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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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The English Novel's Cradle:
The Theatre and the Women Novelists of the Long Eighteenth Century

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

by

James Joseph Howard

March 2010

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. George E. Haggerty, Chairperson

Dr. Carole Fabricant

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2010

The Dissertation of James Howard is approved:

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation for the guidance and encouragement provided during this project by my Dissertation Committee Chair, Dr. George Haggerty, and the positive support of the other committee members, Dr. Carole Fabricant and Dr. Deborah Willis. I would also like to thank Dr. John Ganim, who served on my doctoral examination committee, for his helpful insights before and especially during my oral examination, and Dr. John Briggs, for his initial encouragement of my entering the doctoral program at UC Riverside. I also extend my gratitude to all the English faculty with whom I had the pleasure of studying during my six years at the Riverside campus. Finally, I must make special mention of the English Graduate Staff Advisor, Tina Feldmann, for her unflinching dedication and patience in resolving not only my own interminable queries and needs, but also those of her entire “family” of English graduate students. My experience at UC Riverside English Department has been consistently pleasurable and meaningful, thanks to all those mentioned above, as well as the many others who contribute this successful institution, including my fellow students.

DEDICATION

My dissertation is dedicated to all those who encouraged me and supported me in this late-in-life project: my father, Vincent; my sisters, Patti and Michelle; my son, Rob; and my colleagues at Selkirk College, and my friends; as well as Marti, who first inspired it, and Madelyn, who persevered with me in seeing it through.

It is especially dedicated, however, to my mother, Frances Theresa Germaine Howard (nee LaRochelle), for whom my achievement is the fulfillment of her maternal aspirations for her son, who is forever grateful for her faith in him.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The English Novel's Cradle:
The Theatre and the Women Novelists of the Long Eighteenth Century

by

James Joseph Howard

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in English
University of California, Riverside, March 2010
Dr. George Haggerty, Chairperson

This dissertation examines the relationship between the drama and the novel in the “Long” Eighteenth Century, with the focus on the women who wrote in both genres during this period and on the impact of female playwriting upon the evolution and refinement of the emerging English novel. Ten such writers are the subject of this study, starting with Aphra Behn and concluding with Frances Burney. The uneasy relationship women had with the theatre of the period has been well documented, and conventional wisdom has been that as the eighteenth century progressed, the novel became the preferred (or perhaps culturally imposed) literary venue for most female authors. However, my research reveals the succession of women writers who began their careers as dramatists, or wrote for the theatre soon after attempting other genres, continued unbroken throughout the eighteenth century. Most of these writers persisted in writing plays, even after they achieved success in fiction. It is true the production of novels, largely written by and for women, increased exponentially; but in a revised “feminist” version of the “rise of the novel” narrative, the dramatists in this study, such as Eliza

Haywood, figure prominently in the development of the new genre, alongside their iconic male counterparts.

There was a pattern of conformity and resistance in the work of these writers. They sought to achieve literary acceptance in the paternalistic public forum of the theatre by espousing traditional literary standards and conventions, and by extending those standards into the evolving genres of prose fiction. They also resisted, in their fiction, at least, “feminizing” trends that were developing as a result of the bourgeois fashions of sentiment and domestication, often by adopting the “masculine” classically based model of the novel established by Henry Fielding. Frances Burney’s *oeuvre* represents the culmination of the eighteenth-century relationship between play writing and novel writing by women, but deviates from the pattern. As a frustrated, failed playwright, Burney sublimated her dramatic impulse more extensively into her fiction, especially *Camilla* and *The Wanderer*, infusing her novels with a distinctive, theatrical motif that anticipates the narrative innovation of Jane Austen’s novels.

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INTRODUCTION

This project is about the relationship between the drama and the novel in the “Long” Eighteenth Century, in particular the women writers who worked in both genres during this period. While the notion of literary artists writing in several popular genres may not seem extraordinary to contemporary observers, the practices of play-writing and novel-writing during the eighteenth century have been considered as quite distinct by commentators then and now. The drama was regarded a long-standing male bastion of traditional literary values, while the novel, or at least its immediate predecessors, was the new-fangled preserve of female hack writers. However, the former, subject to increasing censorship, restricted venues and changing tastes, was being transformed, and in the minds of some commentators, deteriorating, as the century progressed; while the latter, according to Ian Watt, et al., was “rising” in popularity and perhaps respectability, as a new literary genre during the same time. In addition, the rapidly increasing participation of women in professional writing and theatre during this period also coincided with the development of the novel and may have contributed to it.

Writing about developments in English drama between 1660 and 1760 in relation to the emergence of the novel, Laura Brown in her *English Dramatic Form* (1981), declares that the “rise of the novel defines the decline of the drama” since “in the end, the eighteenth-century moral action could not find adequate expression in drama” (184). One might expect, if Brown’s analysis were accurate, that the female practitioners of the new “rising” genre would have ignored or abandoned the writing of plays, as their male

counterpart, Henry Fielding seems to have done. Yet, Nora Nachumi, a critic who has also recently explored the relationship between novel and play writing during the later Eighteenth Century, observes in her book *Acting Like a 'Lady': British Women Novelists and the Eighteenth-Century Theater* that of “383 female novelists who published between 1660 and 1818 ... 92 or one-fifth of that number, were actresses and/or playwrights” (xxiii). She adds that a “few were theater managers. Others were members of theatrical milieus; often they also were related to someone involved with the professional theater. Overall, at least 135 women, or approximately one third of the total, were involved in the theater” (ibid).

Given that the majority of writers developing the new genre of the novel during this period were women, Nachumi’s study seems to suggest a possibility opposite to Brown’s declaration: *that eighteenth-century drama may have had a significant role in defining the rise of the novel*. It is this intriguing possibility that has inspired this project and appears to be one that has been largely ignored by scholars to date.

The other component of Brown’s thesis relevant to this study is her claim that eighteenth-century drama was in “decline.” What is fascinating—and troubling—about her contention is that the “decline” Brown charts corresponds with the emergence in England of the female professional writer, in particular women dramatists and prose fiction/novel writers. It is significant that contemporary complaints of some kind of “decline” in the quality of British theatre began simultaneously with the success of female dramatists, such as Aphra Behn, Catherine Trotter, Mary Pix, and Susanna

Centlivre on the London stage. Of further interest is the association of the alleged decline of the theatre with its immorality, most famously articulated by Jeremy Collier in his *Short View* in 1698. While the bawdiness of the Restoration comedies by male playwrights provided plenty of moral ammunition for the likes of Collier, the involvement of women in the theatre as actresses and then as playwrights, was associated with prostitution, so their participation obviously contributed to the stage's "immorality" in the eyes of such (mostly male) critics.

What is now becoming recognized, of course, is that the dramatic output of these women writers is of a calibre at least equal to that of most of their male counterparts. Aphra Behn, for example, is assuming a place in the first tier of Restoration playwrights while plays by Catherine Trotter and Mary Pix now appear in some anthologies. The work of eighteenth-century female dramatists like Susanna Centlivre, Hannah Cowley, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Joanna Baillie certainly holds its own against that of the male playwrights of the period, and plays by their women peers who were primarily novelists, such as Frances Brooke or Elizabeth Griffith, have achieved at least modest recognition. Even the unproduced dramas of Frances Burney have been "rediscovered" to have some merit (that was acknowledged by the likes of Richard Sheridan and Samuel Johnson in her own time). Thus, it is arguable that the participation of women in the theatre did not coincide with (or contribute to) the decline of eighteenth-century English drama, if there was any such phenomenon.

Nevertheless, the female dramatists of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century wrote in a climate of disrespect for the literary value of their work combined with the insinuation that their activity as professional writers was immoral, or at best immodest. Of special importance to this study, therefore, is that in this context of moral controversy and literary devaluation, these women could have turned exclusively to prose fiction as an alternative literary venue but many did not. Some of them, such as Behn, Manley and Haywood, “on the rebound,” as it were, from difficult theatrical experiences, did shift to fiction writing in the latter part of their careers. They seem to have indulged in the very “immorality” attributed to their stagecraft by writing scandalous “amatory” fiction, but while doing so, also laid the groundwork for the novel form.

The successors to these women in the latter part of the Eighteenth Century, however, writers of drama and fiction like Frances Brooke, Elizabeth Griffith, Sophia Lee, or Frances Burney, continued to work in the two genres under similar circumstances, in spite of cultural and literary developments such as the cult of sensibility and the “rise” of the novel. Although the participation of women on the English stage had become relatively well established and the novel had achieved some literary status, debates about the “decline” of English theatre persisted nevertheless, now focused upon the value of “sentimental” drama, but also on whether it was “ladylike” to write for a living, especially for the stage. In addition, later eighteenth-century women writers often still carried the stigma of association with their scandalous predecessors by pursuing professional literary activity.

Thus, for women writers in the later 1700s, the relationship between the challenging public role of writing for the theatre and finding, perhaps, some sense of private security in publishing prose fiction, may have been equivalent to the experience of the pioneer female writers of drama and fiction of the Restoration and early Eighteenth Century. This parallel may indicate that there was a sustained pattern of influence throughout the whole period upon the development of the novel on the part of those women writers who also wrote for the stage. If so, this revelation would contribute a new dimension to the ever-expanding narrative of the “rise of the novel” that is worthy of scholarly pursuit.

This dissertation focuses upon the possible impact of female playwriting for the commercial stage upon the evolution and refinement of the emerging English novel. I have identified at least sixteen female writers of the “Long” Eighteenth Century who wrote both plays and prose fiction/novels with some popular success and literary recognition. Of these, ten are the subject of this study, starting with Aphra Behn and concluding with Frances Burney. Behn stands out as extraordinary for having succeeded more or less equally in both genres in her own time and in the present. The others achieved more recognition in one or other of the two literary forms. Burney is also somewhat anomalous in that she failed to attain any popular success, or at least until very recently, much literary credit for her substantial theatrical work (eight plays), in spite of becoming a highly successful novelist.

Of course, some male writers of the period also worked in both genres, the most notable being Henry Fielding, the canonical “founding father” of one variety of the novel. The Licensing Act of 1737 and economic necessity rather than aesthetic preference probably drove Fielding out of the theatre and into the fiction market, along with his female contemporary, Elizabeth Haywood. Nevertheless, Fielding’s case clearly established the precedent of a drama-novel relationship as critics such as David Hume and Sheridan Baker have pointed out. The other men writing in both genres included William Congreve, Tobias Smollett, Horace Walpole and Oliver Goldsmith, but with the possible exception of Goldsmith, the cross-genre writing of these men seems only marginally significant to my theme as they appear to have merely “dabbled” in the other genre.

I therefore believe that their exploring the drama and the novel as parallel vehicles of artistic expression may have been a gender issue for aspiring women writers of the eighteenth century. The uneasy relationship of women with the theatre of the period, as actresses and then as playwrights, has been well documented, and conventional wisdom has it, that as the eighteenth century progressed, the novel became the preferred (or perhaps culturally imposed) literary venue for most female authors although a few female dramatists remained prominent (Cowley, Inchbald, Baillie).

Very few critical studies have been done about the drama-novel relationship in the eighteenth century. Laura Brown’s work in 1981 has been the most significant full-length analysis of this issue until recently. Brown argues that eighteenth-century plays

were not as successful as novels in depicting the internal “moral action” of characters and thus could not compete with the new genre in rendering “interiority,” or depicting “identity formation” of the individual subject, an alleged preoccupation of the rising middle class in the Age of Sensibility and beyond. However, Lisa Freeman’s recent *Character’s Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century Stage* (2002) also addresses the relationship between the two genres, but takes an opposing position to Brown’s, that the drama of the period “marked a site of resistance to the rise of the subject” (7). She finds no evidence of “the discourse of the subject” which she claims is “conceptually inappropriate as a paradigm to figure or assess the representation of identity in the drama of this period” (7). Instead of seeing eighteenth-century theatre in decline, Freeman argues it remained a “critical site for social exchange in eighteenth-century English culture” (237). Freeman’s view would make more sense of the penchant for female writers of the period to continue writing for the theatre, in spite of the popularity, lucrateness, and increasing literary legitimacy of novel writing than does the implication of Brown’s notion that such writers of drama might have been “flogging a dead horse.”

Nora Nachumi’s *Acting Like a ‘Lady’: British Women Novelists and the Eighteenth-Century Theater* (2008) is the most recent study to address the drama-novel relationship. This book has two components: a close study of Elizabeth Inchbald, Frances Burney, and Jane Austen and an impressive compilation of data about women who wrote plays and novels from 1660-1818 found in the long Appendix. Nachumi’s theme in the case studies is based on aspects of female performativity, “acting like a

lady,” found in the works of these authors that she suggests derive from their interest and experience in the theatre.

Studies of individual dramatist/novelists of the period, such as Behn, Haywood or Burney, have tended to focus upon their writing in one genre or the other, or at least the separate examination of each, in critical-biographical works. Jane Spencer in *Aphra Behn's Afterlife* (2000) does look at Behn's literary legacy in the two genres in tandem (focusing upon her two most enduring works *The Rover* and *Oroonoko*) and a few other critics, such as Janet Todd in *The Critical Fortunes of Aphra Behn* (1998) and Margarete Rubik, have examined relationships between her plays and novels in their studies.

Curiously, the relationship of the unperformed plays of Frances Burney to her best-selling novels draws more critical attention, from scholars like Margaret Doody (*Frances Burney: The Life in the Works*, 1988), than is paid the equivalent connection between more successful performances in both genres by other authors such as Elizabeth Griffith or Sophia Lee. A plausible explanation of Burney's case is that scholars view her plays as a kind of autobiographical resource to plumb in relation to the novels rather than as legitimate works in another genre. The recent work of Peter Sabor in collecting Burney's plays in a definitive edition and Barbara Darby (*Frances Burney: Dramatist*, 1997), who devotes her book to them, has begun to move Burney criticism beyond this phase.

The works of female dramatists/novelists “in between” Behn and Burney, perhaps because they have garnered much less scholarly attention overall, have tended to remain

compartmentalized in academic studies with the genre in which the authors have succeeded most obviously dominant. Thus, Delariviere Manley and Elizabeth Haywood are regarded almost exclusively as prose fiction writers in spite of their modest but significant number of performed plays. At the end of the eighteenth century, Elizabeth Inchbald shares a similar critical fate despite her large dramatic output (notwithstanding the depiction of her *Lover's Vows* in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*), while Sophia Lee is celebrated for her novels, in particular *The Recess*, rather than her two plays, *The Chapter of Accidents* and *Almeyda: Queen of Granada*. Catherine Trotter, on the other hand, is regarded as a late Restoration dramatist while her significant foray into prose fiction, *The Adventures of a Young Lady (Olinda)* has been largely disregarded. In contrast, her contemporary, Mary Davys, has received some attention for her "reformed coquet" fiction but none for her profitable play, *The Northern Heiress*. Of course, the matter of literary quality may rightly drive such critical neglect, so one task of this project has been to assess the literary merit of the lesser known work of such authors in a second genre.

The plays and novels of these female writers do fall within the purview of broader critical studies about the rise of the novel and eighteenth-century theatre. Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) and the studies of McKeon, Richetti, and others that followed, canonized the pantheon of "fathers" of the novel, Defoe, Richardson, and/or Fielding; but since the 1980s, a counter "mothers of the novel" narrative has emerged from the likes of Jane Spencer (*The Rise of the Woman Novelist*, 1986), Janet Todd (*The Sign of Angellica*, 1989), Dale Spender (*Mothers of the Novel*, 1986), Ros Ballaster (*Seductive Forms*, 1992), and Patricia Spacks (*Novel Beginnings*, 2006) that have celebrated Behn and

Haywood among others as co-creators of the new genre. These studies, while very relevant to the development of the novel as the ultimate focus of this dissertation, tend not to discuss the theatrical works of these novelists very much or to explore their relationship to the fiction of these writers.

