this fluid situation forced the women to respond by changing their publishers with relative frequency. As noted earlier, getting a produced play into print was not difficult. The women may have changed publishers for any number of reasons. Perhaps, as may have been the case when Lintot's associate Lewis published Centlivre's The Perplex'd Lovers, Lintot was already busy with other projects and recommended a friend. Richard Wellington, who published Pix's The Spanish Wives (1696), co-published The Double Distress (1701) with Lintot, and published The Conquest of Spain (1705). Wellington was one of the publishers of Manley's The Lost Lover (1696); he also took a particular interest in publishing plays and romances and was at work on a multi-volume edition of Aphra Behn's Histories and Novels when he died in 1718. Evidently Wellington had an extra interest in women's writing. A similar case is F. Clay, one of three co-publishers of Centlivre's A Bold Stroke for a Wife (1718); Clay specialized in the publication of women's novels including the works of Penelope Aubin, Behn, and Madame d'Aulnoy.

In her dissertation Kendall points out that publisher William Turner may also have been attempting to create a market specifically for women's plays. Turner published Pix's Queen Catharine (1698), The Beau Defeated (1700), and The Adventures in Madrid (1706).
For Manley, Turner published *Almyna* (1707);\footnote{152} for Centlivre he issued *The Stolen Heiress* (1702), *The Gamester* (1705), and *The Basset-Table* (1706).\footnote{153} On the last page of *The Stolen Heiress*, Turner advertises his edition of Jane Wiseman’s *Antiochus the Great*.\footnote{154} Turner also published Trotter’s *Love at a Loss* and *The Unhappy Penitent* in 1701.\footnote{155} With his shop conveniently located near the New Theatre at the sign of the “Angel in Lincoln’s Inn Back Gate,”\footnote{156} Turner may have been cultivating the women’s plays for publication. He was probably no particular champion of women’s playwriting as a cause, however, for Turner’s name appears along with Lintot’s among the publishers of the 1704 edition of *The Female Wits*.\footnote{157}

As her two plays were produced within four months of each other in 1701, Trotter may have sold Turner the rights as a package; however, Turner’s careless approach to publishing her works displeased her. After her disappointment with the sloppy printing of *Love at a Loss*, *The Revolution of Sweden* (1706), her first play after *The Unhappy Penitent*, was published by James Knapton and George Strahan.\footnote{158} Both Knapton and Strahan became leading London publishers,\footnote{159} but Trotter was ready to retire from the theatre in 1706. As the partisan political struggles became more heated, Turner’s publication of a paean to Marlborough’s victories entitled *Honour Retrieved* (1705) might, along with his publication of *The Female Wits*, have alienated Manley as well. As already discussed, however, Manley

\footnote{156} Plomer 295.
\footnote{158} Blaydes 317.
\footnote{159} Plomer 181, 282.
probably found it prudent to conceal her Toryism and authorship of *Queen Zarah* (1705) from the Whig backers of the Haymarket Theatre. Despite Trotter's disappointment with Turner and Manley's possible political disagreements, Pix seems to have been satisfied with his work. Her status as one of Lincoln's Inn Fields' regular contributors seems to have paid off as Wellington, Lintot, and Turner were her chief publishers.

Whether Turner would later have made arrangements with the four women to bring out profitable editions of their works is unknown. His last title entry in the official Term Catalogues was in 1705, and his publication of *Almyna* two years later apparently coincided with Turner's withdrawal from the profession.\(^{160}\) Having cultivated the plays of all four women, Turner's retirement from publishing is roughly analogous to the retirement of all the Lincoln's Inn Fields mainstays at the end of the decade. As the plays of Pix and Manley in particular retired with Betterton, Barry, Verbruggen, and Bracegirdle, perhaps interest in the publication of the women's plays decreased with Turner's departure. Certainly the copyrights were still available, but, after the waning of the interest generated by the initial publication of plays which had undistinguished theatrical runs, little interest in reprints remained.

Among other publishers, Manley also developed a relationship with Richard Bentley who was well-known for his publications of plays and novels. Bentley's name appears on her *Letters Written by Mrs. Manley...* (1696), as well as *The Lost Lover* (1696), and *The Royal Mischief* (1696).\(^ {161}\) Among the works Bentley published was *The Secret History of the Duke of Alançon and Q. Elizabeth* (1691), a title which Manley seems to echo in her own secret histories, *Zarah* and *Atalantis*. Bentley's association with Manley was cut short by the publisher's death in 1697.\(^ {162}\) Trotter had a similarly short relationship with Francis Saunders, a noted publisher of plays in the 1680s and early 1690s with connections

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\(^{160}\) Plomer 295.

\(^{161}\) Payne, "Delariviere Manley" 126.

\(^{162}\) Plomer 31-32.
among the aristocracy. Saunders published her Fatal Friendship (1698), but he retired the following year.\textsuperscript{163}

Despite the contentious nature of many of Manley’s relationships, she seems to have developed lasting ties with her publishers based initially on party lines. Probably because John Barber began his career exclusively as a printer and did not branch off into publication until later, his name would only appear as publisher on her last play Lucius (1717) and The Power of Love in Seven Novels (1720);\textsuperscript{164} Barber’s presses, however, may well have printed most of her famous work. Manley’s first publisher with Tory associations was Benjamin Bragg who brought out her The Lady’s Pacquet of Letters (1707) as well as a number of Defoe’s Tory propaganda works.\textsuperscript{165} The sequel to The Lady’s Pacquet . . . (1708) was published by James Woodward, who along with his partner John Morphew would publish The New Atalantis (1709), Memoirs of Europe (1710), The D. of M—h’s Vindication (1711), and Court Intrigues (1711).\textsuperscript{166} Morphew seems to have had considerable courage to accompany his Tory convictions. In addition to his imprisonment for refusing to name the author of The New Atalantis, he also refused to reveal the authorship of Swift’s Conduct of the Allies under interrogation by a Lord Chief Justice.\textsuperscript{167} Only once in the latter part of her career did Manley switch publishers. Edmund Curll hired Charles Gildon to write an unauthorized biography of her. When Manley heard of his plans, she offered to write the book herself so long as Curll kept the arrangement secret from Barber. The result was The Adventures of Rivella (1714), Manley’s intriguing, but often fanciful, autobiography.\textsuperscript{168}

\textsuperscript{163} Plomer 262; Blaydes 317.
\textsuperscript{164} Payne, “Delariviere Manley” 126.
\textsuperscript{165} Plomer 47.
\textsuperscript{166} Payne, “Delariviere Manley” 126.
\textsuperscript{167} Plomer 210.
\textsuperscript{168} Clark 135.
Summary

The basic facts of the effect of politics, patronage, and publication on Pix, Manley, Trotter, and Centlivre's ability to earn a living are relatively simple. One-time sales of the women's publication rights brought a fee ranging from £10 to roughly £20, while a flattering dedication to the printed version might possibly oblige the patron to a further payment of approximately £10 or perhaps a more expensive keepsake. The political system reserved both responsible appointments and cushy jobs for men, but the women were permitted to write flattering works and apply for compensatory grants as Trotter did; or, like Manley they could earn substantial sums by writing popular books with a party bias. Balanced against these financial gains, however, was the estrangement, politically motivated to some degree, between Manley and Trotter and a similar rift, to be discussed in the next chapter, between Manley and Centlivre.

Evident throughout the discussion of politics, patronage, and print is the fact that although these influences on the women's careers may be listed one at a time, they are very difficult to talk about separately. Sharing her life with a Tory printer, Manley's political views affected her decision to remain anonymous during the staging of Almyrna and kept her busy writing for other venues than the stage. Trotter's search for patronage led her away from her family connections with the Tory party to seek the protection of the Whig Duchess of Marlborough and her increasingly Whig husband. Perhaps Trotter earned enough money from the connection to retire from the theatre just prior to her own marriage. Even Pix's approval of Marlborough's victories, friendship with Centlivre, and association with the Haymarket performers were probably sufficient to brand her as a Whig playwright. With Centlivre's epilogue praising Marlborough in The Man's Bewitch'd and her dedication of The Wonder to the Electoral Prince of Hanover, Centlivre's political convictions fundamentally altered her playwriting career. On a smaller level, her feud with the Tory poet, Pope, probably helped
sever her business ties with Bernard Lintot. Whether her switch to other printers had little effect on her career or prohibited Centlivre from pursuing the kind of elegant edition of her works that Tonson published for Congreve is unknown.

Also apparent in the foregoing discussion is the fact that, although the four women playwrights were able to achieve some degree of success in the world of theatrical production, they were at a disadvantage in regard to earnings and support from publication and political patronage. From the lesser disparities between Centlivre and her male contemporaries' receipts for their publications and dedications, to the enormous contrast between Manley's one-time reward from Lord Oxford and the life-long support received by Vanbrugh, Congreve, and the others, the obvious conclusion is that male writers were likely to be much better compensated than women. Vanbrugh's pursuit of his new duties to the exclusion of his writing and Congreve's decision to leave his poetic career behind were not choices made by necessity; because they were options chosen by men who no longer had to write for their living if they did not want to. As an organization that represented power in the worlds of printing, letters, and politics, Jacob Tonson and the Kit-Cats toasted women with poetry and engraved wine glasses, but they reserved their patronage for the men who belonged to the club.
In a manner reminiscent of 1695-1696, the four women responded with new plays to the renewed theatrical competition caused by the spring 1705 opening of the Queen’s Theatre in the Haymarket. Only a month after the new playhouse opened, Pix’s *The Conquest of Spain* (May 1705) became the second new script to be performed there and ran for six days.¹ The following November, Centlivre cleverly took advantage of the success of *The Gamester* at Lincoln’s Inn Fields to persuade Drury Lane to stage her next anti-gambling play, *The Basset Table*. In February 1706, Trotter’s *The Revolution of Sweden* appeared at the Queen’s Theatre, but for only four performances. That June, Pix’s final play, *Adventures in Madrid*, premiered at the Haymarket, and, after a ten-year absence, Manley returned to the stage with *Almyna* at the Queen’s Theatre (December 1706).²

Yet for a number of reasons, only Centlivre had the inclination and resources to pursue her playwriting career beyond the 1706 season. After 1706 Pix’s health evidently failed, and

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she wrote no more plays. Already disgruntled by the poor reception of *The Unhappy Penitent* (1703), Trotter took the failure of *The Revolution of Sweden* as a cue to pursue other interests and leave the theatre behind. Frustrated by her failure to generate interest in a revival of *Almyrna*, Manley began a second decade away from the theatre and dedicated her pen to the Tory cause. Though the extraordinary success of *The Gamester* had left her in an advantageous position, Centlivre had to struggle for another five years before the relative security of her marriage and the phenomenal success of *The Busy Body* put her career on a sound enough footing to weather the transition to a London with only one play-producing theatre.

**The Events That Led To The Triumvirate**

The other reasons for the end of three of the four women’s playwriting careers are to be found in the bewildering series of management and personnel changes which occupied the London theatre between 1705 and 1710. This section summarizes the events that served as the background to the end of Pix, Manley, and Trotter’s careers as well as Centlivre’s establishment as one of the few working professional playwrights between 1710 and 1720.

In 1695 the Actors’ Rebellion had promised bright opportunities for new playwrights, but the relationship between the two theatres was characterized by bitter infighting and unscrupulous profit-taking. The same process occurred after 1705 when the opening of the Queen’s Theatre in the Haymarket sparked the struggle for control of Italian opera. After the ouster of Christopher Rich in 1709, the struggle concluded the following year when the Haymarket was designated as an opera house and Drury Lane became the sole theatre for straight plays. The end of the first decade of the eighteenth century was also the end of an era for performers, because the mainstays of the Rebel Company who had acted in the works of the three Female Wits were all retiring. Anne Bracegirdle left the theatre in 1707; Elizabeth Barry followed suit in 1709. After 1707 Thomas Betterton acted only on special
occasions; John Verbruggen moved to Dublin at the end of the 1707-1708 season and died there the following year.³

Vanbrugh and Congreve (briefly) would try their hands at the management of the Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket. After Congreve's departure late in 1705, Vanbrugh tried to maintain a heavy schedule which included managing the Haymarket, adapting plays for his company to perform, keeping up with his duties in the heraldry office, and supervising the construction of Blenheim. Following the disappointing season of 1705-1706, however, Vanbrugh curtailed his active participation and hired Rich's former deputy, Owen Swiney, to manage the Haymarket. True to form, Rich had underpaid Swiney, who found himself indebted to Rich after several years in the Patentee's employ. Consequently, when Swiney began work for Vanbrugh, he felt no qualms about recruiting the majority of Drury Lane's star performers (Wilks, Oldfield, Bullock, Norris, and eventually Cibber) to perform at the Haymarket. Rich complained, but was mollified when the Lord Chamberlain granted Drury Lane exclusive rights to the use of entr'acte performances and opera. During the ensuing season of 1706-1707, Rich, who had never been convinced that star actors were the best way to sell tickets, prospered with his reduced acting company, fair performers, and repeated performances of two successful operas, Camilla and Tomyris. Blessed with the best acting troupe since the old United Company, Swiney also succeeded with a season that relied heavily on revivals from the standard repertory; he even did well enough to repay his £200 debt to Rich.

The ruling which limited the Haymarket to only incidental music without song and dance led to an episode which illustrates the awkward compromise of the 1706-1707 season. In early December the Haymarket announced a revival of Granville's partially-sung, semi-opera The British Enchanters to be performed without singing, music, or dance. The

³ Judith Milhous, Thomas Betterton and the Management of Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1695-1708 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1979) 189-221. Unless otherwise noted, all information in this section is taken from this source.
understandably incensed playwright wrote his brother-in-law John Stanley, secretary to the Lord Chamberlain, to complain of the players' "design to murder the child of my brain"; as a result, the Haymarket performed Hamlet instead. Evidently Granville was persuaded to accept the excisions, as The British Enchanters, with additions to the "Scenes, Machines, and Decorations," was performed three times at the Haymarket in March and April 1707. The incident illustrates the messy nature of the split between the two companies. Rich could still stage plays at Drury Lane, but he lacked the personnel to compete credibly in legitimate drama, while Swiney was unable to make use of the entr'acte performers, interpolated songs, and dances which had gained increasing prominence since the beginning of the century. Though he now had the staging capabilities of a modern theatre, Swiney was unable to mount the semi-operas which had been a Betterton trademark since the 1670s. The tenuous balance brought about by Swiney's defection and Rich's control of entr'actes and operas would require further adjustment.

The following season Vanbrugh used his court influence to engineer an almost complete flip-flop in the theatrical situation that gave him control of the opera while the actors shuttled back to Rich at Drury Lane at the end of December 1707. Perhaps inspired by Rich's success with opera the previous season and his own interest in the new art form, Vanbrugh relegated Swiney to less important managerial duties, resumed the active supervision of the Haymarket, and promptly discovered that opera was the reverse of the gold mine he had envisioned. Beset by high production costs, uneven audience response, the enormous salary demands of his imported Italian performers, the singers' frequent need to rest their voices, and the resulting reduction in playing dates, Vanbrugh took a financial beating. By May of 1708, Vanbrugh was more than willing to sign a lease with Swiney for the Haymarket with all its

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stock, take himself out of active theatrical management for good, and set about the completion of Blenheim.

Though the 1708-1709 season was delayed until mid-December by the mourning period for the death of Queen Anne’s husband, Prince George of Denmark, Swiney managed to stabilize the opera company’s finances, import Nicolini, a first-rate singing star, from Italy, and have a profitable season. Meanwhile, at Drury Lane the actors discovered that Christopher Rich, with a London monopoly over London actors in 1708, behaved just as tyrannically as he had done in 1694. In short, Rich set out to make money both from what he could earn through ticket sales and what he could retain by withholding funds from those in his employ. Matters came to a head the following winter when Rich began to detain more than the customary £40 house charge from actors’ benefit earnings; on 3 March, for instance, he kept £71 from Anne Oldfield’s receipts “for the use of the Patent.”

At some point, the Lord Chamberlain, Owen Swiney, and the leading players formed a conspiracy against Rich. At the end of March 1709, Swiney began contract negotiations to hire Rich’s actors to perform at the Haymarket. At the end of April, Lord Chamberlain Kent issued an order requiring Rich to pay his actors in full. When Rich refused to comply, Kent allowed the actors to nearly complete the season so their earnings would be as large as possible; then, on 6 June 1709, he told Rich that since “you still refuse to pay and detain from the Said Comedians ye profits of ye Said benefit plays I do therefore for the Said Contempt hereby Silence you from further Acting.” The Patentee evidently expected to resume operations after a short suspension. When Rich advertised a performance of The Recruiting Officer early the following September, however, the audience was turned away. The silencing order had ended Rich’s fifteen-year career as a theatrical huckster. Rich spent the remaining five years of his life appealing the Lord Chamberlain’s action to no avail. As

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7 Milhous and Hume, Vice Chamberlain Coke 117.
Queen Anne's health began to fail, Rich began remodeling Lincoln's Inn Fields playhouse, but he died of gangrene on 4 November 1714, leaving his son Christopher to reopen the building a month later.8

Rich's departure did not immediately provide a return to theatrical stability in London. Swiney began the 1709-1710 season at the Haymarket with Cibber, Wilks, and Dogget as his managers, offering plays four nights a week and operas twice weekly. With enough actors residing in London to staff two full-time companies, Swiney's actors found their playing days reduced by one-third. Rich retained enough power to keep Swiney from taking a lease on Drury Lane, which left the actors formerly in his employ without work. Rich also prudently removed all the stock scenery, costumes, and props from the theatre. In November, however, William Collier, an attorney, Tory MP, and holder of a small share in the playhouse, unexpectedly obtained a license to act at Drury Lane and took possession of the building.

Collier was less fortunate in his choice of Aaron Hill to manage the Theatre-Royal acting company. In an attempt to imitate Swiney's managerial organization at the Haymarket, Hill tried delegating his authority among seven of the actors. When Hill found this arrangement unsatisfactory, he offered the managerial post first to George Pack and then to Barton Booth. After both players declined, Hill brought in his dissolute brother Gilbert to manage rehearsals.9 When Aaron Hill was obliged to leave town in June, the performers refused to act. Even after Hill returned hastily to London, the actors were in open revolt against the Drury Lane management. Hill locked the actors out of the theatre, but actress Lucretia Bradshaw let an armed party into the building through her lodgings which adjoined the structure. George Powell came close to stabbing Hill in the back, while Francis Leigh clubbed Hill's brother in the head. After Hill fled, Christopher Rich entered the building.

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8 Paul Sawyer, Christopher Rich of Drury Lane (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986) 110-111.
9 Milhous and Hume, "The Silencing of Drury Lane" 442.
and was received with approbation by the actors. The Lord Chamberlain, however, refused to allow Rich to resume operations and ordered the suspension of Powell, Booth, Bickerstaff, Keene, and Leigh, which effectively concluded the 1709-1710 season at Drury Lane.10

In the fall of 1710 a new compromise solution was reached which, while temporary in many particulars, established a lasting hierarchy at Drury Lane for the management of rehearsals and the selection of repertory. Collier and his deputy Hill, who had certainly poisoned their relationship with the actors, were given control of the opera which was installed at the Haymarket. Swiney, Cibber, Wilks, and Dogget were given charge of the acting company and the performance of plays at Drury Lane. The new arrangement returned the actors to a six nights per week performing schedule and finalized the genre split between theatre and opera. For the first time since 1694, London had only one theatre devoted to producing plays.

The Triumvirate of Cibber, Wilks, and Dogget acted quickly to remove Swiney from an active role in management. By the end of the 1711 season, the three actors were making all the company’s creative and financial decisions while Swiney settled for a yearly compensation of £600. A year later Swiney would trade this ‘silent-partnership’ to Collier and resume management of opera at the Haymarket until financial difficulties in 1712 forced him to flee London like Alexander Davenant before him. From 1710 until his retirement in 1732, however, Cibber handled Drury Lane repertory selection and functioned as mediator between his partners and the actors. Until his retirement in 1728, Wilks took charge of rehearsals and acted an astonishingly heavy schedule of both new and old roles. As the top actress in the company, Anne Oldfield also had some voice in the decision making, though Dogget’s refusal to have a woman as his co-manager had kept her out of the partnership. Known for his closefisted qualities, Dogget managed the company finances until 1713 when

10 Milhous and Hume, *Vice Chamberlain Coke* 142-146.
his disgust at Wilks and Cibber's decision to admit Barton Booth to management caused him to end his London career in a series of bitter lawsuits against his former partners.11

The End Of Pix's Career

Despite the clamor for opera and the increased use of double bills and entr'acte performers, the opening of the Haymarket was a promising event for playwrights. The writers' enthusiasm, however, must quickly have begun to dissipate. In hopes of outmaneuvering Rich, Vanbrugh and Congreve opened their theatre prematurely at the end of April 1705. To compound this error, they imported a second-rate troupe of Italian singers, "the worst that e're came from thence," to perform The Loves of Ergasto, which closed in five days. Forced to shift quickly to revivals of The Gamester and other "old Ware" from the Lincoln's Inn Fields repertory, Vanbrugh had neglected to prepare new sets to match the opulence of his theatre.12 Furthermore, performers and audiences soon discovered that, although the new building had an impressive exterior, the Queen's Theatre had dreadful acoustics. Even the theatre's location, a mile west of Drury Lane in an area that was not yet fashionable, initially drew criticism for its inconvenience. In fact, by mid-July Vanbrugh was forced to return his company to Lincoln's Inn Fields until his theatre was fully completed.13

The Conquest Of Spain

In that frantic first spring at the Haymarket, Pix's The Conquest of Spain opened a month after the failure of the Italian singers. As Downes records, "it had not the life of a

12 Downes 97.
13 Milhous, Thomas Betterton 200-201.
Stock-Play, for it Expir'd the 6th Day."\textsuperscript{14} Printed without preface, dedication, or the actors' names alongside the list of characters, the published version of \textit{The Conquest of Spain} provides few additional clues as to why the play failed to enter the repertory. As Hume says, the tragic form was still mired in "stasis and decay"; he goes on to list \textit{The Conquest of Spain}, Trotter's \textit{The Revolution of Sweden}, and Manley's \textit{Almyna} as examples of the "slack and slushy form of heroic play predominant in these years."\textsuperscript{15} Even the prologue to \textit{The Conquest of Spain}, which refers to the author as male, laments that "The Tragick Muse, the Glory of our nation,/Is thrown Aside, Despis'd, like an old Fashion."\textsuperscript{16} Most likely, then, there is no secret reason for the play's disappearance. An example of a foundering genre produced in a partially completed theatre in the midst of a scramble to replace a disastrously unsuccessful opera might be expected to disappear after its initial run.

The play itself is a cautionary tale of the disasters that can befall a country during wartime if treachery at home undermines victorious armies. Returning in this play to the portrayal of villainous potentates that marked both \textit{Ibrahim} and \textit{The Czar of Muscovy}, Pix focuses on how King Rhoderique of Spain and the treacherous Alvarez set out to seduce the chaste daughter of the country's top general and the virtuous wife of his second in command. While General Julianus and his subordinate Antonio vanquish the Moors in battle, the king ravishes Jaccincta and Alvarez fools Margareta into believing that Antonio has married another woman. When Jaccincta's fiancé Theomantius escapes from the Moors and discovers what the king has done, he frees the captive Moorish commander who summons reinforcements and overruns Spain. Jaccincta dies from wounds received when the Moors attacked her jailers; overwhelmed with grief at the sight of his dead beloved and guilt

\textsuperscript{14} Downes 98.
ridden because of his treacherous aid to the Moors, Theomantius kills himself. Trapped between his loyalty to the king and his anguish over Jaccincta’s rape, Julianus is mortally wounded while helping a repentant Rhoderique to escape. Antonio arrives in time to kill Alvarez and rescue Margaretta, and the victorious Moors, granting Julianus’s dying wish, send the couple into exile.

More than Pix’s earlier tragedies, *The Conquest of Spain* relies heavily for its pathos upon prolonged emotional outbursts from the tormented characters. Among the emotional set pieces in the play are: Jaccincta’s distraught entrance after her ravishment; Jaccincta’s reunion with her betrayed father Julianus; the unctuous Alvarez’s attempt to suborn and seduce Margaretta; a blustery martial exchange between Theomantius and the Moorish commander; the fiery debate about guilt, loyalty, and revenge between Julianus and the king; and Jaccincta’s tearful farewells with Julianus and Theomantius.\(^{17}\)

Although Vanbrugh now ran the company, Thomas Betterton was still influential. Perhaps in Julianus’s struggle between his personal desire for revenge and his public oath of loyalty to the king, Betterton found a desirable acting opportunity for himself. As Pix certainly knew, the pitiful Jaccincta would be good casting for Bracegirdle with Verbruggen as her hotheaded lover, Theomantius. Booth might have done well as the noble Antonio, while Barry would have excelled as Margaretta, scornig Alvarez and planning to stab Antonio when she thinks him false. Though this casting is merely speculation, the Haymarket company did possess the talent and experience to give *The Conquest of Spain* a credible staging. At the least, during a very hectic time, Pix’s play was able to last long enough to give her a second benefit.

The epilogue to *The Conquest of Spain* calls attention to the theatre’s need to avoid political commentary. Having just performed a play where a depraved sovereign undermines the general who defeats the king’s enemies, Pix and the company were at pains to insure in

the epilogue that no one had identified Pix’s Rhoderique and Julianus with England’s Queen Anne and Marlborough:

How happy is our Isle, which can’t complain
That her great Heroe has deserv’d in vain:
Gladly we’ve seen the Senate and the Crown,
Making their Gratitude like his Renown,
For ever to succeeding Ages known.

Not content with commending the queen and her government for their rewards to Marlborough, the epilogue concludes with high praise for the war effort. First, English women are commended for inspiring the soldiers, then the adulation focuses on the queen:

Thus when in mighty ANNA’s Cause we Fight,
Toils are our Pleasures, Dangers our Delight.
Since to maintain her Rights we’ve us’d our Arms,
They’ve prov’d resistless as Her powerful Charms:
Whose Influence has in one Campaign done more
Than we in Ages could perform before.
Still may your Smiles our Victories Reward,
Their happy Progress nothing shall retard.
All the united Powers of France and Spain,
Our fearless Legions shall oppose in vain:
To Grace your glorious Triumphs both shall joyn,
And their lost Trophies at your Feet resign.18

Even in 1705, with Marlborough fresh from his victory at Blenheim, lauded by queen and government, and soon to triumph again at Ramillies, Pix evidently felt that prudence dictated a flag-waving epilogue to quell any unpatriotic interpretation of her play. Within a few years the Whigs and Tories would accuse each other of attempting to subvert both the war and the peace efforts; certainly when the Tories were in power after 1710, any play which presented a monarch bent on ruining a victorious general would have been seen as treasonous. Perhaps the potentially controversial subject matter of The Conquest of Spain as well as the approaching retirement of so many of the Haymarket stars of 1705 contributed to the play’s disappearance.

18 “By a Friend,” “Epilogue,” The Conquest of Spain n. pag.
The Adventures In Madrid

The Haymarket premiere of Pix’s last play, The Adventures in Madrid (June 1706), bears a similarity to the opening of Centlivre’s Love’s Conivance three years earlier at Drury Lane. Like Centlivre’s play, Pix’s three-act farce was inserted as light entertainment to fill out the end of the benefit season with no pretentions to a long run. The resemblance ends there, however, because unusual conditions prevailed at the Haymarket as Vanbrugh’s first full season drew to a close. At the end of a year marked by the unprecedented premiere of four operas, the Haymarket’s expensive production of Durfey’s The Wonders in the Sun closed after only five documentable performances. Hindered by Drury Lane’s successful debut of Farquhar’s The Recruiting Officer on the opera’s third night, The Wonders in the Sun recovered less than half its production expenses. After this setback, Vanbrugh devoted his theatrical energies that summer to attempting to engineer a union between the two companies or, if Rich blocked the merger, at least a genre split with plays at one theatre and opera at the other. After the disappointing reception for The Wonders in the Sun, according to Downes, Vanbrugh

gave leave to Mr. Verbruggen and Mr. Booth, and all the Young Company, to Act the remainder of the Summer, what Plays they cou’d by their Industry get up for their own Benefit.

An examination of The London Stage performance calendar reveals that The Adventures in Madrid was the only new play attempted at the Haymarket after the failure of The Wonders in the Sun until the following fall. Between the last performance of The Wonders in the Sun (10 April) and the summer company revivals that began with Otway’s The Orphan (29 June), the company did present eleven benefits; a performance of Sophonisba for Elizabeth Barry on 26 June was the last. Aside from Pix’s play, the only other non-benefit

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21 Downes 101.
productions were a command performance of The British Enchanters for the Moroccan Ambassador and a revival of Vanbrugh’s The Confederacy “At the Desire of several Persons of Quality.” Evidently, before Barry and Bracegirdle left for their summer vacations and Verbruggen, Booth, and the “Young Company” began their series of revivals, the actors decided to see what profits they could make by mounting The Adventures in Madrid without Vanbrugh’s backing.

The prologue to The Adventures in Madrid supports this view while wryly commenting upon that seasons’ small crowds in the large new theatre:

To hit your Tast[e] we’ve try’d a thousand Ways
Pastorals, Opera, and some good Plays:
A House was built, the Lord knows what the Charge,
We find indeed the Structure proves too large;
That, nor the Season, stops our Diligence,
We still play on, tho’ at our own Expence.
And like some Miser who has done his Best,
To furnish out one various Splendid Feast,
To little Trifles he at last descends,
And with whipt Cream and Froth Regales his Friends;
So we in Farce a Summer Present bring,
For once accept the humble Offering.22

The phrase that supports the idea that the actors financed the production is “at our own Expence,” but the rest of the passage with its references to “Miser,” “little Trifles,” “whipt Cream and Froth,” and “humble Offering,” suggests further that the production was done on a tight budget using only stock sets and costumes.

No records reveal the length of the play’s run or how much money the actors and playwright earned. In addition to Barry and Bracegirdle, a number of other prominent members of the Haymarket company appeared in the cast, including William Bowen, George Pack, Elizabeth Boman, John Corey, and Barton Booth. Therefore, the play could conceivably have been remounted the following fall. The result of Vanbrugh’s negotiations with Rich and the Lord Chamberlain, however, was a prohibition of entr’acte music and operas at the

Haymarket in exchange for the transfer of most of Drury Lane's best actors to Vanbrugh's company. As an unassuming farce, *The Adventures in Madrid* was designed to pause for two lengthy musical interludes and conclude with a celebratory song and dance. Thus, the removal of the play's music would significantly damage its charm and appeal.