Similarly, amid the wealth of studies of Restoration and Eighteenth-Century theatre, a body of work on women and the theatre has appeared. Of particular interest is Ellen Donkin's *Getting Into the Act: Woman Playwrights in London 1776-1829* (1995). Also relevant is David Hume's important study of Fielding's theatrical experiences, *Henry Fielding and the London Theatre* (1988).

The five chapters of this dissertation span the "Long" Eighteenth Century. The first is dedicated to Aphra Behn who established the precedent for a woman to write professionally in the two (actually three, for she was known as a poet) genres during the Restoration period. The second chapter deals with the "first wave" of female dramatists/novelists who succeeded Behn on the London stage and in print: Mary Pix, Catherine Trotter, and Delariviere Manley, the "Female Wits" derided in the contemporary satiric play. Also included in this chapter is the iconoclastic Mary Davys who seems to have written in relative isolation from the community of female dramatists/novelists in London.

Elizabeth Haywood is the focus of the third chapter and is a pivotal figure in this study. Haywood, writing a little later and remaining active until mid-century, tries her hand at almost every popular literary form of the period, including emulating Behn and

Manley's political allegory and amatory fiction. Haywood's dramatic works are as eclectic as her prose fiction (a comedy, a tragedy, a serio-comic play, and a farce-opera), but she follows her (reluctant?) mentor Henry Fielding's literary path of abandoning the theatre for a career as a novelist. Her eventual transition from amatory fiction to conduct-book novels is especially significant to the development of the English novel.

Chapter Four discusses a "second wave" of women dramatists/novelists, comprised of Charlotte Lennox, Elizabeth Griffith and Frances Brooke. Their work represents a distinct mid-century cultural shift. So-called "sentimental" drama had become prevalent and subject to critical laments by figures such as Johnson, Walpole and Goldsmith. The sentimental tide had also washed over into the novel of the period, so a direct relationship between styles and tastes in the drama and in the novel are perhaps most apparent in this period. Lennox, Griffith and Brooke joined Hannah Cowley and others in the resumption of female participation in English playwriting, but under quite different conditions from those of their predecessors, with the advent of the powerful theatre managers as documented by Ellen Donkin, while at the same time inheriting a relatively established novel form, thanks to the early "fathers and mothers" of the genre. Brooke provides perhaps the first fictional female dramatist in the figure of Maria Villiers in her late novel *The Excursion* (1777).

The final chapter brings the century to a close with an examination of the novels and plays of Frances Burney. Of all the writers discussed in this study, Burney is notable as a singularly unsuccessful playwright. Yet, she wrote a substantial number of plays,

which have received increasing critical attention of late, usually in terms of their relationship to her popular and critically acclaimed novels. This study argues that this relationship represents a crucial transition in the development of the novel, as the frustrated dramatist may have fused her theatrical insights and her vision as a skilled fiction writer into an innovative advancement of the genre, which may have inspired Jane Austen and the nineteenth-century novelists who followed her.

An Epilogue follows that briefly addresses the work of the female dramatists/novelists not examined in detail in this study, such as Sophia Lee and Elizabeth Inchbald. It also comments on the role of the few male novelists who wrote plays during the period, in particular Henry Fielding.

CHAPTER ONE

“ASTREA ON STAGE”: APHRA BEHN

In some ways, Aphra Behn’s literary accomplishment transcends efforts to categorize her either as a “mother of the novel,” “Restoration dramatist,” or the “new Sappho” because she achieved success in all three genres, including that regarded as the highest literary form at the time, poetry. Behn did gain some (often begrudging) recognition for her poems and plays in her lifetime, and posthumously, for her prose fiction, in addition to her twentieth-century “resurrection” and belated recent elevation into the literary canon (Todd, *The Critical Fortunes of Aphra Behn*, 1998; Spencer, *Behn’s Afterlife*, 2000). Although she has been proclaimed the “first professional woman writer” by the likes of Virginia Woolf and lived largely on the proceeds of her work, she had no qualms, apparently, about declaring her claim to literary laurels, fame as well as fortune, which she did most famously in her Preface to *The Lucky Chance*: “...I am not content to write for the third day only, I value fame as much as if I had been born a hero” (191). Many in her own time, and subsequently, were willing to attribute such fame to her.

For such a towering literary figure to be that “first professional woman writer,” who happens also to be an originator of the English novel, compromises the attempt to

incorporate her into a narrative of the “rise of the novel” because her fame and most prolific literary accomplishments were achieved as a dramatist (and to a lesser extent as a poet). Behn appears to have resorted to prose fiction late in her career and life largely out of economic necessity and the need for a wider audience at a time when theatrical opportunities were greatly diminished because of the merger of the two licensed theatre companies in the 1680s (Warner 47). Her case is not unlike Henry Fielding’s 50 years later when he was forced to abandon his career as a dramatist (though successful only in the subgenre of satirical farce) because of the 1737 *Licensing Act* and took up novel writing.

However, unlike Fielding, who managed to rationalize his new choice of genre by distinguishing it from popular fiction and elevating it to Homeric status, it is possible that Behn considered herself to be “writing down” in producing prose fiction, particularly in the amatory vein:

Behn herself...based her claims to fame on her verse and drama. Her dedications to the novels published in her lifetime typically refer to the work in question as a “*little piece*” or a “*little Trifle*,” or, as in the case of *Oroonoko*, as the result of a mere “*few Hours*” of writing. (Spencer (A) 86-7).

Behn opens *The Fair Jilt* with the declaration: “I do not pretend here to entertain you with a feign’d Story, or any thing peic’d together with *Romantic Accidents*, but every Circumstance, to a Tittle, is Truth” (9). Late Seventeenth-Century romances, or amatory fictions, as they have come to be called (Ballaster, Richetti), including many of Behn’s novellas essentially were feigned stories and romantic accidents pieced together for the purpose of entertainment.¹ In addition, much of her fiction was not attributed to her or

even published until after her death in 1689 while Fielding's literary reputation was ultimately established as a novelist.

Behn's role as a "mother of the novel" is further complicated by her subsequent dismissal as a scandalously immoral writer and her eventual exclusion from the literary canon for two hundred years.² Thus the question of Behn's influence on subsequent novel writers becomes problematic after her immediate successors, Manley and Haywood (who were lumped into the same scandalous category). Male novelists like Richardson and Fielding made a point of denying any connection with the "romances" of Behn, Manley or Haywood and defined their new genre as the antithesis of these women's works (Warner 4). Female authors; including the "mature" Haywood herself, however much the breakthrough literary achievements of their predecessors may have encouraged or inspired them; followed their male peers in disowning their sister's accomplishments. (Spencer (A) 62-3, Todd (A) 33) Behn's "influence" upon subsequent novelists then became a negative one of denial—a good novel was constructed, at least overtly, as *not* reflecting the patterns or principles of the "mother of the novel"(Ballaster 198).³

The majority of the scholarship about Behn's oeuvre tends to focus upon her work in one genre or another with little attempt to link them, except occasionally in the context of colonial or feminist issues. Yet Laura Visconti in her article on the beginnings of the epistolary novel in England argues that it would be "negligent and illogical" to attempt to discuss Behn's prose fiction outside of the context of her prolific and highly successful dramatic achievements (300). Clearly, Behn began and sustained her professional

writing career in the theatre, and only came to publish prose fiction at the very end of her life. While she has drawn upon particular European sources and models for this fiction (as she did for her drama), Behn surely owed some of her novelistic technique to her playwriting skills. The easy adaptability of her fiction to the theatre (*Oroonoko*, *Agnes de Castro*, *The History of a Nun*, *The Lucky Mistake*) suggests this connection.

Visconti also points out that:

...during the Restoration and in the following Augustan age, the English public had excellent knowledge of theatre production. Not only did they go to the theatre but they also read play texts which were published very close to the day of the first performance, a habit which apparently extended to all levels of society. Thus the readers-spectators were also the first readers of epistolary novels. They found in them many elements akin to those of theatre texts. The theatre was in steady decline, paved the way (sic) for its natural heir, the novel. (301)

The relationship Visconti suggests between reading play texts and reading novels is significant. This connection is reinforced in Behn's case by the dedications and prefaces she attached to the published versions of her plays, in which she defends her work and challenges her critics (Finke 19-29, Munns 59, Gallagher 66-67). Jessica Munns in particular notes that such documents "conflate the intimacy of private reading and the publicity of publication and in the case of play texts, contrast page and stage" (59). The voice in these meta-theatrical texts is that of the female dramatist engaging with her reader-spectators, an authorial voice unlike anything previously "heard" in print, in English at least. It seems this voice of the woman author is transposed to some of Behn's prose fictions through the narrative personae in *The Fair Jilt* and parts of *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister*, and, of course, the active narrator in *Oroonoko* (Rosenthal 158).

Visconti also observes that in the epistolary novel “even the plots recall typical theatrical situations such as betrayals, weddings, sexual and financial intrigue, all dear to Restoration comedy” (301). This observation can be more broadly applied to most of the amatory fiction of Behn and her successors, Manley and Haywood, which tend not to be written in the epistolary format or first-person narration.⁴ Behn often stages dramatic situations or spectacle into her fiction, such as Sylvia setting up various erotic scenarios for her lovers in *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister* (Ballaster 109) or even the gruesome execution scene in *Oroonoko* (and a similar though less lethal one in *The Fair Jilt*). Similar staging of spectacle can be found in Manley and Haywood’s works.

On the other hand, amatory fiction is meant for “private and solitary reading” because “its attention turns more to the heart or to the painful progression of passion than to witty dialogue in comedy or to action” (Visconti 301). Visconti finds another connection between drama and epistolary fiction in “the emphatic language found in the monologues of contemporary heroic and sentimental tragedy” (301). Certainly, such a language of “hyperbole, exclamations, repetitions and words of tenderness and passion” can be found in Sylvia and Philander’s letters in Behn’s *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister*, but of course the “stylistic extravagance” of heroic drama can also be found in the French romances that inspired English amatory fiction (Richetti (A) 19). Nevertheless, Visconti’s detection of the linkages between the drama and contemporary fiction, in particular the identification of theatrical texts as parallel *reading* experiences for a segment of the literate population is very pertinent. It is Aphra Behn who really forges these links between drama and prose fiction in England in the later

Seventeenth Century, and with a few male exceptions such as William Congreve⁵ and Henry Fielding, it is the women dramatic writers of the early Eighteenth Century who maintain this connection.

Jane Spencer identifies in *Aphra Behn's Afterlife* a “shift in style” in Behn’s fiction that may reflect a transition from drama to the novel. Spencer observes that the posthumously published stories may be “earlier pieces that Behn had put aside” that “are more reliant on common motifs from folk-tales and *from intrigue comedy* (my italics)” (126). Spanish intrigue comedy, of course, was Behn’s preferred and most successful dramatic model, such as in *The Rover*. Spencer suggests that the later fictions such as *Oroonoko* and *The Fair Jilt* are more “complex narratives” because the “narrators...tend to be carefully individualized” and the stories are “the examples that prove a particular maxim about human nature...or as fruits of her own first-hand observation and reflection” (126). The latter qualities, of course, are those that tend to be celebrated as the elements of “realism” that constitute a defining feature of the novel. However, it is interesting that the more “novelistic” examples Spencer provides are the very stories that were dramatized by Southerne and Trotter, rather than the posthumous “early” works. Indeed, the past and present efforts to detect “Mrs. Behn” in Southerne’s dramatic version of *Oroonoko* via the characters of Mrs. Lackitt or Charlotte Weldon (who try to intervene unsuccessfully to save the African Prince and Imoinda) indicate that even a “complex” novelistic device like a narrator giving a first-hand account of events to the point of trying to meddle in them, might be transposed to the stage (Spencer (A) 131). My point is that the line between drama and prose fiction at this time was flexible and

permeable, and in the latter part of the 17th Century writers like Behn, Manley, and to a lesser extent, Trotter and Pix, wrote simultaneously in both genres.

However, what distinguishes Behn in particular from her immediate successors is her apparent commitment to established literary conventions in her drama and in her prose fiction. When Behn took on a literary genre, she did it well and was easily able to adopt the rules and formulas of each. Contemporary scholarship has established that Behn was very much a Restoration playwright, competing with male rivals like Etheridge or Dryden on their own turf and terms. (Spencer (A) 64-65). The later charges of impropriety or immorality her plays faced in the 18th Century were shared with her Restoration colleagues, except, of course, for her own gender making such features more offensive to the delicacy of later audiences and critics (Markley 114). Behn's rover, Willmore, rivals Wycherley's Horner in off-stage sexual acts and Etheridge's Dorimant in his exploitation of women, but he does not transgress beyond any boundaries reached by these rakes.

Similarly, Behn's "female wits" like Hellena and Florinda in *The Rover*, Laura Lucretia, Marcella and Cornelia in *The Feigned Courtesans*, or Julia and Leticia in *The Lucky Chance* can match Vanbrugh's Amanda and Berinthia or Congreve's Millamant or Mrs. Fainall in clever repartee and self-reliant resilience in the predatory world of rakes and dominating patriarchy⁶. She consistently gives her female characters prominent roles and allows them to be proactive, often having them on stage first in her opening scenes, but ultimately they conform to the expectations of the comic, or more rarely, tragic

expectations of the genre (Munns 59, Spencer (B) 86). Her plotting, stagecraft, and effective use of dramatic irony arguably exceed those of her rivals, but they all reflect an excellent grasp of existing dramatic practice. Behn excelled in the theatre, but she did not claim to innovate. Her goal and achievement were to compete in an artistic arena dominated by men in spite of the educational and social advantages they had: “All I ask is the privilege for my masculine part the poet in me...to tread in those successful paths my predecessors have so long thrived in, to take those measures that both ancient and modern writers have set me, and by which they have pleased the world so well” (“Preface” *The Lucky Chance* 191).

Behn may also have sought to follow “those successful paths” of her predecessors when she turned to prose fiction, but as Laura Brown and many others have demonstrated, this was a much less established literary area with a variety of relatively new conventions and practices. Preferring entertainment over instruction, it seems, she eschewed the native masculine tradition of moralistic, satiric, or utopian fiction in favour of the popular style of European fiction written by women. She adopted and adapted the French heroic romance and the more southern epistolary technique of the *Lettres Portugaises*. While adapting these works for an English audience in the absence of an English tradition of popular fiction allowed room for some innovation, Behn was content to remain within each tradition most of the time.

However, just as she was in tune with the shifting values and tastes of the Restoration theatre, Behn also anticipated late Seventeenth-Century tendencies towards

greater realism—“romantic material transformed and domesticated by *vraisemblance*” as Laura Brown terms it (187)—and pandering to “pornographic, pious, scandalous, or escapist” needs of mostly female fiction readers (Brown 186-190). Brown like most pre-1990s critics dismisses the prose fiction of Behn and her successors as a “minor tradition” of “hack writers and translators” although she concedes that “Defoe’s criminal biographies and Richardson’s female novels must be classified as popular and literary” reflecting the disappearance of “the differentiation between popular and literary fiction in the Eighteenth Century” (187). Brown seems to consider the closure of this gap between popular and literary modes as evidence of the movement towards greater realism that she sees occurring in both the fiction and the drama of the period. If so, Behn can be seen as expediting this shift in style in both genres. It also could be argued that Behn was creating this literary market as much as she was conforming to it, but it is evident that she relied on meeting readers’ expectations in much of her prose fiction.

The exceptions, possibly, are Behn’s anomalous *Oroonoko* and the sprawling adaptation of the form of the *Lettres Portugaises* in her *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister*, the latter which in some ways transcends the forms from which it derives. It is these two works that are generally regarded as ground-breaking in the history of the English novel ((Spencer (A) 4, Todd (A) 1). The realistic depiction of the New World, in this case Surinam, and the involvement of the narrator in the plot are the features of *Oroonoko* that have intrigued modern critics. In the case of the less scrutinized *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister*, it is the range and complexity of this three-volume “epic” of a proto-novel that has garnered critical

attention. It seems Behn deployed in this work everything she knew about prose fiction—heroic romance, epistolary narrative, allegory, scandal, history, pornography and political commentary—and managed, even over the three-year period of its composition in rapidly changing times, to achieve a surprising degree of narrative coherence. It is evident that these two works expanded the range of narrative possibility for popular fiction at a crucial historical juncture, the advent of the “long” Eighteenth Century and the “rise of the English novel.” She also seems to have escaped to some extent the confines of “those successful paths my predecessors...have set me” to produce a new kind of fiction that anticipates the novel, or at least provided avenues her immediate successors could follow towards that historic literary destination. For example, her fusion of political scandal fiction with the amatory epistolary tradition in *Love Letters* sets the stage for Manley’s *New Atalantis* as well as Haywood’s scandal fiction. Similarly, Behn’s insertion of an active narrator-participant in her novellas, especially *Oroonoko*, perhaps inspired the shift away from first-person/epistolary narratives to more “objective” techniques by many of her female successors, especially Eliza Haywood as noted above.

The concern of this study, however, is to assess the relationship of this achievement in prose fiction to Behn’s accomplishments in the theatre. A few critics have seen such a connection, for example, Ros Ballaster who in her study of amatory fiction *Seductive Forms*, observes that the “novelty of the novel seems to have provided Behn with the ideal platform for the elaboration of a new relationship of female writing subject to female identity” and points out that it is “not insignificant that Behn’s earliest

experiments in literature were in the drama, another literary genre in which women, in the shape of Restoration actresses, had obtained a new means of turning amatory representation to profit” (113). However, the observations of Ballaster, Visconti and others remain somewhat abstract and theoretical as in the statements above.

Several of Behn’s plays, in particular the enduringly successful *The Rover* and the less popular but critically resilient *The Lucky Chance*, have attracted critical attention in their exploration of feminist issues that are transposable to amatory fiction and the novel, perhaps in a deeper way than in the plays of her contemporaries. The role of the sympathetic courtesan, Angellica Bianca in *The Rover* and the morally ambiguous adultery of Julia (Lady Fulbank) in *The Lucky Chance* have suggested a deeper interest in female “interiority” on Behn’s part than is found in her more conventional female wits or victims.

Angellica is perhaps Behn’s most fascinating character, male or female, the woman who calculatingly sells and markets herself but turns out to be a “feigned courtesan” after all, not in the shallower sense of the respectable female characters in the play whose title uses that phrase, but in terms of her traumatic recognition that she is still capable of love and vulnerable to it:

But I have given him my eternal rest,
My whole repose, my future joys, my heart!
My virgin heart...! Oh t’is gone! (IV.2)

The ironic process of this courtesan losing her “virgin heart” is revealed in a series of asides, the technique that Behn relies upon, along with revelatory dialogue, instead of

extended soliloquies, to depict the interiority of her characters. Thus, Behn teases her modern audience with brief glimpses into her character's consciousness, but does not seek to have us dwell there. In keeping with romance/intrigue convention, Angellica quickly snaps into revenge mode once she recognizes that her self-exposure is not reciprocated by her male counterpart, Willmore:

Then since I am not fit to be beloved,
I am resolved to think on a revenge
On him that soothed me thus to my undoing. (IV.2)

Angellica's anger is as much about her failing to stick to her "principles" as a mercenary woman of ill-repute as it is about Willmore's insincerity as a lover, especially since she knew the latter was the case all along. Angellica's struggle between maintaining her "lifestyle choice" as an independent, if disreputable and unloved woman, and yielding to the very passion she exploits in others complicates the typical seduction tale in a very interesting way and is the stuff novels by the likes of Manley or Haywood could be built upon. Indeed, Angellica's story hints at the "reformed coquette" pattern that Catherine Trotter and Mary Davys would explore in their prose fiction only a few years later. (However, Behn's approach is in an inverted form since reformed coquettes try to maintain their independence by indiscriminate flirting but do not succumb to seduction or actively engage in sexual behaviour.)

Angellica's role is made yet more fascinating for modern scholars through Behn's overt use of symbol in her character's depiction—the "sign of Angellica," the picture(s) of herself that she posts (and removes at will) outside her door to entice her customers. At one point in the play, Willmore and his rivals struggle for possession of the pictures

among themselves as the hidden Angellica watches from above. Behn captures in this symbolism (which she took from Killigrew's source play *Thomaso*) the commodification of women as objects while suggesting that there indeed exists a woman as subject, whose identity is hidden from the public (male) gaze and ironically from Angellica's own introspection as well. It is not surprising that Janet Todd adopted "the sign of Angellica" as the title for her book on early female writers since she suggests they too advertised and sold themselves in the public literary marketplace while attempting to retain their private identities.

Behn's deployment of such an explicit semiotic device shows an interest in the subject/object distinction as applied to women and in questions of interiority that would be the material for much novel writing to come. However, Behn's approach also demonstrates the kind of resistance to the direct depiction of interiority that would follow in the next century according to Lisa Freeman in her *Character's Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century Stage*. Like Laura Brown, Freeman addresses the relationship between the two popular genres in the Eighteenth Century, but takes an opposing position to Brown's, that the drama of the period "marked a site of resistance to the rise of the subject" (the focus upon "interiority" in novels). She finds no evidence of "the discourse of the subject" which she claims is "conceptually inappropriate as a paradigm to figure or assess the representation of identity in the drama of this period" (7). Freeman's argument is based on a more traditional concept of "character," the "staged identity" of personality types and social roles that had been depicted in the theatre for centuries. She points out that by the beginning of the Eighteenth Century the meanings

of “character” began to multiply and issues of social appearance versus internal reality arose. The notion of character as “moral worth” (as in “strength of character,” etc.), meaning a consistency between how one appeared to be and what one actually was, became important to dramatize (22-23). Probing into an “interiority” that suggested a fundamental difference between public social role and internal subjective identity might seem counter-intuitive to a playwright like Behn. Thus, she insists upon Angellica reverting to a consistent publically visible “character” such as “vengeful jilted mistress.”

Perhaps the figure of Angellica came too close to Behn’s own “character” for comfort, for she allows the ambivalent courtesan to dwindle into the more typical vengeful victim of intrigue comedy by the play’s end and then to disappear completely (along with Hellena once she becomes Willmore’s wife) in the sequel to *The Rover*. Such a biographical explanation is made perhaps more plausible by Southerne’s remarks about Behn’s reluctance to dramatize the Oroonoko story:

...I have often wondered that she would bury her favorite hero in a *novel*, when she might have revived him in the *scene*. She thought either that no actor could represent him, or that she could not bear to have him represented. And I believe the last, when I remember what I heard from a friend of hers, that she always told his story more feelingly than she writ it. (“Epistle Dedicatory” *Oroonoko* 428).

The enigmatic Julia in *The Lucky Chance* is another potential character of amatory fiction, who could be likened to Sylvia at a later phase of her development in *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister*, that Behn might have had difficulty representing on the stage. Julia chooses to remain married to her aged husband, Sir Cautious Fulbank and to continue a relationship with her lover Gayman. Whether the

latter relationship is, or will continue to be consummated is unclear however, and Behn avoids extensive forays into Julia's consciousness as the play concludes. It is significant that Eliza Haywood, most well known for her prolific amatory fiction, chose to resurrect this Behn play and to focus upon the Julia plot in her version of this comedy, *A Wife to be Lett*.

Ambivalent female figures like Julia and Angellica populate the amatory fiction of Behn wherein the opportunity for more extensive character development allows her fictitious women such as Sylvia, Alcadiana in *The Fair Jilt*, or Charlot in *The Lucky Mistake*, to become more than just the conventional romance victims, seductresses or villainesses.

Some transposition of male characters from Behn's drama to her prose fiction can also be detected. In her intrigue comedies, Behn establishes the pattern of a pair of male lovers, one of whom is serious and romantic and the other a libertine or rake, pursuing a pair of clever ladies (among others). Belville and Willmore in *The Rover*, Fillamour and Galiard in *The Feign'd Courtesans*, and Belmore and Gayman in *The Lucky Chance* anticipate Octavio and Philander in *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister*. However, men are arguably more likely to be victims or dupes in Behn's amatory fiction. The long-suffering Prince Henrik or even Tarquin in *The Fair Jilt*, the cowardly conflicted Vernole in *The Lucky Mistake*, and the exploited Octavio and love-distracted Cesario in *Love Letters* are examples of a shift in perspective from male to female gaze in these stories as predatory women control much of the plot.

On the other hand, the intrigue in Behn's comedies remains at least nominally male instigated although the prominence given to the roles of the female wits such as Hellena and Florinda, Marcella and Cornelia, or Leticia and Julia in the plotting of these plays has been noted by feminist critics (Copeland 9, Spencer (B) 101). Nevertheless, the strong comic conventions of this drama eventually relegate these female characters back to subordinate roles of brides-to-be or victims of seduction while the male characters usually prevail. In contrast, the predatory or sexually aggressive women in the prose fiction—Sylvia and Miranda in *The Fair Jilt*, for example--often “get away with it” and are neither subjugated nor punished. Only in comedy subplots does a similar pattern occur, as in the case of Blunt's humiliation by the “jilting wench” Lucetta in *The Rover*. It is arguable that characters like Blunt (or the hypocritical Tickletext in *The Feigned Courtesans*) deserve their fates because of their self-centred foolishness at the hands of clever women (who are usually in league with a male accomplice), and that such subplots are carryovers from Jonsonian satiric city comedy like Moll Common and her collaborators in *The Alchemist*.

The enduring (and endearing to some) character of Willmore, the libertine “hero” of *The Rover*, does become something of a template as a figure of the rake that transcends genre and reappears in the plays and novels of the next century (Copeland 14). If the observations of some critics are correct, characters like Willmore and Gayman are parodic representations of the male libertine (Copeland 43, Markley) who arguably are being perceived from the skeptical point of view of the witty female “victims” such as Hellena or Julia. Their self-centred ineffectuality as sexual predators anticipates a line of

unsuccessful fops/rakes in later Haywood (Sir Frederick Fineer in *Betsy Thoughtless*), Fielding (Lord Fellamar in *Tom Jones*) or Burney (Sir Sedley in *Camilla*) although Willmore outcharms them all.

Of further interest is Willmore's role as a (temporarily) reformed rake, an important figure in the moralistic sentimental drama to come but also in the future novel—Pamela's Mr. B as a prominent example. Behn, however, shows little interest in this aspect of Willmore or the male libertine, quickly undoing the rover's reformation in her sequel, and leaving Gayman in a transitional state in *The Lucky Chance*. Similarly in her fiction, the reformed rake, or for that matter, the reformed coquet, does not appear. Behn's allegiance to cavalier or Tory libertinism, as a number of critics point out, precludes much moral or sentimental concern about the ethical status of her characters in her plays or her novels. Even Angellica, the one female "victim" of cavalier ethics Behn allows us to ponder, is depicted cynically from an inverted moral perspective, for she regrets abandoning for love of Willmore her "principles" of exploitative sexuality as a prostitute (Copeland 35). Once again, Freeman's concept of "character" can be invoked to account for Behn's resistance to complicating or expanding upon the "interiority" of these figures. As a dramatist, she remains focused upon theatrical types who are recognizable in how they behave or perform their social roles on stage. As noted above, these theatrical characters continue to appear in the novels of the Eighteenth Century from Haywood to Burney, which often rely on such stock personalities as rakes, fops, and vengeful females to challenge the subjective sensibilities of the heroines.⁷

Instead of the comic mode, perhaps it is in the realm of the heroic where Behn links her dramatic and prose fiction more closely. The tragic/heroic figure of Oroonoko emerges from her late fiction but ironically, it is the dramatic representation of this character and story by Southerne and others that endured more than did any other of Behn's other creations over the next two centuries. Whether Behn ever contemplated dramatizing the Oroonoko story at all as Southerne wonders, we can see her working a similar literary vein in her late play, *The Widdow Ranter*, written contemporaneously with *Oroonoko* (Walden xxvii), which resembles Southerne's dramatization of *Oroonoko* in a number of ways (Spencer (A)130).

The Widdow Ranter is a tragi-comedy like Southerne's play, a dramatic form that had remained popular by the turn of the Eighteenth Century and which Behn had herself employed in her earlier plays (Hughes 181). The heroic main plot centers on the historical exploits of Nathaniel Bacon in Virginia, including his attempted adulterous romance with Semernia, the "Indian Queen," while the comic plot involves the schemes of the young rakes, Hazard and Friendly, to find financial prosperity through marriage to suitable (and not necessarily unmarried) colonial women. Opposing the designs of Bacon and the two cavaliers is the fractious "council" of colonials, led by Colonel Wellman, the Deputy Governor. The colony's women seem dominated by the Widow Ranter, a cross-dressing "roaring girl" who has her own amorous designs on Bacon's second-in-command, Dareing and who brooks no rivals. The heroic plot features the Indians led by their king, Cavarnio, who behave with noble dignity, not unlike the natives in Dryden's

heroic plays or those in Gay's *Polly*, and participate equally in the three-way power struggle depicted in the play though they lose their territory and king in the outcome.

This play exhibits some of the novelistic features found in Behn's *Oroonoko* and other amatory fiction. The plight of the Virginia Indians is sympathetically rendered in *The Widdow Ranter* as the native people in Surinam are in *Oroonoko*, both groups idealized as "noble savages," but with occasional more realistic glimpses into their circumstances. The Virginia Indians are depicted in much the same way as Oroonoko and his African tribal culture are in Cormantien, governed by kings and queens with Latinate names supported by an army with "generals" (IV I, 85). (Unlike in *Oroonoko*, there are no African slaves present in the play to be contrasted with the American Indians.) However, Behn occasionally does attempt to distinguish the Native Americans from the generalized pre-Christian European depiction that she seems to borrow from Dryden by having their priests perform dances "antickly...with ridiculous Postures" (IV I, 83) while chanting strange words. This dismissively naïve representation of native culture is punctuated with some colonial reality in the striking conversation between Bacon and Cavarnio, the Indian King:

KING: ...And oft I have heard my Grandsire say—that we were Monarchs once of all this spacious World; Till you an unknown People landing here, Distress'd and ruin'd by destructive storms, Abusing all our Charitable Hospitality, Usurp'd our Right, and made your friends your slaves.

BACON: I will not justify the Ingratitude of my fore-fathers, but finding here my Inheritance, I am resolv'd to maintain it so, And by my sword which first cut out my Portion, Defend each inch of Land with my last drop of Blood.