More importantly, however, the sudden addition of Colley Cibber, Benjamin Johnson, John Mills, Henry Norris, Robert Wilks, and Anne Oldfield to the Haymarket company gave Vanbrugh's new manager, Owen Swiney, the opportunity to attract crowds with revivals from the proven repertory. Not surprisingly, in the fall of 1706 the Queen's Theatre relied heavily upon older plays with revamped casts. With the sudden influx of new talent to reinvigorate the repertory, Swiney had no need to seek out Pix's serviceable but not stellar farce from the previous summer and restage the piece without its musical interludes.

Although *The Adventures in Madrid* was unlikely to enter the repertory because of the circumstances of its performance and the company change the following fall, the play was a lively choice for the actors to use to try to make some extra money during the summer. The plot turns on ancient Lord Gomez's attempts to control the fortunes of his niece Clarinda, whom he has illegally married, and her friend Laura, whom he intends to force to wed his equally decrepit twin brother. Gomez hopes to abscond to Mexico with his brother and both women before anyone can question the legality of his behavior. To that end, he has had Clarinda

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24 Avery, *The London Stage*, vol. 2, 130-132. Swiney seems to have followed a policy whereby plays that had chiefly been performed at Drury Lane used the newly available actors from that theatre, augmented with a few Lincoln's Inn Fields players, whereas Lincoln's Inn Fields favorites relied chiefly on Rebel Company/Haymarket personnel. For instance, former Drury Lane actors Mills, Wilks, Cibber, and Oldfield headlined the November revival of *The Recruiting Officer* with New Theatre actor George Pack added in as Sergeant Kite. On the other hand, an October performance of Betterton's adaptation of *Henry IV* featured Lincoln's Inn Fields actors, Betterton, Boman, Verbruggen, Husbands, and Booth with the newly acquired Wilks as Hotspur and Mills as Douglass. Casting for plays which both theatres had previously performed was apparently assigned on an all-star basis. Thus, for *The Man of Mode* in November, Cibber and Wilks appeared as Fopling and Dorimant opposite their former Lincoln's Inn Fields rivals Bracegirdle and Barry as Harriet and Loveit.
and Laura’s friend Lisset imprisoned for merely talking to an English gentleman at the door. Pix, therefore, has neatly contrived that the opposition to all three women’s happiness comes from Gomez, an “Adam’s Grandfather,” who is a nastier version of Melito Bondi, the scheming blocking character from *The Deceiver Deceived*. One more bit of bad fortune for the future of *The Adventures in Madrid*, however, was that United Company veteran John Freeman, who played Gomez, left the Haymarket company at the end of that summer of 1706 and did not act in London again until 1710.

Pix also creates a serviceable gallery of characters with plans to defeat Gomez and rescue the women. Barton Booth and Benjamin Husbands were cast as the two young English sparks, Gaylove and Bellmour, intriguing for Laura/Bracegirdle and Clarinda/Barry. The two Spaniards who aid the Englishmen are Gusman and Clarinda’s brother, Don Philip, who had foiled Gomez’s plan to have him shanghaied aboard a ship to the Indies and murdered there. Don Phillip, played by Queen’s Theatre regular John Corey, is also in love with Gaylove’s sister. Because of his love for Lisset, Gusman, played by the popular but volatile comic actor William Bowen, agrees to train Bellmour’s cowardly servant Jo/George Pack in the art of intrigue.

Indeed, the play becomes a complicated game of hide-and-seek as Laura and Clarinda, aided by a secret passage, frustrate Gomez and confound their English admirers. Jo’s lessons in the art of intrigue are successful to the degree that Gaylove and Bellmour are able to meet secretly with the women. In order to escape from Gomez, however, Jo must pretend to be a singing madman acquainted with King Pepin and Charlemagne. Meanwhile, Gusman tries to have himself incarcerated so he can be with Lisset in prison, but the

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26 Highfill, *BD*, vol. 5, 407-408.
constables, convinced that Gusman is also a lunatic, refuse to arrest him.\textsuperscript{31} In any case, Lisset has contrived her own release from jail, disguised herself as a eunuch, and gotten near-sighted Gomez to hire her to "Watch Virgins and Spoil Intreagues."\textsuperscript{32} Of course, Lisset proceeds to help Clarinda and Laura gain their liberty. When the smoke clears and the doors stop slamming, Gomez has been hauled before the Inquisition; Don Phillip has related Gomez's plot on his life and Clarinda has revealed that her marriage to Gomez was never consummated. As a result, Gomez is dragged off snarling to prison, and the four young couples are ready to live happily ever after.\textsuperscript{33}

Pix Quietly Departs

The end of Pix's playwriting career in 1706 lacks the finality of Manley's shift into political writing or Trotter's retirement to raise a family. Perhaps the feeling that her career closes with an ellipsis rather than a period comes from the absolute dearth of information about her final years. The notice of the benefit performance of The Busy Body for her estate in 1709 is the only evidence that establishes the year of her death.\textsuperscript{34} Whether George Pix or any of the couple's children survived her is unknown.

The most likely explanation for the length of Pix's career is that she wrote to the taste of the New Theatre company and was adept at creating roles in both tragedy and comedy which appealed to Barry and Bracegirdle in particular. Moreover, though none of the plays Pix wrote after her departure from Drury Lane entered the repertory, the earnings from her New Theatre productions must have been substantial enough to keep her writing and encourage the theatre to continue accepting her scripts. After experimenting with variations

\textsuperscript{31} Pix, The Adventures in Madrid 34-35, 56.
\textsuperscript{32} Pix, The Adventures in Madrid 11.
\textsuperscript{33} Pix, The Adventures in Madrid 64-70.
\textsuperscript{34} Constance Clark, Three Augustan Women Playwrights, American University Studies Ser. IV. English Language and Literature, vol. 40 (New York: Peter Lang, 1986) 211-212.
in plotting and language in the middle of her career, with her last two plays, Pix returned to the examination of royal excesses and the portrayal of love intrigues between Englishmen and Spanish women that marked her first two successes, Ibrahim and The Spanish Wives. The resemblance of The Conquest of Spain and The Adventure in Madrid to her first two plays does not suggest that Pix was a visionary artist leading the theatre forward into the eighteenth century. On the other hand, Pix should probably be regarded as a competent professional who provided vehicles for the leading actresses of her day to impress the theatre-going public. That the actors chose The Adventures in Madrid to perform when they hoped to generate some income for themselves suggests that they felt her work was commercially viable.

Trotter's Retirement From The Theatre

Trotter’s The Revolution of Sweden appeared at the Queen’s Theatre in the Haymarket for just four performances between 11 and 16 February 1705. The dates that could have occupied the fifth and sixth performances of Trotter’s play were filled with revivals of two recent Haymarket favorites, Vanbrugh, Congreve, and Walsh’s Squire Trelooby and Rowe's Ulysses. Thereafter, as the actors readied their benefits and acted in a few other revivals, Vanbrugh tried his hand at musical theatre, mounting three operas in six weeks with diminishing degrees of success. After opening on 21 February, Granville’s The British Enchanters was played twelve times before the end of the season. Vanbrugh’s second operatic offering, The Temple of Love, was advertised for only two performances and failed, according to Downes, after only six nights; while, as discussed above, The Wonders in the Sun lasted but five performances. Therefore, the lacklustre run of The Revolution of Sweden was closely followed by Vanbrugh’s three operas which led in turn to the benefit season, interrupted only by the premiere of Pix’s The Adventures in Madrid. After Verbruggen and Booth’s summer revivals with the young actors, the fall of 1706 saw the beginning of Swiney’s

36 Downes 100.
management of the expanded Haymarket company. By the time Wilks, Oldfield, and the other Drury Lane transfers began appearing in revivals of modern hits and the classics alongside Betterton, Barry, and Bracegirdle at the Queen's Theatre, Trotter's last play was a forgotten failure from the previous season.

The Revolution Of Sweden

Easily demonstrating the disappearance of The Revolution of Sweden does not explain why the play was unpopular at its initial showing. Trotter articulated her own theories in her preface to the published version. In shrill tones that make her impending retirement unsurprising, Trotter chastises the audience for preferring works which have "no other end but to divert." Since she writes with the noble purpose "to incite some useful Virtue, or check some dangerous Passion," Trotter assumes that the failure of her play is due to the audience's preference for the superfluous:

no doubt I have too little consider'd the present tast[e] of the Town; I shou'd not have wholly neglected those Ornaments, which all are now fond of, since the end of Tragedy is to profit the Audience by Pleasing, and every Body will be pleas'd their own way.

Having suggested that the debased audience expected tragedy to cater to their individual pleasures, Trotter goes on to rebukes the patrons for their demeanor during the performances:

'Tis confess'd it would be very unreasonable to desire, that every one who comes to a Play, shou'd be attentive at it; those who find in the Audience a better Entertainment, must be allow'd to turn their Eyes and thoughts from the stage; but then 'tis no more than equitable to expect, that they should not judge at all of what they have not leisure to mind.37

Despite Trotter's years of careful revision, The Revolution of Sweden evidently did not compel a sizable portion of the audience to attentive silence. Since Trotter believed that the theatre was a forum where the audience could be instructed to virtue, the spectacle of the

Haymarket patrons' disinterest in her carefully planned arguments must have been extremely disheartening to her.

After castigating a portion of the audience for refusing to sit quietly for their own improvement, Trotter addressed the objections of the "less rash, or at least more attentive Criticks" that, she assures the reader, "are not very considerable." A short summary of The Revolution of Sweden is necessary to understand Trotter's further defense of her play. The "one great action" that Trotter chose to present was "the Election of Gustavus to the Throne, upon the entire Deliverance of his Country."38 The play begins with Gustavus on the point of laying siege to his last enemies, the licentious Danish Viceroy and the ferocious Archbishop of Upsal, who are holding Stockholm with a force of mercenaries. When Gustavus allows his peasant soldiers to return to their homes for the harvest, the Archbishop's troops attack him suddenly. After escaping the immediate threat, Gustavus is reinforced by his trusty ally Arwide with sufficient strength to turn the retreat into a counterattack.

All goes well for Gustavus in the battle, but Arwide's wife, Constantia, is taken prisoner by the Danes who demand that Gustavus surrender himself in exchange for her. Against Gustavus's advice, the distraught Arwide charges into the city to offer himself as a hostage instead. Meanwhile, Christina, wife to the traitorous Swede Beron, has been forced to flee from her husband to Gustavus's protection. Reluctant to reveal her identity, even though she previously rescued Gustavus from one of Beron's plots, Christina disguises herself as her own nephew, Fredage. Taken prisoner soon after Constantia, Christina somehow manages to fool her husband into believing that she is his nephew. As the fortunes of war continue to favor Gustavus, the Viceroy is forced to give up his claims to rule the country as well as his designs on Constantia and accept Gustavus's safe conduct back to Denmark along with the Archbishop.

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Remaining in Sweden as an agent for the Danes, Beron hatches a plot to discredit Arwide and create dissension among the victors. Arwide is persuaded to sign what he believes are honorable articles for Constantia’s release, but Beron arranges for the documents the general signs to be treasonous concessions. Beron further contrives that Constantia is convinced of her husband’s perfidy. When Gustavus convenes a meeting of the Senate to elect a new king, Beron makes the false document public and calls for Arwide’s execution. As the senate deliberates, Christina/Fredage arrives. Wounded by Beron in her attempt to keep the incriminating document from being revealed to the Senate, she proclaims that Arwide did sign the papers, but faints before she can vindicate him. Ignoring Gustavus’s entreaties, the Senate votes to condemn Arwide to sudden death. As Constantia, now convinced of her husband’s innocence, pleads for his life, Christina revives long enough to exonerate Arwide, reveal her true identity, and incriminate Beron before she dies. The play concludes as Gustavus ascends the Swedish throne.39

The objections to The Revolution of Sweden that Trotter chooses to counter are: 1) that Arwide’s signing a “Treaty with his Enemy, without ever reading it” is evidence of the clumsy nature of a “Woman’s Plot”; 2) that she has “made Christina speak an hour after she is dead”; and 3) “that the Senators are very hasty Judges, in giving, and revoking, their Sentence.” Trotter correctly points out that Beron’s slight-of-hand in attaining Arwide’s signature is explained in the last scene, that Christina was “speaking after she has been in a Swoon, and suppos’d dead,” and that dramatic structure does not allow time for “using the Forms of Westminster-Hall” in on-stage legal proceedings.40

Unfortunately for the clarity of Trotter’s plot, however, the scene where Arwide is duped into signing the incriminating papers occurs offstage. Beron brings the documents to the Viceroy and Constantia on page forty-two of the published version, while Christina does not explain Beron’s trick until page seventy. In addition to making the audience wait through

nearly half the play for an explanation, Beron's veiled account to the Viceroy of his plan to fool Arwide does not clarify his strategy:

Beron: Insinuate to Constantia, that in this Exigence, Arwide may himself consent t'accept Of Life, upon the Terms you offer.

Viceroy: In vain, She knows his Soul too well to credit it.

Beron: Yet if my Politicks deceive me not, She soon shall see that very Article Sign'd by himself, with others most injurious To his Party, which artfully discover'd To Gustavus, may raise such a Commotion Betwixt those Lords, and their Adherents, As must be fatal to their Cause, and give New Life to ours.

Viceroy: Thou talk' st of things impracticable, Arwide's intrepid, obstinate to Honour, Not to be seduc'd by Fear, or Int'rest, To betray his Cause.

Beron: He is my Lord, And like all other Honourable Fools, He's unsuspecting, open and unweary, On that I form my Plot - My Lord, you know I build no Castles in the Air; Trust me, He shall be draw'n to sign Conditions, At which you'll be amaz'd; and both Gustavus, And Constantia, deceiv'd, and most incens'd.41

While this passage shows that Beron has some stratagem in mind, nowhere do the lines contradict the impression, which an already inattentive audience mistakenly derived, that Trotter's heroic general oafishly signed his own death warrant without reading the fine print.

Trotter's refutations of the audience's other objections to her play's credibility are equally porous. To merely reiterate that Christina swoons and does not die ignores the surprise generated when a character who is presumed dead by both characters and audience for an entire scene suddenly revives and engineers a happy ending. Even as part of an

artificial heroic tragedy, Christina’s resuscitation may cross the line from the divinely inspired poetic justice that Trotter intended to the woodenly contrived deus ex machina perceived by her audience. Though Trotter is careful not to have Christina pronounced dead (she is said to be “expiring”), the device evidently was not well-handled in performance. Generally speaking, the cast for The Revolution of Sweden was quite strong with Betterton as Arwide, Barry as Constantia, Booth as Gustavus, and Husbands and Boman as the villainous Viceroy and Archbishop. The crucial role of Christina, which might conceivably have been acted by Bracegirdle, was played instead by Mary Harcourt. After a short apprenticeship in Dublin and three years as a junior member of Rich’s company, Harcourt acted for only a year and a half at the Haymarket before retiring at the end of the 1706 season. With her superior skill and reputation, Bracegirdle might have convincingly portrayed a character who must impersonate her husband’s nephew and revive to save the day after she has been presumed dead, but Harcourt’s performance of a very tricky part of the script was evidently unsatisfactory.