(II I, 36-7)

This bit of realistic social commentary mirrors that in an earlier conversation between Friendly and Hazard. Friendly has functioned in Virginia for a while and has learned its ways, which he explains to the newcomer Hazard:

...For at this time the Indians by our ill Management of Trade, whom we have armed against Our selves, Very frequently make War upon us with our own Weapons, Tho' often coming by the Worst are forced to make Peace with us again, but so, as upon every turn they fall to Massacring us whenever we ly exposed to them.

Friendly then turns his critical commentary to the colonials themselves:

This Country wants nothing but to be Peopl'd with a well-born Race to make it one of the best Collonies in the World, but for want of a Governour we are Ruled by a Council, some of which have been perhaps transported Criminals, who having Acquired great Estates are now become your Honour, and Right Worshipful, and Possess all Places of Authority; there are amongst 'em some honest Gentlemen who now begin to take upon 'em, and Manage Affairs as they ought to be. (I i, 14)

Friendly's (and Behn's) Tory sympathies are evident here, but the analysis of the colony's problems in terms of "managing affairs" suggests a realistic grounding in pragmatic mercantile colonialism (Hughes 181) that we might find in Defoe or later novelists. This picture of the colony also resembles the divided English community in Surinam that Behn provides in *Oroonoko*, probably on the basis of her first-hand experience there.

Derek Hughes argues in *The Theatre of Aphra Behn* that "*The Widdow Ranter; or, The History of Bacon in Virginia* has clear imaginative links with *Oroonoko* in its portrayal of corruption and rebellion in an English colony whose governor is absent"(181). Hughes points out that the failed heroic figure of Bacon relies on "his

archaic code of honour...linked to a simple faith in the identity of sign and signified” (185) much like Oroonoko in Behn’s novella. Bacon is betrayed, as is Oroonoko, by the treachery of the colonials although perhaps as his prerogative for being European, Bacon dies at his own hands.⁸ Both Oroonoko and Bacon kill their lovers, Imoinda and Semernia; however, the latter’s death is accidental since the Indian Queen had disguised herself as a “soldier” and perished in combat with Bacon. These actions in themselves seem contrived and drawn from heroic romance, but they are the tragic outcomes of conflict with the unromantic, self-interested ambitions of the colonists and their various factions. In effect, the comic prevails over the tragic or heroic, the mercantile individualist over heroic idealist. As Derek Hughes suggests, “class order is restored” (188) at the end of the play, but the only vision for the future is “not a magical prophesy but an economic forecast” (190). Such a collision of romantic ideals with a more pragmatic, even sordid, but ultimately prevailing version of “reality,” as found in Behn’s colonial play and novella, seems to be an intrinsic feature of the emerging novel, or “anti-romance,” traceable back to Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* (Brown 187-8). Furthermore, Hughes points out that in *The Widdow Ranter* (and arguably in *Oroonoko* as well but to a lesser extent) the depiction of this collision of values is fragmented, a “constant unclarity of boundaries” (188). Perhaps Behn in her late drama and fiction was moving towards (or resigning herself to) a more complex, more “realistic” depiction of an increasingly individualistic world view, in keeping with the trends of the times that were undermining her Royalist values.

Another aspect of *The Widdow Ranter* that anticipates or reflects Behn's amatory fiction is in the role of Semernia, the Indian Queen, who reveals about as much interiority as Angellica does in *The Rover*. While her husband the King remains consistently noble and wooden throughout the play, Semernia is a conflicted, ambivalent character who develops to some extent as the plot progresses. She is torn between her loyalty in marriage to her husband and her growing awareness of her romantic attraction to Bacon. Behn provides here a confrontation with the racial Other equivalent to the examination of clothing scene in *Oroonoko* where she depicts the reactions of the native women of Surinam to the strange body coverings of the English ladies. In the play, Semernia encounters European-style love:

The more I gaze upon this English Stranger, the more Confusion struggles in my Soul, Oft have I heard of Love, and oft this Gallant Man...Has told a thousand Tales of dying Maids. And ever when he spoke, my panting heart, with a Prophetick fear in sighs reply'd, I shall fall such a Victim to his Eyes.
(II, I, 38)

This new experience is duly described by Bacon to her as she herself succumbs to it:

BACON: It makes us tremble when we touch the fair one, And all the blood runs shiv'ring thro' the veins, The heart's surrounded with a feeble Languishment, The eyes are dying, and the Cheeks are pale, The tongue is faltering, and the body fainting.

QUEEN: [Aside] Then I'm undone, and all I feel is Love. (II, i, 42)

This erotic language would fit well in Behn's amatory fiction or that of her successors.

After trying to avoid Bacon and his charms, Semernia acknowledges her romantic dilemma and its wider ramifications:

Alas! What pitty 'tis I saw the General, before my Fate had given me to the King—but now—like those that change their Gods, my faithless mind 'twixt my two opinions wavers; ... *Which way so ever my Devotions move, I am too wretched to be heard above.*

(IV, ii, 85-6)

Appropriately for an heroic tragedy, Semernia's romantic conundrum is resolved by her dying (preceded by her husband) as a result of a wound she receives while cross-dressed as a "soldier." Thus like Julia's in *The Lucky Chance*, Semernia's potential adulterous relationship is evaded in this play.

Perhaps more significant, at least from a feminist critical viewpoint, is Semernia's political aspiration early in the play to reconcile the Indians and Bacon's English:

...I'll try my power with the General, for an Accommodation of a Peace: the very dreams of war fright my soft slumbers that us'd to be employ'd in kinder Business.⁹

However, Bacon's charms quickly distract Semernia from her purpose as she learns that she has "power" in a different, amatory sense, and she abandons her peace-making cause:

I'll talk no more, our words exchange our Souls, and every look fades all my blooming honour, like Sun beams, on unguarded Roses.—take all our Kingdoms—make our People Slaves, and let me fall beneath your Conquering sword. But never let me hear you talk again or gaze upon your eyes.

(II, ii, 43)

Love literally conquers all, but Behn does provide a fleeting glimpse of possible female empowerment outside the realm of sexual love here much as she does in the case of Angellica's attempt to control her own life in *The Rover*. Like Imoinda, Semernia also attempts to participate in the most masculine of activities, combat, but even less successfully, as she falls to Bacon's sword. (Imoinda manages to wound but not kill her colonial adversary.) Perhaps Semernia is also the equivalent of the Behn-narrator in

Oroonoko (or her surrogates Charlotte Weldon and Widow Lackitt in Southerne's dramatic version) who claims agency in Surinam's affairs but turns out to be powerless against a patriarchal establishment.

Behn's depiction of ambivalent female characters with some agency or aspirations to it in her plays corresponds to the "fantasy" of the more empowered women of her own amatory fiction, while the indirect or ironic resistance to the dominant masculinity of Restoration drama that she embeds in her characterization of these women (Copeland 9) suggests a path to be followed by later women novelists as they present conforming, domesticated models for female behavior in the "reformed coquette" or "conduct book" plots of their fiction. Behn, writing the first English amatory novellas, was relatively free to empower her female characters, for good or evil, and often at the expense of the men in her stories, because she believed she was merely writing "Trifles" for the entertainment of an audience of women. Delarivier Manley and, for much of her career, Eliza Haywood, also enjoyed this freedom. In contrast, to survive on the public stage as a dramatist, Behn had to bow to social and genre pressures for the masculine to prevail, but in subtle ways, such as the parodic depiction of the cavalier/rake, some glimpses into female interiority, or dynamic roles to be played by women, she tried to retain as much female agency in her female characters as possible.

Annette Kreis-Schink offers another explanation of how this may have been accomplished through a shift in the Restoration period of the dramatic space depicted on

stage from the public street, dominated and controlled by men, to rooms within the household, the private space occupied and to some extent controlled by women:

Thus the drama of the period helped to shape and to resist, to contain and to transform, the dominant construction of gender relations. It reflected, produced, and subverted the struggle to establish new gender identities....In my view, this focus on the interior of the home is one of the reasons for the emergence of women actors and playwrights in late seventeenth-century England, a reason that has so far not received any attention. (32)

Schink cites Congreve's famous "Proviso Scene" in *The Way of the World* as a significant example of this process as Millamant establishes the inviolability of her closet and tea table in her marital negotiation with Mirabel (31). A review of Behn's three intrigue comedies¹⁰ discussed in this study show this pattern developing in her plays before 1700. Much of the action in *The Rover* and *The Feign'd Courtesans* takes place in the street (with the interaction between Willmore and Angellica (and Blunt and Lucetta) within the confines of the women's homes being significant exceptions), but the reverse is true in the later *The Lucky Chance*. Most of the plot transpires within the Fulbank residence wherein the female characters outmanoeuvre the men. Once again, Aphra Behn seems very much to be in the vanguard of the literary developments of her age.

Aphra Behn's greatest significance to this study, perhaps, is her groundbreaking work in all three literary genres that clearly announced to the Restoration and subsequent audiences that there should be no "women's genre" or female ghetto in English literature. She, at least, could meet traditional male-dominated literary standards and be a commercial success in the literary marketplace, despite her lack of formal schooling in the classics or access to conventional patronage. With such credentials, Behn could

develop the new genre of more realistic prose fiction, which would become the novel, and give it credibility within the English literary tradition. Of course, this announcement by a woman was not welcomed by many in the English literary establishment of the Eighteenth Century, and thus she and her work were eventually consigned to oblivion or worse in literary history¹¹.

Her message was especially unwelcome to the men and women who would create the cult of the sentimentalized domestic woman, whose literary turf was akin to her limited social space in the privacy of the home. Eighteenth Century ladies should write—preferably as a result of dire financial necessity—novels, fictions to be written and read by women in private.

The theatre, on the other hand, was the most public of literary activities, but nonetheless depended on the presence of women—actresses, female roles, and even women playwrights—for its appeal from the Restoration onwards. Drama was also the most financially lucrative literary endeavour for hard-up writers, for a few third-night receipts could provide a comfortable year's income. It is no wonder then that Behn's successors, in spite of the increasing social pressure to remain outside of the literary limelight or public view, persist in writing for the theatre while taking advantage of the growing opportunities for women in the more socially acceptable realm of the emerging novel. Behn established that this could be done, and many women writers of the Eighteenth Century, with varying degrees of success in each genre, attempted to continue this practice.¹² Her immediate successors were the "Female Wits: The Triumvirate of

Poets” derided in an anonymous play of that title¹³: Catherine Trotter and Mary Pix, who continued to focus their literary efforts in the theatre but did try their hand at prose fiction, and Delarivier Manley, who wrote for the stage but gained her reputation through her prose fiction.

CHAPTER TWO

“THE FEMALE WITS”: Pix, Trotter, Manley and Davys

The mantle of professional female dramatist-novelist quickly passed to three women writers after Aphra Behn’s death in 1689, the “The Female Wits,” as lampooned in the anonymous play of that title staged at Drury Lane in 1696: Delarivier Manley, Mary Pix, and Catherine Trotter. Pix and Trotter, like Behn, were most productive and remembered for writing plays, but each did write one work of prose fiction, *The Inhumane Cardinal; or, Innocence Betray’d* (1696) by Pix and *The Adventures of a Young Lady (Olinda)* (1693) by Trotter. On the other hand, Manley, although she wrote five plays, four of which were staged, is best known for her scandal fiction, in particular *The New Atalantis* (1709).

In the late 1690s and first decade of the Eighteenth Century, these three writers were a major presence on the London stage, with a total of twenty-one of their plays performed, five in 1696 alone—which no doubt prompted the misogynistic *The Female Wits* in the same year (Nachumi, Appendix). That year also saw a posthumous production of a Behn play *The Younger Brother, or The Amorous Jilt*. They were preceded on the London stage by another female dramatist, the anonymous “Ariadne,” whose play *She Ventures and He Wins* was performed in 1695 (Kelley (B) ix). The dramatic legacy established by Aphra Behn appeared to have been entrenched by her immediate successors as the Eighteenth Century began.¹⁴

Nevertheless, these women were evidently drawn to explore writing prose fiction as well, although only Manley made her career of it. Indeed, Manley, Pix and Trotter experimented with fiction very early in their careers. Trotter's novella *The Adventures of a Young Lady (Olinda)* written at age fourteen, Pix's *The Inhumane Cardinal; or, Innocence Betray'd*, and Manley's *Letters Written by Mrs. Manley: To Which is Added a Letter from a Supposed Nun in Portugal* were their first publications (Nachumi, Appendix). Thus, the three successors to Behn reversed their predecessor's creative pattern, starting with fiction (just) before writing for the stage. They quickly opted for drama, however, perhaps because writing for the stage was more lucrative than fiction writing at this time even for a woman (Nachumi 49).

Despite being grouped together as "female wits," and apparently having some social relationship with one another, Pix and Trotter took somewhat different literary career paths in both drama and fiction (Kelley, B x). Pix specialized in heroic tragedy, which was "a pity" according to Fidelis Morgan in *The Female Wits* (50); for her comedies, *The Spanish Wives* (1696), *The Innocent Mistress* (1697), and *The Deceiver Deceived* (1698), plus *The Beau Defeated* (1700), *The Different Widows* (1703) and *The Adventures in Madrid* (1706) that have been attributed to her, are regarded as lively and were successfully performed. Her tragedies, on the other hand, were criticized for their poor metrification (Kelley B xiii) although they were relatively successful, in particular *Ibrahim* (1696) her first play, which was revived several times in the Eighteenth Century (Fidelis 45). Pix even had the distinction of being blatantly plagiarized by a male playwright and actor, George Powell, to whom she had shown the manuscript of *The*

Deceiver Deceived.¹⁵ Pix's dramas are regarded as being conservative and more politically cautious, with less emphasis on female agency than the plays of Behn, Trotter or Manley (Kelley (B) xiv, Pearson 169, 180).

Trotter, on the other hand, wrote fewer plays, but was more overtly political (in the Whig cause) and feminist in her orientation¹⁶. Her one comedy *Love at a Loss, or, Most Votes Carry It* (1700) features strong women characters who "empathize with and support each other" which is unusual, according to Anne Kelley ((B) xxv). Perhaps in the tradition of Behn's depiction of Willmore in *The Rover*, the rake in this play, Beaumine, is weak and duped by the female characters while his libertinism is intellectually challenged (Kelley (B) xxv), both indicators of the comedy being "transitional," in Laura Brown's terms, between "dramatic social satire" and moral or sentimental comedy. Trotter's first play, a tragedy, *Agnes de Castro* (1697) significantly, was based on Aphra Behn's novella of the same title, which demonstrates the fluidity of genres at this time.

The Inhumane Cardinal; or, Innocence Betray'd was Mary Pix's only foray into prose fiction, an amatory novella that stays close to the continental romance tradition in terms of its elevated "heroic" language, aristocratic characters, embedded "histories" of other characters, and its focus on love and seduction¹⁷. However, it may owe as much to late Jacobean or Carolingian drama, such as *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, as it does to contemporary amatory fiction, not surprisingly since Pix was to become primarily a dramatist. The narrative technique is a straight-forward third person omniscient relation,

with the exception of some letters between lovers inserted, typical of romance fiction, and the two histories related by characters. Nevertheless, the format seems unusual for the two histories constitute more than half the narrative leaving the main plot a kind of frame story.

The main story, set in Rome in the first part of the Seventeenth Century, focuses on the seduction of the innocent heroine, Melora, by the corrupt “inhumane”¹⁸ cardinal, Antonio Barbarino. He is aided by the powerful, machiavellian female character, Donna Olimpia, “who govern’d both Church and State” during the reign of Pope Innocent X. Both Antonio and Olimpia are historical figures as well as “rather conventional stereotypes in the fiction of the period” (Kelley (B) xi). The seduction tactic is for the Cardinal to impersonate Prince Alphonsus (Duke of Modena and rightful claimant to the Dukedom of Ferrara) who is currently engaged in secretly lobbying the Papal Court to reclaim his kingdom and thus is out of public view. Olimpia acts as the matchmaker/chaperone/panderer between “Alphonsus” and the naïve Melora, who entirely trusts her. Olimpia lures Melora from her father’s house and protection in order to facilitate the seduction process.

Besides orchestrating a series of meetings between Melora and the Cardinal, Olimpia wins over the chaste and cautious victim by means of storytelling, the recital of the two “histories” that constitute so much of this tale. The first is the backstory of Alphonsus himself, or rather of the romantic relationship of his parents, Alphonsus and Cordelia. The second is the romantic story of the current Duke of Parma, Emilius and his

bride Lovisa, whom Melora has the opportunity to observe in his court. The former tale is narrated by Olimpia while the latter is told by a courtier, Don Francisco, who is privy to the seduction plot and near the end tries to intervene to save Melora, but unsuccessfully. Both stories are “comic” romances in that they have happy endings with united lovers in contrast to the “she-tragedy” plot of the main narrative. Apparently, the point of these extended narrations is to break down Melora’s resistance to “marrying” “Alphonso” in secret (allegedly because of his delicate political status) as the lovers in both histories carry on a romantic relationship in secrecy in order to avoid the censure of parents, appropriately the fathers in both cases, both of whom conveniently die, allowing the unions to be eventually fulfilled and made public.

Melora occasionally comments on these stories, and at the end of the first one, when Olimpia reveals that her own mysterious suitor is the supposed son of the successful Duke Alphonsus, she does not respond as enthusiastically as the panderess expects: “The Trouble his Father hath involved him in (answers Melora) by matching privately, and below his dignity, ought, in common Prudence, to deter this Gentleman from any such design” (25). The second story is more effective, as “The Ladies were pleas’d with the Narration ...especially Melora; her Sentiments were Delicate; and by a Sympathetic Power, the Misfortunes or Blessings of others sensibly mov’d her Passions” (60). On being chided by Olimpia for not responding to the Cardinal/Alphonsus as Lovisa did to his “father” in the story, Melora tries to maintain her chaste stance and social poise: “I thought reply’d, (Blushing and looking on Olimpia) my Royal Governess would have chid my Weakness too far: and I assure you, my Lord (went she on smiling)

you cannot oblige me more than in comparing me to Rocks and Marbles, and such impenetrable stuff: for I have a great vanity to be thought Inexorable” (60).

However, despite her admirable attempts at self-control and prudent conduct, Melora succumbs to the persuasions of Olimpia and the romantic effusions of the Cardinal and “marries” him. After six months, and with Melora pregnant, the Cardinal’s fervor wanes and political exigencies determine that his mistress must be disposed of. In spite of a last-minute attempt by Francisco to save her, Melora is poisoned. The Cardinal and Olimpia get away with their crimes, even when exposed by Melora’s father because they “are Persons too Great” (69), though they eventually are banished and suffer very unpleasant deaths by natural causes.

Pix’s only prose fiction clearly shows a fusion of later Seventeenth Century dramatic forms, in particular “she-tragedy,” and imported continental romance. Pix’s narrative technique relies on a great deal of dialogue to advance the plot giving the work the feel of a play script. On the other hand, romantically formulaic letters between lovers are strategically embedded into the narrative in keeping with the style of the amatory novella. The features of the two genres mingle comfortably to provide easily accessible reading entertainment, modeling the highly successful fiction-writing approach that Delarivier Manley and especially Eliza Haywood, would pursue. Also, Pix occasionally injects a little anti-romantic “realism” into *The Inhumane Cardinal* that anticipates a crucial feature of the emerging novel as conceived by Richardson, Fielding, and Lennox. For example, early in the first “history,” a character comments: “no where but in

Romances, Persons fall in Love at the first sight; and only Conversation and a long Acquaintance can produce a violent Affection” (16). Later, in the second “history” Lovisa, sounding like Haywood’s Melliora from *Love in Excess*, checks Emilius’ amatory rhetoric by noting “These Imaginary Visions (returns Lovisa gravely) exceed Love’s real Joys. Love, like a Course Picture set in an advantageous light, at a distance we admire, and gaze with wonder, but when nearer to our view, a hundred unthought faults appearing; and imperfect daubing’s seen” (43). Such remarks, sprinkled sparingly throughout this text, are gentle reminders to readers to not take the rhetoric of romances too seriously perhaps. These narrative hints are reinforced by the brutal, tragic outcome of the plot that seems deliberately set in counterpoint to the two histories; pragmatic realism trumps romantic idealism.

Like Behn, Trotter, and eventually Haywood, Pix did try her hand at domestic city comedy and comedy of manners with some success. These dramatic forms move away from the earlier intrigue format, favored by Behn and some of her contemporaries and anticipate aspects of Eighteenth-Century sentimental comedy and perhaps the English novel as well. Paula Backscheider observes this trend in English drama after 1701:

...playwrights had made conventional the long-suffering, completely virtuous woman. By setting the action of their plays more within the home...and increasing the number of intimate conversations between husband and wife, they had created a softer, more domestic heroine. (450)

Backscheider applies this observation to Catherine Trotter’s *Love at a Loss*, discussed below, but a similar anticipation of this trend is apparent in Pix’s *The Innocent Mistress*

(1697) although most of her other comedies stayed with the Spanish intrigue format favored by her predecessor¹⁹.

The Innocent Mistress plays on the oxymoronic title while focusing on the follies of the gentry and the middle class, as well as the servants (Morgan 263), in a manner that anticipates the inter-class relationships found in the comedies of Elizabeth Griffith, Sophia Lee and Frances Burney²⁰ as well the novels of Richardson or Smollett. Fidelis Morgan comments on the “relaxed, less formal world” of this play, despite its “outrageously tight plotting”(263), which could be interpreted as evidence of bourgeois realism emerging from Restoration comedy as Brown suggests (146). In spite of Anne Kelley’s and Jacqueline Pearson’s observation of a less feministic stance in her works in comparison to those of Behn or Trotter, Pix’s *dramatis personae* for this comedy features first “an independent woman,” Mrs. Beauclair, amongst a cast of ten female characters. Several of these characters, however, are described as “ill bred” (265)²¹ and represent female stereotypes.

There are at least three main plots with at least as many subplots in this comedy, most of which involve Lady Beauclair in some capacity. Sir Charles Beauclair is unhappily married to Lady Beauclair who has a daughter by a previous marriage, Peggy, in tow. Vaguely anticipatory of Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, Sir Charles was a younger son who was married off in the Indies: “...’twas a detested match. Ruling friends and cursed avarice joined this unthinking youth to the worst of women”(271). He is in love with Bellinda, “the innocent mistress,” and has managed to establish a platonic relationship

with her though she struggles with her guilt about it. “Bellinda” is the alias used in town by Marianne Belmour who has fled an unsatisfactory arranged marriage. Lady Beauclair and her daughter are “ill bred” colonials who exploit Sir Charles. When asked how she liked the Indies, Lady Beauclair rather ingenuously exclaims: “How was’t possible I should? Our beaux were the refuse of Newgate, and our merchants the offspring of foolish, plodding cits” (274), comments similar to those heard in Behn’s *The Widow Ranter* or Southerne’s *Oroonoko*.

In a second plot, Lady Beauclair has romantic aspirations for Sir Francis Wildlove, a rake or gallant, who is instead in love with Mrs. Beauclair, the “independent woman.” She is Sir Charles’ niece and “friend”, who returns Wildlove’s passion in spite of his roving eye. Her witty insight and clever manipulation of Wildlove recall Hellena’s relationship with Wilmore in Behn’s *The Rover*. In another subplot, Lady Beauclair aspires for her daughter Peggy to marry profitably, but is duped by her husband’s indigent friend Spendall, a “sharper,” who pretends to have inherited a fortune, but is after whatever dowry Peggy has. Yet another plot involves Wildlove’s very straight country friend, Beaumont, who is in love with Arabella. Her fortune is controlled by Lady Beauclair and her brother Squire Barnaby Cheatall, to whom they intend her to be married (in order to secure her fortune to themselves). Finally, the merchant Mr. Flywife and his mistress “Mrs. Flywife” represent a kind of inverted image of the Beauclairs, as an unhappily unmarried couple. Mrs. Flywife is also in pursuit of Wildlove (and he of her) with Mr. Flywife as the jealous “husband.” Mrs. Beauclair plays a brief “breeches” role impersonating a young gallant and provocatively “steals” Mrs. Flywell’s affection

from Wildlove. As Fidelis Morgan points out, all this “outrageously tight plotting” is facilitated by the servants—Eugenia, Gentil, Searchwell, and others—who are also on the lookout for their own interest (263).

The main plot dilemmas are resolved when Mr. Flywife is revealed to be “Allen,” Lady Beauclair’s still living first (and therefore only) husband, while Arabella manages to secure the legal papers regarding her fortune, thereby stymieing the mercenary scheme of Lady Beauclair and her brother.²² Wildlove, after being tested by Mrs. Beauclair and a brief, somewhat cynical “contract scene” between them, seems destined to some kind of open marriage with her:

Well, Sir, if you can give me your heart, I can allow you great liberties. But when we have played the fool and married, don’t you, when you have been pleased abroad, come home surly. Let your looks be kind, your conversation easy, and, though I should know you have been with a mistress, I’d meet you with a smile. (321)

Peggy is happy with her money-less marriage to Spendall and enjoys her new adult freedom²³. “Mrs. Flywife” is disposed of by her “husband” in favour of his real wife, the former Lady Beauclair though he shows a resigned lack of enthusiasm for either. Sir Charles is able to deliver the good news of his honorable availability as a now unmarried suitor just in time to Bellinda/Marianne who is on the verge of fleeing him forever (and who also is about to be reconciled with her father and family regarding the dodged arranged marriage). Multiple anticipated weddings provide a conventional conclusion to this comedy.²⁴

As in *The Inhumane Cardinal*, there is some anti-romantic discourse or tone of “laughing comedy” critical of the amatory conventions within this play. For example, the

sober Beaumont describes Arabella as “Too studious for her sex, she fell upon the seducers of the women: plays and romances. From thence she formed herself a hero, a cavalier, that could love and talk like them” (269)²⁵. At the end of the play, the resigned villain Cheatall cynically declares:

To any man’s thinking these now are going to heaven, ding, dong. But hear me, ladies, ‘faith all young, handsome fellows talk just so before matrimony. Seven years hence let me hear of pantings, heavings and raptures. No, gadzooks, scarce risings then. (328)

When Wildlove responds with amorous platitudes to Mrs. Beauclair’s open marriage offer (cited above), she replies: “You fall into the romantic style, Sir Francis” (321).

On the other hand, there are also signs of the features of sentimental comedy, such as the serendipitous discovery that resolves the plot, anticipating that in Steele’s *The Conscious Lovers* 25 years later, and the totally virtuous characters like Sir Charles, whom Beaumont describes as having “moral virtue to our late English heroes unpractised and unknown” (296), and Bellinda, who struggles to remain completely honorable in spite of her passion for Sir Charles. Pix has Arabella comment at the play’s end: “Permit a stranger to rejoice at the reward of virtue and constant love” (327). This celebration of the moral and socially conforming characters over the witty libertines and coquettes highlighted in Restoration comedy suggests an anticipation, on Pix’s part, of the sentimental and domestic middle-class values that would come to dominate Eighteenth-Century drama (Brown 146).

Jacqueline Pearson points out in *The Prostituted Muse* that “Pix was unfortunately placed in the forefront of women’s fight to be dramatists, and sometimes she adopts too

placatory a tone to a world she assumes will be hostile” (180). She dramatizes “male power with passive women who are helpless” (175) and demonstrates an “uncritical acceptance of the sexual double standard” (177). Certainly many of the female characters in *The Innocent Mistress* (and Pix’s other plays) are conventional stereotypes of female behavior, the same “passive heroines or active monsters” (178) that populate Pix’s novella and much contemporary prose fiction and drama. Arabella and Bellinda clearly represent the former while Lady Beauclair, Mrs. Flywife, and to a lesser extent, Peggy, the latter. However, I would contend that Mrs. Beauclair evades such categorization although she is perhaps a typical female wit of Restoration comedy. She also belongs, however, to a more enigmatic class of women, married or about to be married, depicted on the late Seventeenth-Century stage, that includes Wycherley’s Alithea, Etheridge’s Harriet Woodville, Vanbrugh’s Amanda, and Behn’s Hellena and Julia Fulbank, who possess intelligence and some agency and who are responsible for the “reform” of rakes both before and after marriage. These women characters seem to fuse the polarized roles Pearson describes into a more psychologically credible and interesting construction of female identity that will be explored throughout the Eighteenth Century in sentimental drama and the novel. Nevertheless, Mrs. Beauclair, for all of her insight and social dexterity, must accept, as Pearson notes, the inevitable double standard that “the only alternative for a nice woman is to be chaste and accept her husband’s lack of chastity” (178).

Like Aphra Behn, Pix knew how to please her audience and read the literary market place, but unlike her predecessor, she apparently concluded that the most

profitable use of her talents was in the theatre rather than in writing fiction. Perhaps, if she had lived beyond 1709 when the trend of women's writing shifted to fiction, Mary Pix might have returned to novel-writing as did her fellow "fair wit," Delarivier Manley. However, in light of Pearson's observations above, she might have followed the more conservative path of Mary Davys, Jane Barker or Penelope Aubin of writing the "moralizing" novel (Spencer (B) 86), rather than the amatory fiction of Manley or early Haywood that flaunted female agency and political engagement.

Catherine Trotter, on the other hand, was considerably younger than Pix and sustained a relatively long literary career. Yet she also chose not to return to fiction writing or to the stage after her last play of 1706, most probably because of the obligations of her marriage to Rev. Patrick Cockburn in 1708 (Kelley (A) 6). Trotter's single comedy, *Love at a Loss, or, Most Votes Carry It* (1700) is, like Pix's *The Innocent Mistress*, a comedy of manners, set in England. Unlike in Pix's play, however, the complex plot lacks action and can be hard to follow, more like that in her mentor²⁶, William Congreve's contemporaneous *The Way of the World*. There are two main plots: Lesbia's complicated relationship to Beaumine and his rival Grandfoy, and Lucilia's to Philabell and his rival, the foppish Cleon. Each heroine has a secret in her past that could be an impediment to marrying her choice. Lesbia and Beaumine had been "officially" contracted to each other and have consummated the "marriage", but didn't follow with the church ceremony, allegedly because of Beaumine's mother's objections. Beaumine and Lesbia believe they no longer care for each other but can't figure out how to extricate themselves from their prior commitment (Beaumine to continue his rake's role and

Lesbia to marry Grandfoy). Lucilia, at the misguided prompting of her governess Lysetta, had written compromising letters to Cleon, who threatens to reveal them to her preferred suitor, Phillabell. A third plot of sorts involves Miranda, a professed coquette, whose character best matches Beaumine's. He wishes to have an affair with her, but she too is betrothed--to the unfortunate Constant. This is a "laughing" comedy with lots of cynical, witty repartee, mostly about love and marriage (but with money not a big issue here as it is in Pix's comedy) largely at the expense of the male characters, and little evidence of sentiment. In the two comedies discussed here at least, Trotter and Pix appear to stake out the two sides of the debate between satiric and sentimental comedy that would continue throughout the Eighteenth Century.