Also, though Trotter may be correct in pointing out that prolonged legal wrangling makes dull theatre, her play insists that to be truly free, Sweden must establish a constitutional monarchy. Trotter’s hero Gustavus is particularly vocal on this theme. When his lieutenant proposes that Gustavus be proclaimed king, Gustavus replies angrily:

Forbear th’injurious Mention. Have I with hopes
Of Liberty, incited my suffering Country-men
To undergo th’inevitable Miseries
Of an intestine War, to throw off an usurp’d
An Arbitrary Pow’r, and shall I
With more unjust, and treacherous Usurpation,
Invest my self with the same lawless Title?
Detested Treason! Be it your charge to have
The States Assembled, in them is the sole Right

To chuse a Head, whose Legal Pow'r all ought,
All must submit to; I'll give the first example,
Proclaim that I'll this Day attend the Senate.  

For the representatives of the vaunted new government to be shouting instantly for Arwide’s blood because of Beron’s suspect assertions, then quickly cheering Arwide’s innocence when a fainting witness revives to clear him, and solemnly proclaiming the re-establishment of just government in Sweden immediately afterwards, smacks of the excess of passion that Trotter decried.

In rejecting other commentators’ beliefs that she should have included additional episodes from her source as part of the play, Trotter accuses them of not knowing, or not considering the Rules of the Drama, that Tragedy is confin’d to represent only such incidents as immediately conduce to the effecting the one great Action it proposes . . . .

As already noted, Trotter’s “great Action” for The Revolution of Sweden was to bring Gustavus to the Swedish throne. Though the play does conclude with Gustavus’s crowning, Trotter has violated her own dictum by straying from her singular purpose. Gustavus actually succeeds to the throne with very little opposition; because his two chief antagonists, the Archbishop and the Viceroy are disposed of readily and early. In fact, the Archbishop and his troops are defeated early in Act Two. Chiefly interested in seducing Constantia, the Viceroy never confronts Gustavus on-stage or offstage and returns to Denmark merely piqued at having to leave Constantia behind. Beron does remain in Sweden to undermine the victors, but his efforts are exclusively concerned with ruining Arwide. Although the loss of a distinguished subordinate is a dreadful blow, the last two and a half acts of The Revolution of Sweden focus more on Arwide’s plight than the activities of Gustavus. Though she points out her critics’ ignorance of the “Rules of Drama,” Trotter’s great action is a foregone conclusion well before

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44 Trotter, The Revolution of Sweden 54-55.
the play ends. Where the protagonists in Trotter’s first three tragedies lacked the volition to pursue their goals, in The Revolution of Sweden Gustavus has no credible opposition to hinder him from proceeding easily to the Swedish throne.

Trotter Chooses An Active Early Retirement

Though The Revolution of Sweden failed to impress in its original run and theatrical circumstances made the play’s revival unlikely, other aspects of the text shed light on the directions Trotter’s career and personal life were taking. As with her previous tragedies, when the fortunes of Trotter’s characters look bleak, they declare their intentions to retire from the world. In this case, both Arwide and Constantia yearn for a life of seclusion. After Constantia confesses to Gustavus her belief that her husband is treacherous, she voices her resignation:

I, alas, have finish’d
My unhappy Part, nor is there ought for me,
But in Retirement from the World, to spend my days
In Prayers for his Repentance, and my Countries Safety.48

When Arwide believes that Gustavus and Constantia have turned against him, he sounds a similar note:

I’ve but to say that I resign your Army,
And all I held in charge to your disposal.
’Tis fit the sole unhappy of your Subjects,
Shou’d from the Universal Joy retire;
To the all-seeing Judge I leave my Cause,
And go hide me, and my sorrows, from
The World for ever.49

Once again, these speeches may be merely the formulaic laments of pathetic tragedy, but the playwright was about to retire from the theatre at the age of twenty-seven. On the other hand, as the tone of her preface to The Revolution of Sweden indicates, Trotter was retiring from the theatre, not in wistful sorrow, but in frustration and indignation.

49 Trotter, The Revolution of Sweden 64.
On a more revealing note, *The Revolution of Sweden* contains a debate between Constantia and the Archbishop where Constantia's Whiggish defense of the people's right to oppose tyranny is given ascendancy over the Catholic Archbishop's Tory arguments in favor of the divine right of kings. While the Archbishop maintains that kings are "heav'ns Viceregents," Constantia counters his argument in terms which could come from a Whig justification of the Glorious Revolution of 1688.50

Is it Rebellion for a wretched People  
Oppress'd and Ruin'd, by that Power they gave  
For their Defence, the safety of their Rights,  
To seek Redress? When Kings who are in Trust  
The Guardians of the Laws, the publick Peace and Welfare,  
Confess no Law but Arbitrary Will,  
Or know no use of Pow'r but to Oppress,  
And Injure, with Impunity, themselves  
Disown their Office, tacitly acquit  
The People, of whose due Obedience, just  
Protection, is the Natural and Essential Condition.51

In a play dedicated to a member of both the Marlborough and Godolphin families, a vindication of the Whig 'Revolution Principles' that justified the deposition of James II in favor of William and Mary does not seem out of place. Indeed, the portrayal of Gustavus might be seen as an elaborate compliment to the Duke of Marlborough's accomplishments as heir to William III's military policies. Having written in defense of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Trotter might also have been familiar with Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1689) which, though not yet frequently employed in political argument by Trotter's contemporaries, do contain a reasoned justification of the "Original Contract" between subject and sovereign.52

As a practicing Catholic whose father had served Charles II and James II, however, Trotter might have been expected to have her Archbishop character overpower Constantia's arguments. Instead, Constantia goes on to question the church hierarchy:

Can that Religion
Of which the Spirit, and distinctive Character
Is Mercy; forgiving Injuries and Universal Love,
Can it e'er authorize Revenge? Incite
To Persecution, and Bloody Massacres?
Well may Infidels be scandaliz'd
At our most Holy Faith, when its Professors
Themselves impute to it the most unnatural
Impieties! Well may Religions sacred Name
Be fall'n to Contempt, when thus abus'd,
To serve the vilest, the most impious Ends!

The Archbishop blusters, "When Women preach, 'twill be with Luther's Aid; A blessed Reformation," but his rejoinders are interrupted by the news of Gustavus's sudden attack. With the Archbishop in physical and ideological retreat, Constantia is clearly meant to win the argument.

With the advantage of hindsight, the desire to renounce the world and the espousal of a Whig-Anglican argument over a Tory-Catholic position seem to indicate the direction Trotter's subsequent career would take. During the spring after the premiere of The Revolution of Sweden, Trotter published her verse tribute to Ramillies, Marlborough's second great victory. As discussed in the previous chapter, at this time Trotter also received some form of patronage, perhaps from the Marlboroughs, which allowed her to retire from the theatre until her marriage. Shortly thereafter, Trotter joined the Church of England and allowed some of her correspondence concerning her conversion to be published in June 1707. Early in 1708, after a suitable interval of friendship and correspondence, Trotter married the Reverend Patrick Cockburn. The mechanics of her transformation from single Catholic

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playwright and theatre reformer to philosophical writer and Anglican clergyman’s wife were completed quickly, but Trotter had been considering the ideas behind her departure from the theatre and Catholicism for some time.

To say that Trotter’s marriage marked the end of her writing career would be inaccurate. Certainly family priorities associated with four children and the lean years between 1714 and 1726, before Reverend Cockburn relented and signed the oath of allegiance to the Hanovers, significantly lessened her writing output.\textsuperscript{55} As Trotter wrote in an unmailed letter to Alexander Pope, however, when “my young family was grown up to have less need of my assistance; and beginning to have some taste of polite literature, my inclination revived with my leisure.”\textsuperscript{56} In 1726, a printed sermon that attacked John Locke prompted Trotter to come to Locke’s defense a second time with “some animadversions, which she threw together in the form of a Letter.” As was the case with her epistolary reflections on converting to the Church of England, Trotter was again persuaded to publish her correspondence as a Letter to Dr. Holdsworth (1726). In 1751 Birch also published Trotter’s reply to Holdsworth’s reaction to her Letter.\textsuperscript{57}

At some point, Trotter revised her comedy Love at a Loss with hopes of having the play acted, but the revival never occurred. Trotter also had plans to revise her tragedies “with a view, not only of correcting them, but likewise of improving the versification, and raising the diction,” but whatever revisions took place were never published.\textsuperscript{58} Trotter did have verses and an essay published in the Gentleman’s Magazine in the 1730s, and an article of hers concerning the “Foundation of moral Duty and moral Obligation” appeared in a 1743 volume entitled The History of the Works of the Learned. In spite of periods of increasingly

\textsuperscript{55} Birch xxxiv-xxxv.
\textsuperscript{56} Birch xl.
\textsuperscript{57} Birch xxxvi.
\textsuperscript{58} Birch ix, xxxvi.
poor health, in 1747 Trotter published her reactions to Dr. Rutherforth's Essay, on the Nature and Obligations of Virtue.\textsuperscript{59}

At Trotter's death on 11 May 1749, Birch had already begun collecting her works for publication by subscription. Interestingly Birch devotes over three hundred pages of the first volume of the works to publication of "Letters Between Mrs. Cockburn, and Several of her Friends."\textsuperscript{60} In The Patriarch's Wife, Margaret Ezell notes that Trotter's switch from playwriting to correspondence was not a retirement but a return to the "general pattern of women's participation in the intellectual life of the century." Ezell also remarks that the "modern emphasis on publication as the measure of feminine accomplishment discredits any method of intellectual exchange that does not conform to twentieth-century practices."\textsuperscript{61} Writers in the eighteenth century were not yet as certain as modern authors that publishing works for the general public was the only, or even preferable, means of circulating one's writing.

By switching to manuscript circulation and epistolary exchanges that sometimes led to publication, Trotter was returning to an "older form of literary transmission which left control of the text in the author's hands rather than signing it over to the bookseller."\textsuperscript{62} In choosing her readership in the latter part of her career, Trotter was able to target her works away from the inattentive audiences of The Revolution of Sweden and towards individuals who were interested in debating the philosophical and religious questions of the day. As an outgrowth of her disappointment with the theatre public's rejection of her plays, Trotter chose to circulate her subsequent writing among friends, relatives, and intellectual acquaintances. In short, Trotter opted for more control over her readership than works for sale on a shelf or performed in a theatre allowed. In a sense, where Manley retired from the

\textsuperscript{59} Birch xxxviii, xliiv-xlv.
\textsuperscript{60} Birch 153-459.
\textsuperscript{62} Ezell 99-100.
theatre to write political journalism, Trotter left the theatre, not to stop writing altogether, but instead to produce philosophical and religious reflections for an audience of her own choosing.

Manley Briefly Returns To The Theatre

Almyna: or, The Arabian Vow. Manley's only play between 1696 and 1717, was acted only three times in mid-December 1706. One reason for the swift disappearance of Almyna was that, like Pix and Trotter, Manley was still writing to the taste of Betterton, Barry, and Bracegirdle for the heroic tragedy of the 1670s and 1680s, but the post-1700 London audience was no longer interested. As Hume explains:

Of the 9 heroic plays [staged in London between 1700 and 1710], 8 turn out to be L.I.F.-Haymarket shows: Betterton stubbornly stuck with a genre he believed in, long after Rich had given it up as hopeless.63

Since one of the first objectives in getting a play produced at the New Theatre or Haymarket was to gain the approval of the three top actors in the company, when the Female Wits wrote tragedy they faced an unusual conundrum: to appeal to the taste of the 'Three B's,' they needed to slant their writing towards a genre that had ceased to please audiences. Thus, Pix, Manley, and Trotter wrote to the actors' strengths, and at the same time, helped insure that their tragedies would disappear from the stage when those actors retired.

Despite the suggestion in the preface that as an heroic tragedy Almyna is superior to opera,64 the play is actually an operatic exercise in the portrayal of anguish and heroic exultation. The play contains very little action. Previously betrayed by his wife, Sultan Almanzor has discovered a passage in the 'Alcoran' which claims that women lack souls. Therefore, in revenge for his wrongs and to insure women's fidelity to him, he has taken the brutal vow (à la The Arabian Nights) to wed only virgins for one night and execute them the

63 Hume, Development 474.
next morning. Almanzor's Vizier, who is in charge of the executions, has two daughters, Zoradia and Almyna. Zoradia loves Almanzor's brother Abdalla, but the mere sight of Almyna has caused Abdalla to fall in love with her and forsake Zoradia. To support her sister, Almyna refuses to wed Abdalla even though he has been made heir to the throne. Instead, fired by the heroic possibilities of sacrificing herself to save others, Almyna becomes Almanzor's next bride. The Sultan is smitten by her and persuaded that his vengeance is cruel and unholy. Though he tests Almyna's courage by nearly letting the execution proceed, Almanzor spares her life and, reversing his earlier position, vows that their souls will be eternally joined. Meanwhile, mistakenly believing that Almyna will be executed, Abdalla attacks the palace, is stabbed by the Vizier, and stabs Zoradia by accident. After asking forgiveness of all concerned, Abdalla and Zoradia expire, leaving Almanzor to reflect that their loss is his punishment for taking such rash vows.

With relatively few incidents to detail, Manley is free to use the majority of Almyna for the examination of the emotional dilemmas of the characters. The heart of the play is not Almanzor's renunciation of his dreadful vow. Instead, Manley moves from one emotional high point to the next. Zoradia's torment at being abandoned by Abdalla in favor of her sister is acute. The Vizier's anger over Abdalla's betrayal of Zoradia is complicated by his conflicting loyalties to Almanzor and Almyna when he fears he must kill his daughter to serve his master. Faced with Almyna's unwavering rejection, Abdalla is torn between his guilt over abandoning Zoradia and the hopelessness of his current love. Almanzor's entrenched bitterness over his past mistreatment is transformed into contrition and forgiveness by the power of Almyna's reasoning, strength of will, and beauty. Intoxicated by the notion of forfeiting her life in heroic endeavor, Almyna relishes her decision to marry Almanzor, triumphs in her encounters with him, and steadfastly faces what she believes will be her own
execution. Even the actual wounding of Abdalla and Zoradia is given little emphasis, because what the play dramatizes is how they feel as they expire.65

Though Manley may have sacrificed audience appeal in tailoring her play to the preferences of Betterton and company, she was fortunate in the casting for Almyna. Where Pix's last two plays were probably hurried into obscurity by the transfer of the Drury Lane actors to the Haymarket in the fall of 1706, Manley would benefit from their presence in Almyna. In addition to having Betterton to supervise rehearsals, the three chief male roles, the Sultan, his brother, and the Vizier were played by Betterton, Wilks, and Theophilus Keene, a talented, powerfully built actor newly arrived from Dublin.66 In a cast that had only two women, Barry acted the title character while Bracegirdle played her sister, Zoradia. With such strong players in the principal roles, it is not surprising to find the preface to Almyna speaking hopefully of the possibility of the play's revival.

In fact, the Almyna preface provides a rare glimpse of a playwright struggling to get further performances for a script that seems to have suffered almost as much from bad luck as from the audience's rejection of heroic tragedy. Commenting that she was "at a great distance from the HOUSE at the time of Representation," Manley leaves room for speculation that her experience with The Female Wits left her resolved to stay away from rehearsals for Almyna. After thanking Betterton for supervising rehearsals and Swiney for "venturing upon the good Opinion of the Play, to make so great an Expence" in sets and costumes, Manley chides them for scheduling her premiere near Christmas and opposite Drury Lane's popular opera Camilla. According to Manley, after the original run she had rewritten Almyna without the long ceremony where Abdalla is designated as heir67 and with a happy ending for Abdalla and Zoradia, but Wilks's health and Bracegirdle's retirement had precluded the play's

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65 Manley, Almyna, 1-68.
67 Manley, Almyna, 5-9.
revival. The preface concludes with the information that publication of the play was postponed in hopes of Bracegirdle’s return,

    But the Season being far advanced, ‘tis hoped, that the publishing of it, may be a Means to prepare the Town against next Winter, for a new and kind Reception of it.\textsuperscript{68}

In addition to the interesting information that Manley cut scenes and revised the ending in expectation of further performances, the \textit{Almyna} preface also shows how unfortunate coincidence could sink a play just as readily as poor writing or working in an unpopular genre. According to Manley, the promised revival almost took place in February, but

    \ldots Mrs. Bracegirdle’s quitting the House, three days before it was to have been Played again, with the Alterations annex’d, has hitherto hinder’d us to see what better Fortune it might have had. \ldots \textsuperscript{69}

What occurred in February 1707 is debatable; in some way, however, Owen Swiney’s preference for Oldfield over Bracegirdle precipitated the latter’s retirement in mid-season. One possibility is that Swiney scheduled Oldfield and Bracegirdle in competing performances of the lead role in \textit{The Amorous Widow} that February; when the audience preferred Oldfield, Bracegirdle felt slighted enough to retire. Luckily for Bracegirdle, she had done well financially during her career, and she would receive a £1000 bequest from the Earl of Scarsdale in early 1708. As Bracegirdle returned to the stage for only one benefit performance of \textit{Love for Love} for Betterton in 1709,\textsuperscript{70} Manley’s hopes for a revival of \textit{Almyna} were dashed by events that had little to do with the merits of her script. In \textit{The New Atalantis} (1709), Manley was still angry at a theatre management that

    pays those for speaking who never knew how to speak, even to the imitation of a parrot. If this had not been obvious, they would never have suffered, by their injustice, the admirable Bracillia [Bracegirdle] to leave ‘em who, in

\textsuperscript{68} Manley, “Preface,” \textit{Almyna} n. pag.
\textsuperscript{69} Manley, “Preface,” \textit{Almyna} n. pag.
\textsuperscript{70} Highfill, \textit{BD}, vol. 2, 275-277.
some things, could be only excelled by the incomparable Berenice [Barry], in
most but by her self and, in all, was the usefullst, as well as the most
agreeable, woman of the stage.71

Less credible as an excuse for Almyna's short run was Manley's assertion that, after
the play's initial performances, "Mr. Wilks (the Ornament and Support of the declining
Stage) had a long Indisposition that followed soon after."72 The London Stage reveals that,
Wilks acted in The Recruiting Officer on 19 December, the night after Almyna closed, and
continued to act a full schedule until at least 16 January. Wilks's name is absent from the
available cast lists between 17 January and 29 January when he appeared in The Spanish
Fryar. On 4 February Wilks acted in the premiere of Cibber's Marriage A La Mode, which
suggests that he was probably well enough to rehearse during the last two weeks of January.
After the opening of Cibber's play, Wilks resumed his heavy acting schedule through 18
February, the probable date of Bracegirdle's last appearance, which also happened to be a
benefit performance of The History and Fall of Caius Marius for Wilks himself.73

The evidence is inconclusive: Wilks could have been 'indisposed' for ten days of so in
the latter half of January, but Manley says his illness took place "soon after" the run of
Almyna in mid-December. Also, his appearance in a major role in Marriage A La Mode at the
beginning of February, followed by his benefit two weeks later, suggests that, between the
close of Almyna and Bracegirdle's retirement, Wilks had merely been given an opportunity to
rehearse for the premiere of Cibber's play and his own benefit. Quite possibly, the company
was less enthusiastic for another performance of Almyna than Manley herself. In her preface,
Manley could either be inventing an excuse for the lack of performances before Bracegirdle's
departure or accepting some prevarication on the part of the company to postpone, but not
gratify, her hopes. Whatever the truth about Wilks's "Indisposition," with Bracegirdle

73 Avery, The London Stage, vol. 2, 130-140.
gone, Oldfield would have been reluctant to tackle a role in a marginal play where her rival had so clearly excelled. By the following January, the brief existence of the expanded Haymarket company was over anyway, and Manley, with her theatrical hopes on hold for another ten years, had some good ideas about how to help the Tory party with her writing.

Centlivre’s Career Enters Its Second Decade

As Pix’s health failed and Manley and Trotter left the theatre behind, Centlivre’s playwriting career continued with unabated energy after 1705. Although The Gamester was not followed by an unbroken series of successes, by the time the Triumvirate management of Wilks, Cibber, and Dogget took control of Drury Lane in early November 1710, Centlivre had become one of the few playwrights regularly having their works produced in the theatre. This section of this chapter will chronicle how Centlivre’s career survived the management turmoil between 1705 and 1710. Before she was able to proceed to her success after 1710 with The Wonder and A Bold Stroke for a Wife, Centlivre also had to deal with Cibber’s plagiarism of Love at a Venture, Wilks’s dislike of The Busy Body, and the flap over her own indiscreet comments about the players’ treatment of her during rehearsals for The Man’s betwitch’d.

The Basset-Table

Centlivre shrewdly offered The Basset-Table, her follow-up to The Gamester, to Drury Lane, where Rich, Wilks, and company were probably anxious to cash in on the sequel to the anti-gambling play their rivals had staged with such success the previous season. The play opened on 20 November 1705, but Centlivre’s cleverness did not pay off at the box office. In the atmosphere of renewed competition between the two companies, the Haymarket premiere of Rowe’s “new Cloath’d, and Excellently well perform’d” Ulysses took place on

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74 Milhous and Hume, Vice Chamberlain Coke 147-148.
75 Downes 98-99.
the fourth night of the run of *The Basset-Table*. In the rush to compete with the new hit at the Haymarket, Drury Lane stopped further performances of Centlivre’s play and tried to compete with Cibber’s popular *The Careless Husband*, Wilks as *Hamlet*, and *Arsinoe*, one of Rich’s opera mainstays. By early December, when the Haymarket schedule returned to the repertory with only periodic performances of *Ulysses*, Drury Lane was ready to premiere Cibber’s *Perolla and Izadora*, and *The Basset-Table* was left behind.76

As F. P. Lock points out, *The Basset-Table* is superior to *The Gamester* in a number of ways. Unlike *The Gamester*, where Valere’s high-stakes play is merely his personal vice, the latter play treats gambling as a social ill, detrimental to the society around the participants. Also, in *The Basset-Table* the gaming scenes are not sideshows; instead, they are integral parts of the plot where the outcome of the games affects the relationships among the characters. In *The Gamester*, Valere is caught red-handed and declares his reformation under duress with no guarantees that he will not relapse. In *The Basset-Table*, after a discussion with Lady Lucy, Sir James comes to the mature realization that his gambling is an obstacle to his marriage and reforms accordingly. Shortly thereafter, Lady Reveller’s reclamation comes under pressure from Sir James. Acting in Lord Worthy’s behalf, Sir James brings Reveller to the understanding that her acceptance of monetary favors at a gaming table could cause an unscrupulous man to demand amatory favors in the bedroom as recompense. Aghast at this possibility, Lady Reveller immediately abandons her gambling and her coquettish refusal of Lord Worthy’s offer of marriage.77

Despite these improvements, the Drury Lane audience did not show a sufficient preference for *The Basset-Table* to either sustain its original run or bring about later revivals. The play may have failed because *The Gamester* had already capitalized on the novelty

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value of depicting gambling on-stage. Indeed, playing hardball in the competition, the
Haymarket had already revived Centlivre’s earlier play twice that fall; the second
performance took place the night before The Basset-Table opened. Of course, the premiere of
Rowe’s Ulysses literally drew the audiences away from Drury Lane as well. In the short run,
therefore, The Basset-Table lost much of the career ground that Centlivre had gained with
The Gamester. Not only did Colley Cibber feel free to refuse her next script, Love at a
Venture, he also swiped large portions of Centlivre’s play to make up his own The Double
Gallant (1707). For her part, Centlivre got Love at a Venture accepted by the Duke of
Grafton’s players and appeared in the play herself when it was acted at Bath.

In the long run, The Basset-Table did enhance Centlivre’s career because the play
helped her develop her relationships with important Drury Lane players. The play offered
nicely written roles tailored to the talents of all five Drury Lane women that appeared in the
cast. For Anne Oldfield, who had begun her rise to stardom even before Cibber modeled his
Lady Betty Modish in The Careless Husband (1704) on her clever conversation, Centlivre
wrote the witty Lady Reveller, who enjoys flouting her uncle by hosting raucous card games in
her apartments in his house, trifling with Lord Worthy’s affections, and (after Sir James
confronts her with the consequences of her frivolity) readily accepts the loyal Worthy as her
husband. Anxious to play only virtuous characters after her unhappy affair with Wilks, Jane
Rogers was cast as Lady Lucy, “a Religious sober Lady” who helps Sir James see the error of
his ways. Significantly, though Wilks and Rogers are paired romantically in The Basset-
Table, their scenes together are debates and discussions instead of love encounters.

Among the secondary women's roles, young Susanna Mountfort, the daughter of Susanna and William Mountfort born two years before his murder,\textsuperscript{81} played Valeria, a scientifically minded woman who also finds time to marry a handsome ensign. Back in London after an elopement to France and a stint at Dublin's Smock Alley Theatre,\textsuperscript{82} Letitia Cross played Mrs. Sago, "a Gaming profuse Woman" who wheedles money from her husband with scams and baby talk while pursuing Sir James. When her husband is arrested for her debts, Mrs. Sago is obliged to reform or go to jail. Even Jane Lucas in the usually nondescript serving woman's role is allowed to support her mistress Lady Reveller with some comically irreverent remarks at her uncle's expense.

For Wilks and his favorite second male lead, John Mills, Centlivre wrote yet another variation on the pattern of two lively young men in pursuit of a pair of lively young women. As the high-spirited Sir James, Wilks got to demonstrate his charm and versatility; the character enjoys his gambling, successfully extricates himself from a former mistress, frightens Lady Reveller into the arms of her future husband, and comes to his senses in time to marry Lady Lucy. As the virtuous Lord Worthy, Mills portrayed a well-meaning character who makes a fool of himself for Lady Reveller but earns her love as well. For the other men, Centlivre wrote interesting small roles for tall, lean William Bullock as the gullible father of the intellectual Valeria and uncle to Lady Reveler; versatile young John Bickerstaff as Valeria's suitor, Ensign Lovely; William Pinkethman as Buckle, Worthy's less-than-helpful footman; and Benjamin Johnson as Sago, a foolish "Drugster" whose wife is cuckolding him and wasting his fortune.\textsuperscript{83}

More important for her career, Centlivre wrote the bluff and honest Captain Hearty character for another well-regarded new arrival from Dublin, Richard Estcourt. Popular with the gentry because of his talents for mimicry and skills as a pub raconteur, Estcourt also

\textsuperscript{81} Highfill, BD, vol. 10, 352-354.
\textsuperscript{82} Highfill, BD, vol. 4, 63-64.
\textsuperscript{83} Centlivre, The Basset-Table 1-64.
enjoyed a considerable vogue as an actor in roles like Sergeant Kite in *The Recruiting Officer* and Trinculo in *The Tempest*. When the acting company returned to Christopher Rich’s control for the last time during 1708-1709, Estcourt was made deputy manager along with Cibber and Wilks. Prior to becoming co-manager at Drury Lane, however, Estcourt spent the 1706-1707 season strolling with the same Duke of Grafton’s players who acted Centlivre’s *Love at a Venture*. Most likely, Estcourt acted with Centlivre that season and may even have taken a role in her play. As Estcourt was on friendly terms with the Duke of Marlborough, Addison, and Steele, Centlivre may have counted herself lucky to have close ties with an influential Drury Lane insider. Unfortunately Estcourt’s health failed early. His gout obliged him to purchase a tavern and retire from the stage in 1712, but he died before he could employ his storytelling skills in his own establishment.\(^4\) Though Estcourt disagreed with Centlivre over the acting version of *The Man’s bewitch’d* (1709), during the difficult years between 1707 and 1710, he may have been an important advocate in Centlivre’s favor.

**Love At A Venture**

When Centlivre offered *Love at a Venture*, her adaptation of Corneille’s *Le Galant double*, to Colley Cibber at Drury Lane sometime early in 1706, the actor reportedly rejected the play with the comment that “it is silly, and it is not ridiculous.”\(^5\) As a result, Centlivre was forced to offer her play as well as her acting services to the Duke of Grafton’s players. A year later, however, Cibber combined portions of Centlivre’s play with segments of William Burnaby’s *The Ladies Visiting-Day* and *The Reform’d Wife* to make up *The Double Gallant* which premiered at the Haymarket on 1 November 1707.\(^6\) The appearance of Cibber’s pastiche may have come as a shock to Centlivre, but at Drury Lane, Rich was sufficiently informed of his former lieutenant’s behavior to stage Burnaby’s *The Reform’d Wife* the night

\(^{4}\) Highfill, *BD*, vol. 5, 99-100.

\(^{5}\) Lock 55, 57.

\(^{6}\) Hume, *Development* 472.
before Cibber’s play opened. Unfortunately for Cibber’s credibility, Centlivre’s play was published in 1706; so anyone who wanted to compare Love at a Venture with The Double Gallant had only to acquire copies of the two plays.

Cibber later maintained that, although he had “often been treated as a Plagiary,” he was merely recycling plays that had been “laid aside, as so much Poetical Lumber.” In his Apology, Cibber even made the claim that “I did not publish it in my own Name,” but the published version announces The Double Gallant as “Written by Mr. Cibber.” In fact, Cibber’s actions justified the criticism of his management practices in Visits from the Shades, an anonymous satire of 1704 that lamented Cibber’s responsibility for the Drury Lane repertory:

> the poets must need have a fine time on’t, to be governed by such a quack of Parnassus, a stage tartar, that graze for your dialogues from the poets of the last age... In short, your plays and your judgment are monstrous and defective.

Though The Double Gallant later became a popular repertory piece, perhaps due to the blatant nature of Cibber’s plagiarism, the play’s initial run lasted only four days.

When George Powell pilfered sections of Pix’s The Deceiver Deceived for his Imposture Defeated in 1697, Pix called Powell her “enemy” in the preface to her script, and, together with Congreve and Trotter, tried to disrupt the opening of Powell’s play. Confronted with a similar situation ten years later, Centlivre was faced with the harsh reality that at that point only the Haymarket Theatre was staging plays in London. Since she had no second company where she could transfer her allegiance, Centlivre refrained, at least in public, from confronting Cibber with his theft. As a result, Cibber apparently felt obliged to Centlivre, at least to the degree that he contributed an epilogue to The Man’s Bewitch’d (1709) and Drury Lane continued to accept her plays for production with Cibber as co-manager.