There are two original elements in the play: the bumbling figure of Bonsot who anticipates Centlivre's Marplot, and the unusual resolution of Lesbia's choice of husband by a vote of the other characters (as stated in the subtitle). The result of the vote is narrowly in Beaumine's "favour," and a conservative deference to prior commitments over true love seems to prevail²⁷. This outcome includes an interesting survey of the rationale for each character's vote that provides insight into his or her values. For example, the idealistic Phillabell and Constant vote "for him who loves her best," and Miranda, the coquette, opts "for him who loves her least," and so on (635). Lesbia equivocally sums up the vote in Beaumine's favour:

The odds are on Beaumine's side: whether I declare I love him least or best, there's a vote for him; his right is indisputable; he says he shan't quarrel with me; and he is weary of me already. So there can but be two against him. (635)

It is significant that the two votes against the former rake come from male characters. All the women, on the other hand, support Lesbia's return to Beaumine, with the conflicted Lucilia (see below) adopting a conservative, legalistic position: "I am for him that can plead most right in her" (635).

Jacqueline Pearson declares that the modern dismissal of Trotter as a boring dramatist "will not do" and argues that "she is not a historical curiosity but an accomplished dramatist in her own right" (189). From Pearson's feminist standpoint, Trotter excels Pix in being "especially optimistic about the abilities of women and their moral and intellectual powers" (ibid.). The latter aspect of Trotter's work has been celebrated more recently by Anne Kelley, who has apparently specialized in Trotter studies, and Paula Backscheider, who has written extensively about early Eighteenth-Century women writers. Kelley echoes Pearson:

...the focus in *Love at a Loss* is on the potential of each individual to moderate the flaws in the patriarchal structure with the help of a principled rationality, in order to develop social stability based on mutual respect—arguably a Lockean perspective. The play focuses primarily on the intellectual deliberations of the female characters. ((A) 108)

This emphasis on philosophical deliberation might have contributed to the "boring" theatrical legacy of this play,²⁸ but this intellectual dimension and the resulting depiction of a kind of female interiority constitute for Paula Backscheider a "novelistic"²⁹ quality in the characterization of women:

Trotter's play is a significant theatrical contribution to some of the most important explorations of human nature and human relationships in the time of the construction of modern married people. As might be expected, it is also a part of literature's major contribution to the creation of the

psychologized person—a movement strikingly apparent in the courtship and marriage plays of this decade....As Vanbrugh has said, to some people in the culture, this part of personal experience had become *more* interesting than actions, and writers were beginning to assemble multiple ways of giving writers and readers access to the thoughts and feelings of their characters. ((B) 456)

She goes on to say that a “considerable achievement of Trotter’s play is her ability to give her characters consciousness and her audience access to thought” (457). Backscheider suggests that is achieved not only by the more conventional technique of having the women characters confide in each other, but also by the “Lockean structure” of having the audience witness an “active combative scene” and then having “the characters discuss the scene separately with others” (457). Her example from *Love at a Loss* is the encounter between Beaumine and Miranda, which is secretly witnessed by Lesbia. Beaumine is fulfilling his openly declared intent to flirt with the coquette Miranda, but his account of his relationship to Lesbia, as well as the rationale of his libertinism, is what is under scrutiny. Miranda is quite willing to entertain Beaumine’s advances until she “debriefs” the encounter with Lesbia, and decides to ally with her against the rake.

Backscheider summarizes the process:

As they analyze the other person, describe their conduct, and tease out their own reactions and the implications of the scene, they ‘process’ the event and assign meaning. (457)

The general context of this processing in the play is the staging of debates between the characters (male and female) about the institution of marriage, which according to Backscheider “begin to move beyond a few generalizations to the kinds of insights that will provide plots for post-1760 novels” (447).

While Bakscheider, like Pearson and Kelley, regards Trotter's dramatic characterization which "elevates women and creates a new subject position...a subject that projects 'conscious worth'" (457) as largely successful, she finds at least one character depiction problematic—that of Lucilia, who struggles with her own lack of transparency with her lover of choice and future husband, Philabell, whom she has deceived about her past epistolary relationship to Cleon. When given the opportunity to examine the incriminating letters, Phillabell, who was initially suspicious about his future bride, nobly chooses not to examine them and the marriage can take place. Lucilia is relieved but expresses guilt in an aside:

Well, I am happily come off, but through such dangers, such anxieties, as might warn all our sex against those little gallantries with which they think only to amuse themselves but, though innocent, too often gain'em such a character of lightness as their future conduct never can efface. Nay, though I have succeeded better, I find within all is not as it should be: a secret check, that so entire a confidence as Phillabell has in me is not returned with that plain artless dealing it deserves. That will be the lasting punishment of my childish fault. (634)

Lucilia's reflection could be a meditative moment by the heroine of many a "reformed coquet" novel and seems to owe something to Olinda's perceptive self-consciousness in Trotter's own novella *The Adventures of a Young Lady*. Bakscheider, however, wonders if "[it] is, perhaps, too subtle for the stage or, at least, not dramatized in a developed or credible enough way" (457). She suggests that Trotter abruptly shifts away from Lucilia's dilemma to Lesbia's, which can be conveniently resolved by the characters' votes, and "shuts down, suddenly and completely, access to the character's feelings" (458). Bakscheider's observation, however, can be applied more broadly to this play as

a whole (perhaps also explaining its stage failure), and arguably to the developing trends in Eighteenth Century drama in general.³⁰ Such an assessment would support Laura Brown's theory about the decline of drama and the rise of the novel during this era.

Catherine Trotter's *The Adventures of a Young Lady (Olinda*³¹) (1693) may be the original "reformed coquette" novel (according to Jane Spencer (D) 143-4). In contrast to Pix's novella, it is a first-person narrative, an epistolary fiction—but all nine of the letters are written by Olinda, most to her male confidant, Cleander, but the last couple to her lover, Cloridon³². Olinda is a coquette in that she does not want to marry anybody (and is in love with nobody) through much of the story until she gradually falls for Cloridon, who is a major public figure and already married. Olinda does toy with her other suitors a little, but she is virtuous, and consistent in her indifferent attitude above. As Ann Kelley points out, all the male suitors are caricatures; even the imposing Cloridon receives some comic treatment ((A) 57). Trotter shows her originality in this cause when she deploys a "fictive device" that Kelley calls the "two Olindas" to expose the follies and self-absorption of the men who seek to court or seduce her heroine, a device derived from the masquerade that examines conventional gender constructs and proved popular on the Eighteenth-century stage (for example in Cowley's *The Belle's Strategem*) and in later fiction (Defoe's *Roxana* and Haywood's *Fantomina*) ((A) 61).³³ Olinda performs as a witty Restoration belle to her suitor Antonio when she wears a mask, but acts as a stupid girl when in his company without a mask. Antonio's inability to figure out that she is the same person reveals his intellectual and social inadequacy. Orinda dismissively

comments: “I don’t know, whether he ever knew, that they were both one person” ((A) 62).

Olinda serves as a platform for Trotter’s satirical observations of male behavior, and as such, her coquetry is justified and not unreasonable. Her “reform,” therefore, is at most her realistically depicted recognition that she does have feelings for Cloridon and must deal with them. With some psychological insight, Trotter allows Olinda to explore her angry response to Cloridon’s expression of a more explicit passion for her (tendered in verse, of course). Olinda reports to her epistolary mentor, Cleander:

I believe I spoke from my Heart, when I told him I hated him; I’m sure I thought so then....But my Rage, or Hate, was soon Converted to a Quiet, Stupid Grief, that overwhelm’d my Soul, and left me not the Power of easing it the common way, in tears, or in Complaints. I saw that I must resolve never to see him again, whatever it made me endure: And in fine I saw all that cou’d make me unhappy, without hopes of a Remedy....And I don’t know if I had not some Reason to distrust my self, after having gone so far, as not only to suffer him to talk to me of his Love, but to own mine to him. (98-99)

This passage of character introspection displays a sense of interiority and an early manifestation of the “possessive individual” that is remarkable, especially since the writer was 14 years old and the publication date was 1693!

Olinda learns to handle this self-knowledge appropriately in not yielding her virtue to Cloridon or actively encouraging his advances while his wife is alive. Kelley argues that a dominant characteristic of Trotter’s depiction of women in her works is their judgment and rationality, especially when compared to the male characters ((A) 61). This thoughtful, unemotional approach of her heroines is exemplified in Olinda’s management of her love affair with Cloridon:

I find by Experience 'tis but bravely, heartily and thoroughly Resolving upon a thing, and 'tis half done: There's no Passion, no Temptation so strong, but Resolution can overcome: All is able to Resolve: there's the Point, for one must lose a little of the first Ardour before one can do that; and many of our Sex have ruin'd themselves, for want of time to think. 'Tis not a constant settled purpose of Virtue will do. There must be particular Resolutions for a particular Attack. (103)

The couple eventually makes a deal that they will wait until he is free (presumably by his wife's death) but in the meantime remain in a platonic relationship.

While the figure of Cloridon may suggest the kind of political scandal fiction that Behn and Manley wrote³⁴ and the romance "plot" (of a series of suitors with classical names) seem to derive from the amatory fiction of the time, Trotter's novella points in another direction that future novel would follow. Jane Spencer traces the origin of the "reformed heroine" in fiction, which she sees as "the paradigm of the central female tradition in the eighteenth-century novel" ((D)141), to Trotter's precocious first work. After observing that "*Orinda's Adventures* is clearly inspired by Restoration comedy" and Orinda is "close to the abundant coquettes of Restoration and eighteenth-century comedy," she notes that:

Coquettes in the novel are very like coquettes in the drama, but in the women's novels they and their education become central, and comic expose of coquetry shades into analysis of the feminine situation that produces it. ((D)145)

Spencer adds, however, that Orinda is let off "very easily" relative to future reformed heroines, such as Haywood's Betsy Thoughtless, maintaining her autonomy with only a possibility of an eventual marriage to Cloridon. Spencer does not comment on the figure of Cleander, Orinda's correspondent through most of the novella. It is interesting that her sounding-board/mentor is a man, who perhaps anticipates the more influential Formator

in his advisory role to Amoranda in Mary Davys' *The Reform'd Coquet* (1724), the next "reformed heroine" novel in Spencer's historical sequence.

The originality of Trotter's *The Adventures of a Young Lady* is in stark contrast to her fellow dramatist Mary Pix's only work of prose fiction, *The Inhumane Cardinal*, which largely follows in Behn's footsteps of adopting and adapting Continental intrigue drama and romance fiction models. However, like Pix, Trotter found the London stage the more amenable forum for her literary expression. Even later in life, after she had apparently abandoned writing for the stage, focusing instead on her philosophical tracts as well as her domestic obligations, Trotter continued to tinker with her one comedy, *Love at a Loss*, rewriting it as *The Honorable Deceivers; or All Right at the Last*, referred to in a letter dated in 1739, but the manuscript has been lost (Kelley (A) 93). No such interest in returning to her remarkable early work of fiction is recorded.

Paula Backscheider challenges the notion that Aphra Behn had shifted from writing drama to novels only for economic and political reasons but argues instead that she found a truly creative venue in prose fiction (105). This appears not to have been the case for Pix and Trotter, who despite masculine resistance, continued to realize their feminine visions on the stage, along with the prolific and successful Susanna Centlivre, rather than consign them to the emerging women's domain of amatory fiction.

Delarivier Manley, on the other hand, took the opposite course and followed to some extent, the path of Behn by transferring her literary energies from drama to fiction. Like her predecessor, Manley wedded political allegory and satire to the conventions of

romance and amatory fiction, most famously in her *The New Atalantis* (1709). Jane Spencer also attributes to her (and Haywood) the distinction of being the first novelists to “develop the seduction tale” ((D) 112), in effect the counter-plot in fiction to the “reformed coquette” narrative. Both of these patterns derive from the she-tragedy and manners comedy of the contemporary London theatre, dramatic genres (along with a history play) in which Manley wrote for the stage. However, in the later Eighteenth Century and today, Manley was and is reviled or celebrated as a female scandal-fiction writer, her four plays, which met with varying degrees of success, largely forgotten or dismissed (Rubik 60).

Manley’s single comedy *The Lost Lover, or The Jealous Husband* (1696) failed on the Drury Lane stage just as Catherine Trotter’s sole effort in the genre, *Love at a Loss*, did four years later. The play recalls Behn’s Angellica in *The Rover* in its depiction of the jilted mistress, Belira, who after practicing “masculine” self-restraint regarding her ex-lover Wilmore’s subsequent amatory ventures (a mercenary marriage to an older woman and a love affair with her daughter), eventually tries to kill her rival and departs in a rage. Rubik and Zettelmann in their introduction to the play in *Eighteenth-Century Women Playwrights* suggest the treatment of Belira is “equivocal” and not as “consistent” in the pity elicited for her plight as the spurned Angellica receives in Behn’s play (xxxv-vi). As a result, she, along with Olivia who opts to remain loyal to her repulsive husband Smyrna, joins the list of problematic female characters in the comedies by women of this period, such as Behn’s Angellica and Julia Fulbank or Trotter’s Lesbia and Lucilia, (and later Haywood’s Mrs. Graspall), who have attracted the attention of feminist critics

(Backscheider 92, Pearson 197). However, the editors above also argue that the “soft Nature”(38) of the reformed rake, Wilmore, whose melodramatic “protestations of reform” contrast with the cynical observations of Belira, are “the stuff that sentimental comedies are made of” and suggest Manley had “created the first sentimental comedy” as much as two years before Colley Cibber’s *Love’s Last Shift* (xxxvi).³⁵

In spite of these features, *The Lost Lover* is quite conventional in characterization and plot, not surprisingly perhaps, for a first play written in seven days as Manley claims in her Preface (5). As her literary successor, Eliza Haywood, would do thirty years later, Manley declared her intention to quit the theatre after her comedy’s failure: “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”(5). Nevertheless, like Haywood, Manley persisted with her dramaturgy and did achieve some modest success. In Manley’s case, this came almost immediately with her tragedy *The Royal Mischief* that lasted six nights at Lincoln’s Inn Fields. This play falls into the popular “she-tragedy” category, but features a sexually voracious heroine, Homais, among the more conventional tragic female victims, Bassima and Selima. Homais is of particular interest to feminist critics because she manages to demonstrate her agency despite her confinement in a castle by her jealous husband, the Prince of Libardian. More importantly, she reverses gender roles by functioning as a female rake, whose methodical libertinism intimidates the men she pursues. A telling example is Homais’ dismissal of a former lover, the almost pathetic Ismael, which is performed far more coldly than Wilmore’s ambivalent disengagement from Belira in *The Lost Lover*:

Oh did you know the difference
Between a new born Passion, and a former
Nothing remains, but Memory and Wonder;
Not the least warmth of kind desire or joy,
Nay scarce can we believe, or make that Faith
A Miracle, how we cou'd doat, or they reproach we did,
How love so much, that which at present seems unlovely. (84)

As Margarete Rubik points out, this play not only transgresses gender boundaries but crosses genre ones too, for the central plot situation of this tragedy is closer to Restoration comedy with the stereotypically elderly jealous husband being outwitted by his young clever wife who manages to sustain a string of lovers (62).

Laura Backscheider observes that the plays by women performed on the London stage in 1695-96, “like the women’s novels that followed them, showed marriage and courtship in troubling terms” (93). In the stock example of marriages between young women and older possessive men, she points out a parallel between Behn’s Julia in *The Luckey Chance* and Manley’s Olivia in *The Lost Lover*³⁶ noting how both characters are “sympathetic to their jealous husbands” while they preserved:

...the explicit expression of a range of emotions: outrage at being assessed, bartered, and sold; despair and repugnance when married without love; pride in their virtue and integrity. They also preserved the hope of free love—love freely chosen and given and constant because free. Most important of all, they insisted upon the possibility of female self-control and self-possession. (92)

The representation of these “novelistic” female aspirations seemed possible on stage in this period only in certain kinds of comedy, which were more domestic and sentimental than the prevailing comedy of manners or intrigue, and which at the time failed to please or meet the expectations of theatre audiences. Laura Brown argues that similar

difficulties with experiments in dramatic form not pleasing audiences plague Trotter's mentor, William Congreve around the same time (104). Behn and Pix tended to rely on the other, perhaps more reliable, comic forms, in which unmarried, witty coquettes enjoyed some agency, at least until the comedy's close. In the case of Pix, she, along with her fellow "fair wits" Trotter and Manley, apparently preferred to work in the vein of pathetic tragedy or historical drama³⁷ with its temporarily empowered female villainesses and unequivocally powerless, innocent victims. While Trotter eventually abandoned the literary project altogether, Manley transferred her creative energy to prose fiction, accepting, perhaps, this as the only viable literary medium for women and depicting this experience in her semi-autobiographical *The Adventures of Rivella* (1714).³⁸

Manley's fictional "autobiography" of herself was written in pre-emptive response to Charles Gildon's unflattering attempt at her biography (Ballaster 150). It was her second effort at depicting her own life and its scandalous incidents, such as her bigamous marriage to her cousin John Manley, in as favorable light as possible; the first was the story of Delia in *The New Atalantis* which Manley confirms in *Rivella* (60).³⁹ Jane Spencer points out how these two autobiographical narratives cover different aspects of Manley's life and dovetail with each other: "Rivella's story fills in what was left out of Delia's—her life before and after the bigamous marriage" ((D) 54). More importantly, Spencer asserts that *Rivella* concentrates on presenting Manley as a writer, but in erotic terms:

...the self-portrait she gives had a powerful influence on the public conception of women writers of her time. Partly because of Manley, woman writer and erotic writer came to seem almost synonymous terms. (ibid.)

Manley achieves this in part through the novella's oddly narrated format: the "adventures" are told by a male character, Sir Charles Lovemore, who has experienced unrequited love for Rivella, to a friend, Chevalier d'Aumont who "translates" Lovemore's recollections into French. Rivella/Manley only speaks to the reader through several layers (and languages) of reportage. Unusual for an autobiography, this narrative context and approach were perhaps considered necessary by the author, recently arrested for her political attacks in *The New Atalantis*,⁴⁰ for *Rivella* is also a *roman a clef* with the characters corresponding to actual people, including her bigamist husband, John Manley (Oswald), Richard Steele (Mr. S—e) and Catherine Trotter (Calista). The most interesting feature of Manley's narrative apparatus is that she allows her male narrator, Lovemore, to represent her in his own masculine terms, culminating in the carefully eroticized closing scene when he describes Rivella's bed chamber to d'Aumont (Spencer 55, Ballaster 149-50). In effect, she allows herself to become a stereotypical character from an amatory fiction conceived from a masculine erotic perspective—except as Ros Ballaster points out, Rivella herself is missing from this scene:

In this passage then, 'proper' femininity is disclosed to be nothing more than a patriarchal fiction within which the woman herself is absent. (150)

The plot is often not centred on Rivella, but much of it on her role mediating/scheming in a lawsuit between Lord Crafty (late Duke of M—ue) and Baron Meanwell (Earl of Bath) for the estate of Tim Double (Christopher Monk). She allies with Cleander (Mr. Tilly), a lover, but their schemes seem neither coherent nor clever. During the narrative, Rivella “loses her reputation” in various ways, though the details remain vague, but she remains an attractive woman (despite her obesity as reported by a number of male acquaintances, including Swift) who manages to navigate through men and scandal.

Some reference is made to her play, *The Royal Mischief*, “which was more famous for the language, fire and tenderness than the conduct” and its fate in the hands of Thomas Betterton’s company (67-8). Lovemore adds that Rivella would “laugh and wonder that a man of Mr. Betterman’s grave sense should think well enough of the production of a woman of eighteen, to bring it upon the stage in so handsome a manner as he did, when her self could hardly now bear the reading of it”(68). This disclaimer of her most successful play is surprising, especially since she allows her narrator to put the words in Rivella’s mouth. One might think this is consistent with Manley’s abandonment of political writing in the post-Queen Anne/Tory era, which is also announced in this work. Towards the end of the novella, Lovemore describes the politically chastened Rivella (after her arrest and trial for her *New Atalantis*) as declaring that “hence-forward her business should be to write for pleasure and entertainment only, wherein *party* should no longer mingle” (112). Yet, Manley wryly allows Lovemore to add with some self-congratulation:

She now agrees with me, that politics is not the business of a woman,
especially one that can so well delight and entertain her readers with more
gentle pleasing theams...(112)

but then has him reveal that Rivella “has accordingly set her self again to write a tragedy for the stage”(ibid.). The play referred to would be her history play, *Lucius, the First Christian King of Britain* (1717), a “theam” more political and less “pleasing” perhaps, than the strictly amatory fiction implied by Lovemore’s account of Rivella’s resolution.⁴¹

The ambiguous relationships between high and low culture, instruction and entertainment, or drama and fiction conflated in this novelistic moment of transformation in the main “character” suggest Manley’s own ambivalence regarding the value of her art and her social role as a professional woman writer. A little earlier in the narrative, when she is railing against the constrictions upon her and her works as articulated by Lovemore, Rivella asserts “she was become a *misanthrope*, a perfect *Timon*, or a *man-hater*; all the world was out of humour with her, and she with all the world...[but]that she was proud of having more courage than any of our sex” (107-8). Manley seems here to be taking a feminist stance beyond the standard protestations of Behn, Pix, or Trotter in their prefaces and prologues and recapitulated famously by Manley at the very beginning of Rivella’s “history”: “I have often heard her say, if she had been a man, she had been without fault” (47). Yet she allows Rivella to be “brought...to be ashamed of her writings” by Lovemore, and though she does go on to write that one more play⁴², her last literary production after it was *The Power of Love in Seven Novels* (1720) which “abandoned the complexity of the rediscovered, translated, and reconstructed source

commonly employed as a means of simultaneously concealing and signifying political intent in Manley's fiction" (Ballaster 153).

Manley's dilemma as depicted in *The Adventures of Rivella* of struggling to remain in the literary mainstream as a political writer and dramatist before succumbing to the social pressure to resign herself to the developing woman's literary domain of amatory fiction locates her in a pivotal position in the historical narrative represented by the "Fair Triumvirate of Wit", Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley and Eliza Haywood. While Behn opened up the possibility of a woman achieving literary acceptance beyond mere entertainment and a specific genre, Haywood eventually was confined to the role of a writer of women's literature, whether amatory or conduct fiction, largely for entertainment, with some female-oriented didacticism towards the end of her career. Delarivier Manley's career straddles these two fates and demonstrates the process of the transition from the one to the other that occurred—not without a struggle—in the first part of the Eighteenth Century.

In terms of genre, we also see the detachment of the emerging novel from its literary cousin, the drama, as a form of popular entertainment with many shared features. While Behn, Mary Pix and Manley managed to meld the characteristics of popular romance and theatre, especially in their tragedies and intrigue comedies, as well as in their prose fiction, Catherine Trotter seems to have charted a different course with her more "intellectual" drama and her introspective fiction that anticipated the directions towards which Eighteenth-Century tastes and values would tend—the reformed drama of

sentiment and the social realism and interest in interiority of the novel. As playwrights, however, each of these women did explore to some extent the new terrain of female consciousness, as represented by the problematic women characters in their domestic comedies that did not quite conform to the existing stereotypes in contemporary drama or fiction.

The first decade of the eighteenth century saw the emergence of another “female wit” on the London stage, Susanna Centlivre, who chose, however, not to pursue prose fiction as part of her literary career. On the other hand, several new female fiction writers appeared in the early part of the century, who seem to have consciously followed the more modest “Orinda” tradition of Katherine Philips as an alternative the more scandalous, political, and feminist path of “Astrea” (Behn) and Manley. These new women writers included Penelope Aubin, Jane Barker, Elizabeth Rowe, and Mary Davys, who sought to produce “pious and didactic love fiction” (Ballaster 33). Barker and Rowe did not write for the stage, but Aubin and Davys each produced a comedy that was performed in a London theater, Aubin’s *The Merry Masqueraders* at the Haymarket in 1730 and Davys’ *The Northern Heiress, Or, The Humors of York* at Lincoln Inn Fields in 1716.

Mary Davys’ work is of most interest to this study not only because she wrote *The Reform’d Coquet* (1724), which provides the label Jane Spencer applies to the novelistic convention she traces back to Catherine Trotter ((D) 144), but also because her novels and play have an edgy, gritty realism that contrasts with the traditional genres (romance

and comedy) in which she develops her stories. Largely unheralded in the rise of the novel narrative and as an author in her own time,⁴³ Davys made a modest but significant contribution to the new genre and its relationship to drama.

The Northern Heiress, Or, The Humors of York, was successfully performed in York and then in London at Lincoln's Fields Inn in 1716. The third night proceeds provided Davys with sufficient funds to open a coffee house in Cambridge upon which she subsisted for the rest of her life (Bowden xx). This play, set in York, is a comedy of manners, or to some extent, humors, as the subtitle suggests. It is mostly a satirical "laughing" comedy but ends on a sentimental note, with key characters abruptly modifying their behaviors or stances (Lady Greasy regarding Liddy, Isabella regarding Gramont) to achieve a harmonious outcome, in keeping with Brown's category of "transitional comedy". Of particular interest is the range of classes presented and satirized, from the servants (33) to the aristocracy as perceived by the middle class. However, the social-climbing "cits" of York are the primary satirical target as they retain their "mechanical" manners in spite of their newly acquired titles (Lady/Lord) and political roles (lord mayor, alderman). There is also some predictable lampooning of the "country" and small town (York) in contrast to the city (London). It is easy to see that this play would amuse audiences in York and London.

The plot centers on the "northern heiress," Isabella, who is in love with and courted by Gramont, who lacks a fortune or title until his estranged father dies. To some extent, Isabella is a coquette to be reformed as she toys with or spurns her suitors (such as

Bareface, the fop, or an unseen Lord Splendid) and risks Gramont's commitment to her by devising tests of his sincerity (in particular pretending to have lost her fortune). Gramont is no rake or fortune hunter, but is understandably perplexed by Isabella's tactics. Gramont's sister Louisa is Isabella's confidant while being pursued by her brother's worthy friend, just returned from abroad, Welby. Louisa's ability to accept Welby seems contingent upon Gramont's success with Isabella. Both women are relatively empowered to choose the mate they prefer though financial and status considerations are not forgotten in favour of love.

These two men and two women serve as the normative (genteel) ground against which the other characters are observed and judged. These characters include male fops and boobies (Bareface, Sir Loobily Joddrel) and a set of female "Ladies": Greasy (a chandler's widow still running the shop), Swish (brewer's wife), Cordivant (glover's wife) and Ample (more genteel as Isabella's aunt). They display their "mechanical" origins in the malapropisms of their speech and folksy tastes (they don't drink tea) and behavior. Even Bareface the fop is a tradesman's son. In the end, the characters are appropriately matched: the genteel foursome are to marry, the decent country booby Sir Jeffrey Hearty weds Lady Greasy, Miss Dolly weds Colonel Tinsel over the objections of her mother Lady Greasy, and the aspiring Bareface is tricked into marrying Liddy, Isabella's maid, instead of her mistress.

Davy's provides a little metatheatrical touch when she has Isabella declare: "Madam, the Comedy begins to draw towards an End, and it is almost time to declare

myself” (68). She also achieves some “realism” in the physical comedy (people eat, drink, and hit each other) and effort to capture the Yorkshire dialect (“barn” etc.). Overall, Davys provides a little of everything an audience might expect—wit, sentiment, social satire, stock characters—which may explain the play’s modest success. The plot is not strong though, but serves mainly to display the follies and wit of the characters, typical of manners comedy.

Davys wrote a second play, *The Self-Rival*, that was not performed and appears only in the collected edition of her *Works* (1725) with the motto “As it should have been Acted at the Theatre Royal at Drury Lane” (Bowden xx). No doubt an interesting back story about this play has been lost to historical record. *The Works of Mrs. Davys*, however, contains five of her novels, including *Familiar Letters Betwixt a Gentleman and a Lady*, which was not published separately by subscription as were her other pieces of fiction. *Familiar Letters*, *The Reform’d Coquet* and *The Accomplish’d Rake* (1727) form an intriguing trilogy that examines courtship issues from several perspectives and experiments with different narrative techniques.

The Reform’d Coquet sets the pattern for “reformed coquet” fiction. In spite of supposedly being a “memoir,” it is narrated in the third person by a fairly intrusive narrative persona. Amoranda is an orphan by age 16 and an heiress under the guardianship of a benevolent but absentee uncle who transfers his guardian duties to an old gentleman, “Formator.” He resembles Mr. Knightly in *Emma*, and to a lesser extent Albany in Burney’s *Cecilia* in his critical role. Amoranda is spoiled by her parents and

her sense of her own beauty and worth, so she soon becomes a coquette playing one suitor against another. An early childhood example (while her parents are still alive) of her spurning a boy with whom she had played “man and wife” sets this behavior pattern in motion. As a young woman she toys with young rakes like Froth and Callid and the more dangerous Lord Lofty. The former plan together to abduct her and force her to marry one of them while latter intends to seduce her. All of them are easily foiled by Amoranda with the aid of Formator. She faces a more serious threat of rape at the hands of Biranthus, disguised as “Berintha”, the friend of Arentia, an old acquaintance of Amoranda, who visit her. They lure her away alone (against the advice of Formator) on a barge ride where she is betrayed by her “friends” and servants. Only the intervention of a mysterious stranger—whom Amoranda immediately falls in love with—saves her. The two conspirators die as a result.

The rest of the story reveals her savior/lover, young Alanthus, to be Formator in disguise, so she will end up marrying her father-figure/mentor, setting the precedent Lennox and Austen will follow. Despite the moral instruction agenda of reforming a coquette, this novel has plenty of romance elements in it: mysterious ladies in distress, disguised heroes and villains, attempted abductions and escapes, everything that Lennox’s *Female Quixote* believes happens in her world. Rather than with a moral, the novel ends with a hasty wedding of the couple in London “where the Reader, if he has any business with them, may find them” (84). The dismissive “this is not a romance but real history” tone here echoes the gruff, sarcastic opening of the novella in which the narrator declares “I confess myself a lover of money” before launching her tale with:

Love is a very common Topick, but 'tis withal a very copious one; and would the Poets, Printers, and Booksellers but speak truth of it, they would own themselves more obliged to that one Subject for their bread, than all the rest put together. 'Tis there I fix, and the following Sheets are to be fill'd with the Tale of a fine young lady. (11-12)

Just as she attempts to wring some social realism from the conventions of humours or manners comedy in *The Northern Heiress*, Davys seems to struggle against the artifice of the romance tradition to embed her didactic message, which nonetheless seems to evaporate in the comic denouement of the book. Abandoning any pretence of realism, the narrator indulges in fantasy to explain the transformation of Formator into Alanthus by explicitly invoking the fairy tale. The formerly sober, chastening hero declares:

This...is the *Fairy-land* where I have so long Liv'd Incognito; and there, there's the Inchantress, who by natural Magick, has kept me all this while in Chains of Love. (83)

This is not the language we would expect to close a "reformed coquet" conduct novel.