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87 Avery, The London Stage, vol. 2, 156.
88 Cibber, Apology 183, 346.
In addition to working with Estcourt and whatever benefit she eventually derived from Cibber's mistreatment, Centlivre's season with the Duke of Grafton's players provided other unforeseen consequences. After the presentation of *Love at a Venture* at Bath where Centlivre's comedy made its only appearance, the company moved on to Windsor. Centlivre (Mrs. Carroll as she was then known) played the role of Alexander the Great in Lee's *The Rival Queens* in britches to the approval of at least Joseph Centlivre among the crowd. A courtship followed this interesting introduction, and the couple married in April 1707; the personal and financial security of their union allowed Centlivre to take a respite from writing a play a year in order to make a living. Two years would pass between Centlivre's marriage and the appearance of *The Busy Body* in May 1709.91

*The Platonick Lady*

After Cibber's refusal of *Love at a Venture* and Centlivre's meeting with her future husband, but prior to the appearance of *The Double Gallant* (1707) and her subsequent marriage, Centlivre's *The Platonick Lady* was acted at the Haymarket for only four performances between 25 and 28 November 1706.92 Despite this setback, Centlivre's career appears to have been approaching a positive turning point as the first decade of the eighteenth century came to a close. With a growing number of successes to her credit and close ties with the Drury Lane hierarchy, even if Cibber was bound to her by obligation rather than affection, Centlivre seemed destined to have playwriting success as long as her creativity sustained her. While her coming good fortune may seem obvious in retrospect, when the quick failure of *The Platonick Lady* followed the disappointing reception for *The Basset-Table* and the rejection of *Love at a Venture* Centlivre felt inclined to lash out at those who dismissed women's plays because of the sex of the author.

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91 Bowyer 92-94.
92 Avery, *The London Stage* 132-133.
In her preface to the "generous Encouragers of Female Ingenuity," Centlivre provides a defense of women's writing in general:

And why this Wrath against the Womens works? Perhaps you'll answer, because they meddle with things out of their Sphere: But I say, no; for since the Poet is born, why not a Woman as well as a Man? ... Some have arm'd themselves with resolution not to like the Play they paid to see; and if in spite of Spleen they have been pleas'd against their Will, have maliciously reported it was none of mine, but given me by some Gentleman: Nay, even my own Sex, which shou'd assert our Prerogative against such Detractors, are often backward to encourage a Female Pen.

Wou'd these profest Enemies but consider what Examples we have had of Women that excell'd in all arts; in Musick, Painting, Poetry; also in War: Nay, to our immortal Praise, what Empresses and Queens have fill'd the World? What cannot England boast from Women? The mighty Romans felt the Power of Boadicca's Arm; Eliza made Spain tremble; but ANN, the greatest of the Three, has shook the Man that aim'd at Universal Sway.93

In the quoted passage, Centlivre rejects the argument that women belong in some silent "Sphere" which precludes artistic expression. She also points out the fallacious nature of the belief that, if a woman's name was attached to a successful work, a man must certainly have written the play for her. She notes how these arguments have perniciously led to the failure of many women to support women's writing, and she concludes strongly by pointing to a history of women's excellence in the arts and in government where Queen Anne had gained ascendancy over Louis XIV.

Having eloquently summarized the obstacles to women's writing that she would eventually overcome in large measure in her own career, Centlivre does not delve further into the more mundane reasons for the failure of The Platonick Lady. In addition to suffering from the "Carping Malice of the Vulgar World; who think it a proof of their Sense, to dislike every thing that is writ by Women,"94 Centlivre's comedy was also handicapped by the circumstances of its presentation. As the first new play presented at the Haymarket in the fall of 1706 by Swiney's combined company of actors drawn from Lincoln's Inn Fields and Drury

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94 Centlivre, "Preface," The Platonick Lady n. pag.
Lane, *The Platonick Lady* seems to have been designed to provide comic turns for as many members of the expanded company as possible.

To that end, in *The Platonick Lady* Centlivre constructed an improbable and complicated set of intrigues that culminate in the marriages of Captain James Beamont/Wilks with Isabella/Oldfield, Sir Charles/Booth with Lucinda/Bracegirdle, andSharper/Cibber with Widow Dowdy/Elizabeth Willis. Captain Beamont, who believes his name is Belvil until the last scene of the play, has an impertinent servant named Robin/Pack, while Sharper is bedeviled by his servant, Equipage/Norris, who is intent on getting the eight years of back pay his master owes him. Each of the three women also has a servant: Toylet/Margaret Bicknell helps Isabella with her various impostures; Betty/Elizabeth Mills listens quietly to Lucinda's woes; and Peeper/Elinor Leigh tries to make some money by helping Widow Dowdy to a husband. In charge of Dowdy's conversion from country widow to city lady via a group of "Manto-Women, Milliners, Match-makers, Tire-Women, Singing-Masters, and Dancing-Masters,"95 was Mrs. Brazen/William Bullock. Complimented by Steele for having "a peculiar talent of looking like a fool" on-stage, Bullock occasionally played comic old women in addition to his farcical gallery of bumpkins and coarse fathers.96 Finally, as Sir Thomas Beamont, uncle to Lucinda and Belvil, Betterton had the complicated responsibility of tying all the plot strands together with a long speech in the last scene.

What Sir Thomas reveals is that Belvil and Lucinda are actually a brother and sister who, upon the death of their father, Sir Thomas's brother, were given to different guardians as children. Following this separation, the Widow Dowdy's first husband managed to steal Belvil's estate and bribe lawyers and judges to prevent Sir Thomas from retrieving the money. After meeting his nephew by chance and making Belvil swear not to wed Lucinda without his consent, Sir Thomas asks Belvil to woo Widow Dowdy in order to procure the "writings" of his estate. When Belvil acquires the legal documents, Sir Thomas is able to recover his nephew's

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95 Centlivre, "Dramatis Personae," *The Platonick Lady* n. pag.
fortunes and reveal that Belvil is really James Beamont. Despite her briefly articulated
interest in a platonic relationship with Belvil, Lucinda and Belvil seriously consider
marriage as the play progresses. As a result, when Sir Thomas reveals them to be brother and
sister, their four act courtship is found to contain an unsavory hint of incest.

After Equipage contrives to have Sharper beaten for withholding wages, Sharper
enlists the disreputable services of Mrs. Brazen to help him to the Widow Dowdy’s fortune.
Although she has an unfortunate tendency to lick off the newly applied lipstick from her
fashion makeover, Dowdy, with the connivance of Brazen and Peeper, succumbs to Sharper’s
questionable charms. Belvil nearly ruins the scheme when, drunk because of his frustrations
over Lucinda and Isabella, he crassly informs Dowdy that Sharper is a liar and a coward.
Luckily for Sharper, Dowdy is full of sympathy for her abused beau and the marriage
proceeds. Of course, when Sir Thomas reveals how Dowdy came by her fortune, most of the
money reverts to Belvil/James Beamont. Dowdy and Sharper are stuck with each other,
while Brazen and Peeper earn only ridicule for their pimping efforts.

While all these events occur, Isabella embarks on her own complicated intrigues.
Separated by ill-fortune from Belvil in France five years earlier where the two had fallen in
love, Isabella finds herself betrothed to Sir Charles against her will. She sets out to break
the match with Sir Charles, who loves Lucinda anyway, and to determine whether the
unsuspecting Belvil still loves her or has given his allegiance to Lucinda. To pursue this
double purpose, she disguises herself as a wife pursued by an angry husband, as a country
servant newly come to London, and as Belvil’s French wife who claims to be the mother of
their child. When, at his wit’s end, Belvil decides to credit her last imposture and demand
his conjugal rights, Isabella is rescued by the arrival of Sir Charles and Sir Thomas. When
Belvil, alias James Beamont, discovers her true identity, he happily offers to marry Isabella.
After this match is made, Sir Charles is accepted by Lucinda, though she previously refused his advances and even called him dishonorable for betraying Belvil.  

In addition to the likelihood that this sprawling comedy suffered because it was written to gratify the enlarged Haymarket company, the obscurity of the intrigues, the complicated solution in the last scene, and the near-incest between Lucinda and Belvil must have contributed to Swiney's decision to terminate the play's run. Another factor in the demise of The Platonick Lady was the ready availability of so many plays from the classic repertory that could be revitalized with new casting. With Centlivre's play flagging at the box office, Swiney could easily turn to The Unhappy Favorite, featuring Wilks, Barry, and Bracegirdle, to be followed shortly by Volpone, 1 Henry IV, and Etherege's She Wou'd if She Cou'd.

The Platonick Lady may well have suffered from the enmity which developed between Oldfield and Bracegirdle, who did have a scene where they acted together in the play. The only other Queen's Theatre cast that season which lists the two together was Cibber's Marriage A La Mode in early February. Though Bracegirdle's departure may well have been precipitated by The Amorous Widow competition or by the scheduling of Oldfield's benefit on 25 February 1707 ahead of Bracegirdle's, it is reasonable to assume that the two rivals could not work together amicably only four months prior to Bracegirdle's sudden retirement. In any case, whether the feud between the two actresses adversely affected The Platonick Lady or not, Centlivre's third consecutive failure brought her career to a low ebb. In fact, the anger in Centlivre's preface to The Platonick Lady resembles the renunciatory tone of Trotter's preface to The Revolution of Sweden; but, where Trotter chose to retire from the theatre with her marriage, Centlivre's marriage helped her find the extra

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97 Centlivre, The Platonick Lady 1-72.
100 Avery, The London Stage, vol. 2, 139, 141.
time and perspective to rebound from three consecutive disappointments with her first hit play in five years.

The Busy Body

As the premiere of The Busy Body approached in the spring of 1709, Centlivre may have been convinced that her luck had not changed at all. Despite two encouraging revivals of The Gamester in March as benefits for Powell and Pack, the situation at Drury Lane, as the actors maneuvered to be rid of Christopher Rich, must have been extremely tense. As noted in the opening section of this chapter, in late March 1709, some of the actors began negotiating to defect to the Haymarket for the following season; at the end of April, Rich refused to stop withholding extra money from the performers' benefits; and on 6 June 1709, the Lord Chamberlain permanently barred Rich from the exercise of his Patents. As May progressed and Rich continued to tax the actors' benefits while the Lord Chamberlain waited to spring his trap, The Busy Body, which opened on 12 May 1709, was the last new play performed at Drury Lane that season.

Though Wilks was notorious for his strident temper, the additional tensions at Drury Lane that spring partially explain his outburst during rehearsals for The Busy Body when "in great dudgeon [he] flung his part into the pit for damned stuff, before the lady's face that wrote it." Centlivre evidently had trouble getting the company even to accept the play for production, and, after Wilks's outburst, was forced to tearfully beg him to continue with rehearsals. In confirmation of her worst fears of bad advance publicity voiced in her dedication to The Platonick Lady, word got around that her play "was a silly thing wrote by

101 Avery, The London Stage, vol. 2, 188.
a Woman" of which the actors "had no Opinion. . . ." In spite of the late spring opening, the players' dislike of the script, and the intrigues of the company against Rich, however, Centlivre was about to enjoy an unexpected theatrical triumph:

On the first Day there was a very poor House, scarce Charges. Under these Circumstances, it cannot be supposed the Play appeared to much Advantage, the Audience only came there for want of another Place to go to, but without any Expectation of being much diverted; they were yawning at the Beginning of it, but were agreeably surprized, more and more every Act, till at last the House rung with as much Applause as was possible to be given by so thin an Audience.

After overcoming such a doubtful start in storybook fashion, The Busy Body became one of the most popular entries in the repertory, performed "250 times before 1750 and over 200 additional times before 1800."

A number of commentators have already commended the play's excellence. Lock notes that The Busy Body is "a triumph of construction, timing, and the disposition of comic business." Hume observes: "What really occupies and entertains the audience is not intrigue per se, but a veritable catalogue of comic devices and formulas." He later adds that "The mainstream of Augustan comedy is well represented by Mrs. Centlivre's The Busy Body. . . ."

In her ninth play, Centlivre mastered a number of techniques she had used earlier with varying degrees of success. In The Busy Body, the high-spirited love intrigues that proved unwieldy in plays like The Beau's Duel and The Platonick Lady are managed expertly. The typical plot concerning two young men who outwit blocking characters to win their ladies is handled with considerable variety as well as admirable economy; where Isabella tries three different impostures mostly to show off Oldfield's versatility as an actress in The Platonick

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105 Bowyer 96.
107 Bowyer 103-104.
108 Lock 57.
109 Hume, Development 118, 485.
Lady, Charles/John Mills dons only one disguise in The Busy Body because the character's needs requires him to do so.\textsuperscript{110}

Although the two intrigues stand rather well on their own, Centlivre's insertion of the Marplot character into both plot lines is what makes The Busy Body extraordinary. An insatiably curious fellow who tries to learn the secrets of Charles and Sir George's intrigues, Marplot is a goodhearted character who does everything wrong, gets pummeled for his meddling, is forgiven for his mistakes, and is even helped to his fortune. Anxious not to miss anything, he races through the play complicating the lovers' stratagems with his naive attempts to help. A good example of Marplot's antics and Centlivre's comic plotting is the 'Monkey Scene' where Miranda has made an assignation with Sir George by telling Marplot in front of her odious guardian, Sir Francis Gripe, that if anyone comes to the garden gate at 8:00 P.M., she will shoot them. Rightly assuming that Miranda wants him to call, Sir George arrives at the appointed hour. Afraid that Miranda will actually shoot someone, Marplot rushes to inform Sir Francis, and the two men surprise the lovers. Miranda stashes Sir George behind the chimney board and manages to deflect Sir Francis from the hiding place with the desperate lie that she has a new pet monkey in the compartment. Beside himself with a desire to see one of "the little Miniatures of Man," Marplot insists upon viewing the monkey. Hoping to solve the crisis, Miranda cleverly enlists Sir Francis to physically force Marplot away from the chimney. Accompanied by a watchful Miranda, Sir Francis finally goes out to his coach. Unable to restrain himself, however, Marplot opens the cupboard and screams at the sight of Sir George. Having made a hash of things, Marplot persuades Sir George to break some china and flee; when the others return, he apologetically admits that he peeped at the monkey who broke the dishes and escaped. Thus, Marplot both ruins Sir George's tryst and rescues him from his mistress's guardian.\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{111} Centlivre, \textit{The Busy Body} 52-56.
In addition to George Pack in the role of his career as Marplot, the cast also featured Wilks and Mills as Sir George and Charles, with Estcourt as the cloying Sir Francis and William Bullock as Sir Jealous Traffick, who is obsessed with marrying his daughter Isabinda to a Spaniard. The resolute and upright Isabinda provided another good virtuous role for Jane Rogers, while Letitia Cross acted the resourceful Miranda who wins Sir George and outwits Sir Francis.\textsuperscript{112} Despite the adverse circumstances of the play's premiere, \textit{The Busy Body} ended the 1708-1709 season with considerable momentum; in fact, the seventh performance of Centlivre's play on Saturday 4 June was the last at Drury Lane before Rich's 'silencing.'\textsuperscript{113}

After the season of 1709-1710 got underway with most of the original cast of \textit{The Busy Body} performing under Swiney at the Haymarket, William Collier snapped up the lease to Drury Lane in late November and hired whatever actors had been left unemployed by Rich's departure. As a result, in October and November 1709, there were five revivals of \textit{The Busy Body} by Swiney's company where the only changes from the original cast were Dogget as Marplot and Mary Porter as Isabinda. At Drury Lane, however, with the exception of Pack as Marplot the play was staged with an entirely different cast on 26 November; notably, Powell played Sir George, Booth acted the role of Charles, and Henry Norris appeared as Sir Francis.\textsuperscript{114} Consequently, as the London theatre underwent its last transformations before the relatively stable Triumvirate management began in 1710-1711, Centlivre's best play to that point was appearing at both theatres. William Pinkethman even staged a revival of \textit{The Busy Body} during his second summer season at Greenwich with yet a third cast.\textsuperscript{115} After \textit{The Busy Body} surmounted the initial dismal expectations for its run, the play's phenomenal success facilitated the continuation of Centlivre's playwriting career beyond 1710.

\textsuperscript{112} Centlivre, "Dramatis Personae," \textit{The Busy Body} n. pag.
\textsuperscript{113} Avery, \textit{The London Stage}, vol. 2, 192-194.
\textsuperscript{114} Avery, \textit{The London Stage}, vol. 2, 200-203.
\textsuperscript{115} Avery, \textit{The London Stage}, vol. 2, 229.
The Man's Bewitch'd

When The Man's bewitch'd; or, The Devil to do about Her opened on 12 December 1709, with recent revivals of The Busy Body already in both theatres, Centlivre's career seemed to be in high gear. Though the sprawling construction of The Man's bewitch'd bears more resemblance to The Platonick Lady than to The Busy Body, Centlivre notes in her preface that

This Play met with a kind Reception in general, and notwithstanding the Disadvantages it had to struggle with, by raising the Prices the first Day, and the Nearness of Christmas, it would have made its way to a sixth night. ...¹¹⁶

A brief summary will show that The Man's bewitch'd, despite its lack of graceful plotting, still held comic possibilities for the Queen's Theatre company.

The play concerns Captain Constant and his two friends, Faithful and Lovely, who go to the country town residence of Belinda, Laura, and Maria, the three women they wish to marry. While Lovely must merely persuade Maria to accept his sincere love, Constant has decided to counterfeit the death of his father Sir Jeffry in order to collect a large sum of money from Trusty, steward of Sir Jeffry's estates; for Trusty also happens to be Belinda's father. To that end, Constant arrives in Peterborough dressed in mourning and proceeds to bamboozle the cash and Belinda away from Trusty. With the help of his servant Manage, Faithful employs a barrage of stratagems to pry Laura away from her jealous and amorous guardian, Sir David Watchum. Finally, Laura counterfeits madness; Manage performs an exorcism upon her which transfers her 'madness' to Faithful who terrifies Sir David into hiding and hurries away with Laura to the parson. Just as everything appears to work out, an uproar occurs when Sir Jeffry arrives unexpectedly: Trusty fears that Sir Jeffry is a ghost; Constant fears Sir Jeffry will discover his plot; Constant's servant and Belinda's maid try to convince Sir Jeffry that he is an apparition; and Roger the drunken farmer, one of Trusty's tenants, acts as go-between for

all concerned. After the misunderstandings are cleared up, all three marriages are agreed upon, though Sir David departs in anger wishing “Arrests and Poverty on you all.”

In addition to another pairing of Wilks and Mills as the two young sparks Faithful and Constant, opposite Oldfield/Belinda and Cross/Laura, The Man's bewitch'd featured Benjamin Husband/Lovely and Mary Porter/Maria as the third pair of suitors. As Letitia Cross was not the company’s top comedienne, Centlivre delayed her appearance until the second half of Act Three and took advantage of her fine singing voice with a song “at her Spinet” at her first entrance and another song as her means to counterfeit madness later on. Another strong singer, Thomas Dogget, cast as Squire Num, a rustic character with pretensions to Belinda, was also given a song in praise of country girls to conclude the play. In addition to employing Estcourt/Trusty, Bomman/Sir Jeffry, and Benjamin Johnson/Sir David as the irascible steward, father, and guardian, Centlivre also included low comedy turns for Dogget/Num, Cibber/Manage, William Bullock/Roger, and Pinkethman, as Clinch, Constant’s wisecracking servant. Assisting their mistresses in securing husbands were Anne Oldfield’s close friend, Margaret Saunders, as Belinda’s maid, and the sprightly and well-regarded dancer and actress, Margaret Bicknell, as Laura’s maid Lucy.

Whether so many strong performers working sometimes at tangents from the poorly connected ‘Constant’ and ‘Faithful’ plots could have turned the play into a repertory favorite remains a moot point, because unforeseen circumstances brought an abrupt end to the run of The Man's bewitch'd. Though the actors had succeeded in freeing themselves from Christopher Rich the previous spring, the sudden resurgence of Drury Lane under William Collier and the uneasy compromise whereby the Haymarket actors gave up two playing nights to the opera performers each week kept both actors and singers on edge. The disquiet at the Haymarket

117 Centlivre, The Man's bewitch'd 1-68.
118 Centlivre, The Man's bewitch'd 36, 48-49, 68.
120 Milhous and Hume, Vice Chamberlain Coke 123-125.
coincided with the larger stir created by the 20 October 1709 publication of Delarivier Manley's *The New Atlantis*, an event alluded to by the prologue to *The Man's bewitch'd*:

> Why shou'd tender Delia tax the Nation?  
> Stickle, and make a Noise for Reformation,  
> Who always gave a Loose, her self, to Inclination.121

The actors' short tempers and Manley's attack on the Tories would be unrelated, except that on the second day of the run of *The Man's bewitch'd*, the *Female Tatler*, a journal associated with Manley, published insulting remarks about the actors that were attributed to Centlivre. Only one day after *The Female Tatler* appeared, *The Man's bewitch'd* closed following its third performance.

The offending passage in *The Female Tatler* was:

> The Society had the curiosity of knowing the nature of introducing a play into the house. Mrs. Centlivre told them that 'twas much easier to write a play than to get it represented, that their factions and divisions were so great they seldom continued in the same mind two hours together. They treated her (though a woman) in the masculine gender, and, as they do all authors, with wrangling and confusion, which has made most gentlemen that have a genius to scribbling employ their pens another way, that to show their judgment in plays they had actually cut out the scene in the fifth act, between the countryman and the ghost which the audience received with that wonderful applause, and it was with very great struggling the author prevailed to have it in again. One made faces at his part, another was witty upon hers. But as the whole was very well performed at last, she has condescension to pass over the affronts of a set of people who have it not in their natures to be grateful to their supporters.122

Believing that the information about the near-excision of the ghost scene from Act Five could only have come from Centlivre, the actors apparently allowed her to have her benefit the next night, then terminated the run of her play. For her part, Centlivre refused to believe that the play closed because of poor ticket sales. She pointed out that, although the run of her play was interrupted on the night after the premiere by a performance of the opera *Camilla*,

> yet it brought above Forty Pounds the second Night, which shew'd it had some Merit; for I have known many a Play kept up that fail'd of half that

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122 Morgan, *The Female Tatler* 140-141.
Money the second Night. Now by the Rules of the House, it ought to have been play’d on.

In her version of events, Centlivre tries to thank the players for their work, but her bitterness at the closing of the play is obvious:

Had I search’d all the Theatres in the World, I cou’d not have selected a better Company, nor had more Justice done me in the Action, tho’ they have not dealt honourably by me in my Bargain; for they ought not to have stop’d the Run, upon any Pique whatever. ’Tis small Encouragement to Write for the Stage, when the actors, according to the Caprice of their Humours, maugre the Taste of the Town, have power to sink the Reputation of a Play; for if they resolve not to Act it, the Town can’t support it.

Centlivre also tried to defend herself against the charge that she wrote the article herself:

I think no reasonable Person will believe I could be guilty of so much Folly. Tho’ Vanity is said to be the darling Vice of Woman-kind, yet nothing but an Idiot wou’d express themselves so openly; and I hope the world won’t think me guilty of Printing, what I must blush to Read, nor imagine it Wrote even by any Friend of mine, for two Reasons: First, the Grossness of the Flattery. Secondly, the Injury it must of course do me, in the Run of my Play, by putting those People out of Humour, whose Action was to give Life to the Piece.¹²³

The gross flattery to which Centlivre refers occurs earlier in The Female Tatler piece where the gathering who heard Centlivre’s remarks is said to have rejoiced to see the inimitable Mrs. Behn so nearly revived in Mrs. Centlivre. Some there, who are esteemed no ill judges, were pleased to say that they thought it a genteel, easy and diverting comedy. That it had a better plot and as many turns in it as her celebrated Busy-Body, and though the two first acts were not so roared at as the rest, yet they were well-wrought scenes, and tending to business.¹²⁴

Centlivre also defends herself by describing the manner in which she believes The Female Tatler acquired its inside information about the nature of rehearsals for The Man’s bewitch’d:

I willingly submitted to Mr. Cibber’s Superiour Judgment in shortning the Scene of the Ghost in the last Act, and believed him perfectly in the Right, because too much Repetition is tiresome. Indeed when Mr. Estcourt slic’d most of it out, I cou’d not help interposing my Desires to the contrary, which the rest readily comply’d with; and I had the Satisfaction to see I was not deceiv’d in my Opinion, of its pleasing. This Passage I happen’d to mention among my Acquaintance; for ‘tis Natural to have a kind of a Tender for our

¹²³ Centlivre, “Preface,” The Man’s bewitch’d n. pag.
¹²⁴ Morgan, The Female Tatler 140.
own Productions, but especially if they have the good Fortune to divert
others. Now, if from this the Author of the Tattler gather'd his Account, I am
guilty of speaking, but not designedly; for who they are that Write that
Paper, or how Distinguish'd, I am perfectly ignorant, and declare I never was
concern'd, either in Writing, or Publishing, any of the Tattlers.125

According to Centlivre, then, her privately expressed remarks on the give-and-take between
author and performers were maliciously altered by The Female Tatler to damage her by
making her seem to overpraise herself and simultaneously denigrate the performers.

One interpretation of the series of events that led to the termination of The Man's
bewitch'd is that when Manley became aware of the “tender Delia” reference in the play's
prologue she retaliated quickly in The Female Tatler, and the actors, feeling themselves
betrayed and ridiculed, shut down the play in anger. As a Whig and a friend of Manley's
enemies Anne Oldfield and Richard Steele, Centlivre would have been a natural target for
Manley. Manley could have quite possibly overheard Centlivre, or someone close to her,
relate the story about the script squabbles during rehearsals for The Man's bewitch'd. Manley
could also have discovered before the play opened that she was to be mocked in the prologue.
Certainly the excerpts from The New Atalantis and The Female Tatler quoted previously
demonstrate that Manley had an insider's knowledge of theatre personnel as well as contempt
for Cibber, Wilks, Estcourt, and Oldfield.

Considerable ink has been spilled, however, upon inconclusive attempts to prove who
actually wrote The Female Tatler. Arguments for Manley, Centlivre, and others have been
advanced. Bowyer points out that Manley's arrest for The New Atalantis was on 29 October
and that she probably resigned her editorship of The Female Tatler on 2 November. Manley
was "admitted to bail on November 5," however, which means she could have been free to
write the damaging issue of 12-14 December 1709 before the charges against her were dropped
on 13 February 1710.126 On the other hand, Paul Bunyan Anderson argues that Centlivre had

125 Centlivre, “Preface,” The Man's bewitch'd n. pag.
126 Bowyer 124.
her personal irritation to overflow in *The Female Tatler*. She desired to deny all connection with the periodical and was ready to entertain and advance any plausible explanation other than the most direct and damaging one—that she herself was the author of the offensive article.127

To refute Anderson, F. P. Lock notes that *The Female Tatler*'s praise of Saunders's "natural trembling and faltering in her speech when she apprehended Sir Jeffrey to be a ghost" singles out a passage of doggerel stuttering for excellence. Lock also points out that "The conspicuous inferiority of *The Man's Bewitched* to *The Busy Body* is easy to see." Therefore, according to Lock, in praising the plot of *The Man's bewitch'd* over *The Busy Body*, *The Female Tatler* is again "being witty at the author's expense," a fact that, in Lock's opinion, proves Centlivre did not write the piece.

Since irrefutable proof of who wrote the offending article is unlikely to appear, the crucial fact is what Centlivre herself admits: that she mentioned some rehearsal difficulties over cuts in *The Man's bewitch'd* and her comments (embellished or not) found their way into print in a form that angered the actors enough to halt the production. Though the tone of her remarks is generally conciliatory towards the Haymarket company, Centlivre's preface appears to have compounded matters by taking an ill-advised swipe at Cibber with the remark that "tho' at present it seems a certain Author has enter'd a Caveat against all Plays running to a sixth Night, but his own."130 In its way, *The Female Tatler* incident was nearly as great a trial for Centlivre as the production of *The Female Wits* had been for Pix, Manley, and Trotter thirteen years earlier. Particularly since the future Triumvirs, Cibber, Wilks, and Dogget, were all in the cast for *The Man's bewitch'd*, Centlivre faced the possibility of having alienated all three managers at the only play-producing theatre in London.

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127 Paul Bunyan Anderson, "Innocence and Artifice; or, Mrs. Centlivre and *The Female Tatler*," *Philological Quarterly* 16 (1937): 360.
128 Morgan, *The Female Tatler* 140.
129 Lock 79.
130 Centlivre, "Preface," *The Man's bewitch'd* n. pag.
Significantly, after reviving *The Busy Body* five times in the first three months of the season prior to the premiere of *The Man's bewitch'd*, the Haymarket dropped the show from its repertory. Centlivre's luck returned, however, as Collier and Aaron Hill's shaky company at Drury Lane survived just long enough to keep Centlivre's work in the theatres and allow tempers to cool on both sides. With George Pack as Marplot, Hill revived *The Busy Body* on 26 December 1709 and 27 January 1710. Centlivre then presented Drury Lane with her one-act farce, *A Bickerstaff's Burial; or, Work for the Upholders*, which was acted three times in March 1710; the third performance was a double-bill with *The Gamester* for Centlivre's benefit. A satirical portrait of a group of mariners who help an Englishwoman and her niece escape from a barbarous country where, after one spouse dies, the remaining partner is interred alive, *A Bickerstaff's Burial* was revived again on 5 May along with two other one acts "For the Entertainment of several Foreigners." In addition to helping Centlivre earn some money after her tiff with the Haymarket company, the composition of a one-act shows her experimenting with the writers' contribution to the multiple bills of variety acts, pantomimes, plays, and afterpieces that would become increasingly popular after 1710.

Finally, on 22 April 1710, the Haymarket offered a performance of *The Busy Body* as Letitia Cross's benefit. Drury Lane gave one more performance of *The Busy Body* and another revival of *The Gamester* before the Collier-Hill company self-destructed that June. In July and August, Pinkethman offered both plays again in Greenwich. Consequently, as Cibber, Wilks, and Dogget negotiated their agreement with Swiney, Collier, Vanbrugh, and the Lord

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Chamberlain to move plays to Drury Lane and leave opera at the Haymarket,\textsuperscript{135} Centlivre could play her trump card for gaining the favor of the newly installed Triumvirate, Marplot; or, The Second Part of The Busie-Body.

Considering the earlier play's phenomenal success, the Triumvirs probably never hesitated when Centlivre offered them the sequel. Besides, though he had written an epilogue for The Man's bewitch'd, Cibber was still indebted to Centlivre for plagiarizing her earlier work. Wilks probably also remembered that he had seriously misjudged The Busy Body and had misbehaved during rehearsals for that play. In short, Centlivre had long-standing ties with the Drury Lane personnel from the top echelon to the more secondary players like George Pack. Under the Triumvirate, the production of new plays would significantly decline, but Centlivre had written enough profitable plays and built enough substantial relationships within the company for her work to continue to reach the stage while other new plays were discouraged. Though Marplot, after a respectable six-night run from 30 December 1710 to 6 January 1711,\textsuperscript{136} did not enter the repertory, Centlivre, alone among the four women playwrights who attempted to write professionally at the turn of the eighteenth century, had successfully weathered the return to the one-theatre status quo.

Summary

The years between 1705 and 1710 were decisive for both the London theatre and the playwriting careers of Pix, Manley, Trotter, and Centlivre. In that short time span, the collective experiment at Lincoln's Inn Fields ended with the retirements of the major English players from the last quarter of the seventeenth century and with the construction of the Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket. All-sung Italian opera was introduced to London and eventually established separately from spoken theatre. After fifteen years of unscrupulous management at Drury Lane, Christopher Rich's chronic mistreatment of his employees

\textsuperscript{135} Milhous and Hume, \textit{Vice Chamberlain Coke} 147-148.
\textsuperscript{136} Avery, \textit{The London Stage}, vol. 2, 239.
finally provoked the Lord Chamberlain to revoke his Patent rights to the performance of plays in London. In 1710, with Cibber, Wilks, and Dogget as managers, the actors were finally given the opportunity to order affairs at Drury Lane, while the opera was moved to the Haymarket. Though the arrangement was imperfect and John Rich re-opened Lincoln's Inn Fields and theatrical competition in 1714, a conservative repertory policy which emphasized variety entertainments and acting virtuosity over new plays prevailed in London until the premiere of *The Beggar's Opera* in 1728.¹³⁷

While the London theatre was undergoing the transition from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, the careers of Pix, Trotter, and Manley came to a close. Though her last two plays resembled her first two offerings in style and quality, if not in audience appeal, Pix's health failed and she died in 1709. Unable to find an audience for her didactic brand of theatre and frustrated in her attempts to perfect her playwriting techniques, Trotter retired from the theatre after *The Revolution of Sweden* (1706) to a religious family life; though she wrote considerably over the next forty years her efforts were concentrated on correspondence, philosophy, and religious matters. When Manley's return to the theatre after a decade's absence ended with an unsuccessful attempt to have a revised version of her *Almyra* (1706) revived, she dedicated the next eight years of her professional life to the Tory cause. Yet she was still writing plays in 1717, the year her *Lucius, The First Christian King of Britain* appeared at Steele's Drury Lane. Since Manley possessed both tremendous energy and unique insight, the theatre's loss was a dividend for the novel and political journalism. While Centlivre is remembered for three plays, *The Busy Body* (1709), *The Wonder* (1714), and *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (1717), all three of which remained popular into the nineteenth century, her career reached a crisis between 1705 and 1710. In addition to the tumultuous changes in the theatre as a whole during those years, Centlivre's personal struggles to get

Busy Body acted and to survive the controversy over The Female Tatler and The Man's bewitch'd nearly deprived that theatre of some of her best work.
CONCLUSION

As Hume has shown in *The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century*, the inaccurate description of the period from 1695 to 1710 as the time when the forces of theatrical reform supplanted the old immoral play styles with the new exemplary ones requires substantial revision. On a smaller scale, the theatrical activities of Pix, Manley, Trotter, and Centlivre require a similar reconsideration. The four women did not become fast friends and, with the benign support of Queen Anne, contend against a constant group of adversaries to bring about the transition between the old dissolute works of the Restoration and the sentimental drama of the eighteenth century, a false designation in itself. Rather, their relationships with each other had considerable ups and downs; and their working associations with the two London theatre companies were more important to their careers than political parties, patronage, publishers, or the queen herself. Ultimately, Pix and Centlivre would chose to make playwriting their profession while Manley and Trotter would exercise their intellects and energies with other pursuits.

Political and theatrical upheavals do seem to have facilitated the appearance of these women playwrights. The Cromwell rebellion had a destabilizing effect on stratified English life that was not completely reversed by the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 had additional serious consequences, particularly for Catholic sympathizers like the Trotters. Depending on their political and religious affiliations, families were disenfranchised and forced to flee from the opposing armies with no certainty that they could return to their homes. Trotter and Manley's families had been Royalists in exile, and because they were Parliamentary supporters, Centlivre's family may have fled to
Ireland for a time after the Restoration. 1 Only Pix does not seem to have suffered some direct consequence of the civil war or the Glorious Revolution, yet her family probably left Buckingham parish due to fire, smallpox, and her father’s death.

In this period the typical history for women born into families of some means was a lifetime of male sponsorship, beginning with their fathers and continuing, after a legal transfer, with their husbands. 2 This pattern, however, does not apply to these four women. Trotter, Manley, and Pix’s fathers all died before their daughters were married; Centlivre probably left home to become a strolling player. Though expected to behave as her father’s surrogate, Manley’s cousin John proposed bigamy instead. Though all four writers had significant relationships with men, interestingly only Pix was married when her first play was staged.

Thus, they began to make their way in the world against a larger background of societal turmoil as well as smaller upheavals caused by the disruption of the standard home pattern. In the meantime, they read history or romances, learned French, developed their correspondence skills, experimented with the novel, and wondered if their skill at letters might not be turned to some advantage in an uncertain world where few jobs beckoned to women. At this time, university and legal training as well as government, military, and church positions were closed to them; and, the lucrative aspects of artistic and political patronage were reserved for men. Only Centlivre seems to have seriously considered acting, but, despite her strolling experience, no records exist of her performing in London.

Why not write plays? Margaret Cavendish and Anne Wharton had written closet drama. Katherine Philips, the ‘Matchless Orinda,’ had been the first to have a play staged with Pompey in 1664. Frances Boothby’s Marcelia was acted in 1669. Elizabeth Polwhele had seen the performance of at least The Faithful Virgins among the three plays she wrote in

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1 F. P. Lock, Susanna Centlivre, Twayne’s English Authors Ser. 254 (Boston: Twayne, 1979) 14.
the late 1660s and early 1670s. Most important, Aphra Behn had proved a woman could write for a living in the theatre with more plays reaching the stage during the period than anyone except Dryden. Despite the risks, the opportunity for benefit receipts and perhaps a ready-made market for future scripts was a powerful lure for anyone with poetic aspirations. What is more, the United Company, product of a theatrical log jam caused by the collapse of the King’s Company and the tense political situation of the 1680s, had broken into two separate companies that were initially desperate for new works.

With a precise beginning in 1695 and an almost tidy conclusion in 1710, the competition between the Patent and Rebel Companies provides a reasonably convenient interval in which to study the playwriting careers of Pix, Trotter, Manley, and Centlivre. The theatrical activities of the Female Wits were almost entirely contained within those years, while Centlivre’s career reached a decisive turning point in 1709 and 1710. Having examined the women’s plays and the theatrical vicissitudes of those fifteen years, the following conclusions can be drawn.

The four women’s relationships with the theatrical companies were as important and perhaps even more crucial to the progress of their careers than the success of their plays with their audiences. Certainly successful plays and positive relations with the actors were related; for the author of a crowd pleasing play like *The Busy Body* might expect better treatment from the players than the author of a one-night failure like *The Lost Lover*. Since, however, plays must be rehearsed before they are judged by an audience, this study emphasizes just how often a playwright needed positive relations with the actors to give her play the chance to become a success. For the two playwrights in this study who had substantial careers, Pix’s friendship with Barry and Centlivre’s relationships with Wilks, Oldfield, and Pack were instrumental in sustaining their careers. Though Manley obviously

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respected Barry, Betterton, and Bracegirdle, no evidence suggests that they returned her feelings, while *The Female Tatler* contains a number of her insults directed at Cibber, Oldfield, Wilks, and Estcourt. Trotter did receive support from two playwrights, Congreve and Farquhar, but she seems not to have generated friendships with any of the players. Manley and Trotter's lack of contacts within the two theatre companies contributed to the premature endings of their theatrical careers.

If Centlivre's career reached a crisis over *The Man's bewitch'd* (1709), then Manley, Trotter, and Pix's careers reached their turning points with *The Female Wits* (1696). The difference between the status and experience of Manley, Pix, and Trotter in 1696 and Centlivre in 1710 provides one of the keys to understanding why, though the four women were contemporaries, Centlivre is considered an eighteenth-century writer while the Female Wits are usually relegated to the seventeenth century. In 1696 Manley, Pix, and Trotter were inexperienced as writers and theatrical practitioners; but by 1709, in addition to her experience as a strolling player, Centlivre had already been a playwright for nine years with three repertory successes to her credit. When the high spirits, inexperience, and indiscretions of Pix, Trotter, and Manley provoked *The Female Wits* in 1696, the three women were publicly ridiculed and cut off at the outset of their careers from the Patent Company. Though all three writers were able to have their next plays staged at Lincoln's Inn Fields, they were associated with the stars of the late-seventeenth century not with the actors of the next generation. Of the major performers and managers after 1710, only Barton Booth was affiliated with Lincoln's Inn Fields, while Cibber, Wilks, Oldfield, Norris, and, for the most part, Dogget were Drury Lane personnel.

After *The Female Wits* and Powell's plagiarism of *The Deceiver Deceived*, Pix was forced away from Drury Lane to Lincoln's Inn Fields where, despite the fact that she wrote
seven plays for the Barry-Bracegirdle tandem, her last ten plays were never revived. The bright beginnings of Pix’s career when both Ibrahim and The Spanish Wives entered the Drury Lane repertory are easily forgotten because of this sequence of consecutive failures. At Lincoln’s Inn Fields, where there were fewer strong comedians, where the company was still interested in staging tragedies when the London audience was rejecting them, and where the actors were already preeminent in the established repertory, Pix simply found herself unable to adapt to both their standards and their limitations.

Perhaps Trotter and Manley were not as welcome as Pix at Lincoln’s Inn Fields. After Fatal Friendship did not enter the New Theatre repertory in 1698, Trotter returned to Drury Lane in 1700 for Love at a Loss and The Unhappy Penitent. After the failure of those two plays, six years would pass before Trotter’s The Revolution of Sweden made its brief appearance at the Haymarket, where the tragedy was acted by the remainder of the Rebel Company, now under Vanbrugh’s direction. For Trotter, The Female Wits marked the beginning of her struggle to have her works and her reform purpose taken seriously, a struggle she would abandon in 1706 after The Revolution of Sweden provoked laughter instead of moral thought.

Although The Royal Mischief had six performances at Lincoln’s Inn Fields in 1696, Manley did not follow up this encouraging showing with another new play in the next season or two. Instead, disillusioned by the failure of The Lost Lover, the Patent Company’s behavior concerning The Royal Mischief, and the devastating satire of The Female Wits, Manley waited ten more years before her Almyna appeared during the renewed competition of 1706. Essentially, Trotter and Manley’s theatrical careers never recovered from the damage done to them by The Female Wits. Though she lived until 1724, Manley made only

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4 Elizabeth Howe, The first English actresses: Women and drama 1660-1700 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 190-191. Of the fifty-six plays in which Bracegirdle and Barry originated new roles together, Pix wrote the largest number with seven, while Nicholas Rowe was second with five plays for the two actresses.
sporadic attempts to have plays produced. Finding neither audience support nor a steady working relationship with either of the theatrical companies, Trotter retired permanently from the theatre at the age of twenty-seven.

In some ways, the situation Centlivre faced over The Man's bewitch'd was worse than what Manley, Pix, and Trotter encountered with The Female Wits. Dissatisfied with the progress of rehearsals, Manley had withdrawn The Royal Mischief from the Patent Company herself. In contrast, the comments attributed to Centlivre in The Female Tatler angered a cast led by Cibber, Wilks, and Dogget enough for them to actually stop the run of The Man's bewitch'd and seriously jeopardize her future as a playwright. Had the woman to whom those comments were attributed been only the author of The Perjured Husband, Centlivre's career might have ended at that point. Instead, with Love's Contrivance, The Gamester, and The Busy Body to her credit, she was able to weather the controversy by offering the players Marplot, the irresistible sequel to her most popular play to that point. Centlivre had the experience and wherewithal to survive a dangerous blow to her career; whereas, after The Female Wits, Trotter, Manley, and Pix could only continue their careers on a more limited basis.

Even though the period has a relatively exact beginning and end the theatrical circumstances between 1695 and 1710 varied widely and had a profound effect upon the women's careers. After the first two phases of the competition, marked by Lincoln's Inn Fields dominance until 1698 and Drury Lane's superiority from 1698 to 1702, the theatrical environment was not particularly conducive to new plays. Between 1702 and 1705 when the competition subsided into an uneasy truce, Centlivre's ability to write for both companies proved crucial to her career development. During that same period, Pix had only one documentable play performed, The Different Widows, and neither Trotter nor Manley wrote a play that reached the stage.
Whereas Pix had been experimenting unsuccessfully at Lincoln's Inn Fields since 1697 with a veritable Polonius's catalogue of comedy, tragedy, prose tragedy, tragicomedy, a tragedy without villains, and knockabout farce, Centlivre was able to vary her offerings between both theatres. If *The Perjured Husband* did not do well at Drury Lane, she could try *The Beau's Duel* and *The Stolen Heiress* at Lincoln's Inn Fields. When *The Gamester* succeeded at the New Theatre, she could sell the sequel, *The Basset-Table*, to Drury Lane. When Cibber turned down *Love at a Venture*, Centlivre also had the option to submit the play, along with her acting services, to the Duke of Grafton's players. Luckily, when the difficulties over *The Man's bewitch'd* temporarily poisoned her reception at the Haymarket, Aaron Hill's company at Drury Lane lasted just long enough to stage *A Bickerstaff's Burying* while the other actors 'tempers' cooled.

Also, it was no accident that when the competition revived briefly with the opening of the Haymarket, that all four women had new plays staged. In fact, the 1705-1706 season comes closest during the period to mirroring the hopeful situation for new works in 1695-1696. There were two companies competing vigorously and new plays were in demand again. In this situation, even with the poor acoustics in the Haymarket, Pix's *The Conquest of Spain* reached a second benefit, and the actors staged her *The Adventures in Madrid* to make extra money at the beginning of the summer. Unfortunately, Vanbrugh slowed the new competition with his disastrous maneuvering for an opera monopoly. First, he jerry-rigged the 1706-7 season so only the Haymarket had a strong company of actors who were chiefly interested in staging revivals; then, mid-way through the 1707-1708 season, all the actors were packed off to Drury Lane with Rich as their employer again. After the actors were finally rid of Rich at the end of the 1709 season, another tumultuous year would pass before Cibber, Wilks, and Doggett stabilized things at Drury Lane and opera was established at the Haymarket. By then, Pix was dead, Manley was writing novels and political pamphlets, and Trotter had left the theatre behind for marriage and philosophical writing. Even Centlivre barely survived
the upheaval at the expense of having to endure Cibber's plagiarism of *Love at a Venture*, Wilks's ill-tempered misjudgment of *The Busy Body*, and the players' petulant closing of *The Man's bewitch'd*. Though only Centlivre's plays would go on to have stage histories after 1750, all four of the women in this study deserve recognition for overcoming an atmosphere that ranged from skepticism to outright hostility in their attempt to write plays for a living between 1695 and 1710.
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