Davys moves away from such an awkward romance/conduct juxtaposition in *Familiar Letters Betwixt a Gentleman and a Lady*, published a year later in the *Works*, but probably written around the same time. In this short work, Davys takes on another conventional approach, epistolary fiction, as the title indicates. The letters are between Artander and Berina, who have agreed to a platonic relationship after meeting prior to the correspondence, but Artander still seeks a romantic relationship with Berina, who on her part does not want to marry at all. Also Artander is a Tory while Berina is a Whig (closer to Davys' own political allegiance). The correspondence does not become a political allegory or *roman a clef* like Behn's or Manley's fiction, but an early debate between the two "lovers" about political values (mainly the Stuart vs. Hanover monarchy) seems

unusual. In fact, the narrative seems to invert Behn or Manley's approach by using political and other matters as analogues to affairs of the heart, rather than the opposite.

Artander always tries to turn the conversation to their relationship and his love for her in conventional romantic jargon (thus taking on a "feminine" role) while Berina dodges the issue and deflects the subject to wider concerns in a more realistic, "masculine" manner. Artander finally becomes explicit in his last letters and Berina fends him off by dismissing his ardent complaint as a kind of acting a role for humorous effect:

But methinks you are like a half-bred Player; you over-act your Part: The next time you put on the Lover, do it with an easier Air; 'tis quite out of fashion to talk of Dying, and Sighing, and Killing Eyes, and such Stuff; you shou'd say, Damn it, Madam, you are a tolerable sort of a Woman, and if you are willing, I don't much care if I do you the Honour to marry you. That's the modern Way of courtship... (120)

Berina's feisty retort would make a great speech in a witty comedy and satirically undermines Artander's romance platitudes, which he doesn't abandon in his response. Berina does agree to let him visit her in town to "laugh at all that's passed" (120), perhaps indicating some ambivalence on her part, but the correspondence significantly ends without a resolution.

The Accomplish'd Rake is Davys' companion piece to *The Reform'd Coquet* focusing on the moral decline/development of a libertine, Sir John Gaillard. Davys traces Sir John's experience from youth as a step-by-step process of increasingly serious psychological events (negative and then positive), much in the same manner as in Defoe's contemporaneous *Moll Flanders*, which Bowden describes as "astute in a pre-

Freudian age” (xxxviii). His mother’s own irresponsibility and promiscuity with the valet Tom triggers Sir John’s libertine lifestyle, in spite of the sound tutelage of his deceased father, his kindly neighbor Mr. Friendly, and his tutor Mr. Teachwell (modeled on Davys’ own dead husband Peter). Sir John relentlessly pursues his career as a rake in London, using many women of all classes and virtue until he reaches his moral nadir when he rapes Mr. Friendly’s own daughter, Nancy, using drugged macaroons! Things start to go wrong for Gaillard after this act (Bowden xl), and he experiences increasingly intense bouts of remorse until he finally redeems himself by marrying Nancy and adopting his child by her, though she shows little enthusiasm for his gesture or his person. This serious plot is echoed by the more comic one involving Sir Combish who dupes the innocent Betty and her suitor William but gets his comeuppance, ironically through Sir John.

Another character of interest is the relatively empowered Miss Wary, Belinda, who resists and eludes Gaillard’s seduction plots (and those of Sir Combish), and like a comedy of manners heroine is more than an intellectual match for these rakes. As the editor Martha Bowden notes, there is a clear allusion to Pope’s *Belinda* in Miss Wary, but in reverse, as she is no superficial coquette (xli). Bowden also observes that this novel anticipates Richardson’s *Clarissa*, but in comic mode as the rake and his victim, don’t die but marry (however ambivalently) (xl).

Davys pursues a more consistent realism in this later novella. Although events play out much like in the amatory fictions of Behn or Haywood, the language and details

of their depiction are more explicit and coarse (especially in figures like Sir Combish and his ally Sir Cock-a-Hoop). The novel has almost a fabliau flavor to it. This, coupled with the achievement of some psychological realism in the rake's progress, suggests *The Accomplish'd Rake's* anticipation of the directions prose fiction would take with Defoe and Richardson. Davys also employs an opinionated narrative persona once again to open and close the narrative by suggesting a detached, perhaps more cynical view of the events that unfold in the story while at the same time asserting the historicity of these events and characters:

As for *Sir John Gaillard* I would have him acknowledge the Favour I have done him, in making him a Man of Honour at last, but withall I here tell him I have set two Spies to watch his Motions and Behaviour, and if I hear of any false Steps or Relapses, I shall certainly set them in a very clear Light, and send them by way of Advertisement to the Publick. (226)

The narrative voice here anticipates that of Fielding or the later Haywood in their novels though Davys does not sustain this perspective of her persona throughout the fiction as these novelists will do. Nevertheless, Martha Bowden's claim that Davys is "just as surely a forerunner of Richardson as she is of Fielding" (x1) is credible, and reveals a pivotal role her fiction served prior the genre's official "birth" in the 1740s. Moreover, once again, this contributor to the development of the English novel also pursued her literary career in the theatre. Her publication of her two plays, one successfully produced on stage and the other not, together with five of her novels in her *Works* indicates a refusal to distinguish between the two genres as legitimate examples of her art. This would become the hallmark of many women writers in the middle of the century.

However, by the 1720s, Mary Davys, along with her fellow women writers, had to work in the shadow of the last of “Astrea’s” successors in the ever-popular genre of amatory fiction, the prolific Eliza Haywood, who would become the culmination of the Behn-Manley tradition and the author of its demise in a number of ways. She too would emerge from the theatre, and she ultimately would appropriate innovations of the counter-tradition in women’s fiction, such as the “reformed coquet” convention and the detached narrative persona, that Davys significantly developed upon in her short career.

CHAPTER THREE

“MRS. NOVEL”: ELIZA HAYWOOD

In terms of sheer productivity and literary range, it is Eliza Haywood (1693-1756) who most recalls the talented and prolific Aphra Behn. Like her predecessor, Haywood undertook a variety of literary genres, and although she arguably did not excel in most of them, her range of literary activity was much wider than Behn's, including not only poetry, drama, prose fiction and translations, but also journalism (her *Female Spectator*, for example), literary criticism of sorts (*A Companion to the Theatre*), and literary (as well as political) satire (*Anti-Pamela*). Her stature is augmented by the length of her career as a writer, spanning thirty-five years during which she displayed a remarkable ability to adapt to changing tastes and values, transforming herself, for example, from a notorious producer of scandal fiction into a purveyor of domestic novels of manners. Haywood is also an historic figure in the “rise of the novel” narrative(s), not only continuing and developing the amatory fiction of her female predecessors, but competing and perhaps collaborating with the male novelistic icons, Daniel Defoe⁴⁴ and Henry Fielding. And of course, she has shared Thomas Shadwell's fate of being remembered most for being the object of the satire of a great poet, in Haywood's case, as Alexander Pope's victim in his scathing depiction of her as the Grub Street hack/whore in his *Dunciad* (Rudolph xxi).

As Ros Ballaster points out in *Seductive Forms*, the literary career of Eliza Haywood begins just as Delarivier Manley's ends, around 1720 (153). The first volume

of Haywood's initial amatory fiction *Love in Excess: The Fatal Inquiry* appears in 1719 while Manley's last work of fiction, *The Power of Love in Seven Novels*,⁴⁵ was published in 1720. As the two titles suggest, these works "mark a shift in the nature of amatory fiction by women.... The allegorical duplicity of scandal fiction, its complex double movement between the amatory and the party political plot, is superseded by the more direct aim of representing the eternal power of the disruptive force of desire, specifically female desire" (Ballaster 153-154). *Love in Excess*, of course, became an instant best seller, a publishing phenomenon that rivaled Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (published in the same year) and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (first edition in 1726) in sales and public attention (153). As a result of this success and an unprecedented string of amatory novels published during the 1720s, Haywood became the third member of yet another "Fair Triumvirate of Wit," consisting of Behn, Manley and herself, as well as the "Great Arbitress of Passion," earning both titles courtesy of James Sterling's poem of praise included in the 1732 collection of her works (Merritt 27-28).

Eliza Haywood's literary fame or notoriety was and is based on her prolific career as a fiction writer, but like her predecessor, Aphra Behn, her literary roots were in the theatre. Prior to 1720, Haywood found work as an actress in Ireland and England, debuting in Shadwell's *Timon of Athens* in 1715 (Schofield (A) 2). Then, during her most productive prose fiction writing years in the 1720s, she also wrote three of her four plays: *The Fair Captive* (1721), *A Wife to Lett* (1723), and *Frederick, Duke of Brunswick-Lunenburgh* (1729). In the turbulent 1730s, Haywood returned to the stage as a member of Fielding's company at the New Theatre in the Haymarket, even while being playfully

satirized herself as “Mrs. Novel” in his “Author’s Farce” (Blouch liv, Richetti (C) 240)⁴⁶. During this time, she co-authored with William Hatchett⁴⁷ a revised version of Fielding’s *Tragedy of Tragedies*, renamed *The Opera of Operas*, in 1733, which turned out to be her most successful dramatic production (Schofield 16). During the 1730s she may have written other plays, such as the satiric comedy *Mr. Taste, the Poetical Fop* (1732, later *The Man of Taste*, 1733) attacking Alexander Pope (Bouch lvi) and a revision of *Arden of Fethersham* (1736), in which she performed and is identified in the playbill as “Mrs. Haywood, the Author” (Blouch lix).⁴⁸

Haywood’s dramatic career, like Fielding’s, came to a definitive end with the Licensing Act of 1737 although she was reported by her first biographer, George Whicher, to have commented much earlier that “The stage is not answering my Expectation, and the averseness of my Relations to it, has made me Turn my Genius another Way” (cited in Schofield (A) 3). As Schofield suggests, Haywood’s expectations may have been economic, for the relatively poor runs of her few plays, and her possible mediocrity as an actress⁴⁹, precluded earning a good living in the theatre. However, Schofield also notes that the date of the above comment might be as early as 1721; thus, Haywood’s renunciation of the theatre would predate most of her playwriting efforts. Her persistence in the field of drama over twenty years, despite her success in fiction writing, suggests an attachment to the theatre that transcends matters of money.

In any case, Haywood did manage to get at least four plays performed on London stages with varying degrees of success. Her first drama, a “tragedy” (the villain, rather

than the female protagonist dies) *The Fair Captive*, lasted only four nights (Rudolph xii). Haywood was asked to rewrite the original script by Captain Robert Hurst to make it more stageable. It is an oriental tale, set in Constantinople, which depicts a Christian-Muslim conflict in which the women characters play prominent roles. The “fair captive” at the centre of the plot is Isabella, a Spanish virgin betrothed to the rather ineffectual Spaniard Alphonso. She has been captured by the Turks and is destined to serve in the Sultan’s seraglio. However, the Sultan’s rakish Vizier, Mustapha, has designs upon Isabella and poses the immediate threat to her honour since the Sultan is located elsewhere.

The play might fall into the category of a “she-tragedy” (the title echoing Rowe’s famous example of this sub-genre, *The Fair Penitent*) as the two Turkish “rivals” for Mustapha, Daraxa and Irene (his wife), both die melodramatically as a result of their betrayed love. Mustapha is the central tragic figure, however, whose political scheming against the Sultan is undone by his insatiable lust. Isabella’s suitor, Alphonso, proves to be more of a bungler and dupe of Turkish court intrigue than her savior. Perhaps the most telling moment occurs when Alphonso is distracted from the rescue of his mistress by his mistaken belief that Isabella has lost her honour to Mustapha in an effort to save his life. In spite of the rampant corruption and cynicism of the Turkish court and the misogynistic behavior within it, Mary Anne Schofield claims that Haywood “is still concerned with fictional standards and does write a happily-ever-after ending for the hero and heroine” ((A)12).

Given that Haywood's version of this play was written at about the same time as *Love in Excess* (1720-1), it is not surprising that parallels between the two works can be found. Although *The Fair Captive* is set in the "oriental" context of the Turkish sultan's court in Constantinople, the editors of a recent edition of the play point out that in it "The cultural other...turns out in fact to be contemporary eighteenth-century [European] society" and the vizier Mustapha's "character and career are reminiscent of a Georgian rake rather than a Turkish potentate" in his libertine (in contrast to Eastern polygamous) dealings with women (Rubik and Mueller-Zettelmann xl). The main focus of the play is on the preservation of Isabella's virtue under Mustapha's rakish assault, with his two former "victims," Daraxa and Irene, plotting against him (in order to win him back), not unlike Melliora's role in *Love in Excess* who fends off Count D'Elmont's advances in the midst of the plots of Alovisa and Melantha to win his amorous attention. Haywood's plot in her play obviously owes much to the Spanish drama of court intrigue just as several commentators note a similar debt in *Love in Excess* (Backscheider 22, Warner 97).

Even though *The Fair Captive* is a pretty conventional sentimental/heroic play, Schofield argues that it is "a frontispiece for Haywood's entire corpus" ((A) 12). She provides an early feminist reading of Haywood's work suggesting that her "authorial anger" ((A) 13) is directed against the "exploitation and enslavement" of women, and in this play and her first novel, she "marked out her territory as a rebel against such treatment" ((A)16). Haywood certainly gives the female characters voice in this play and sets the tone of the beleaguered woman's perspective in the opening lines of the play where Constantinople is described by Alphonso in oppressed feminine terms:

This Beauteous Mistress of the *Eastern* World,
Should drag the Chains of Arbitrary Power.
Spite of her Pomp, she drooping, still laments
Her ravish'd Freedom, and her lost estate. (115)

As the plot develops, we hear the betrayed mistress and wife, Daraxa and Irene, articulate their grievances against the male predator Mustapha while still struggling with their committed affections for him. Daraxa, his jilted mistress disguised as a eunuch to gain access to him for revenge, cannot go through with her plan, but instead reveals the plots of others against him. In keeping with Ros Ballaster's detection of the symptoms of hysteria in the female characters of Haywood's fiction whose bodies work against their will to expose their true feelings or passions (171-2), Daraxa declares to Mustapha as she stabs herself (instead of the vizier):

First, I will be just,
And punish the Betrayer of my Honour;
This fond, this foolish Heart that has undone me,
Bleed, bleed, Seducer! (140)

Mustapha's wife, Irene, even as it becomes obvious that he will not honour his vow of monogamy to her, hesitates to condemn him but attempts to monitor and control his behavior instead, somewhat like the more convinced and impetuous Alovisa in her "fatal inquiry" into her husband D'Elmont's amorous pursuit of Melliora in *Love in Excess*. Irene rationalizes her hesitancy to expose her husband's transgressions as a necessary tactic to preserve female honour:

...but I am too well
Acquainted with this Traytor Husband's Falsehood,
And not for his, but for my own sake conceal'd it:
She who proclaims her Wrongs, proclaims her Shame;
And tho the Husband sins, the Wife is scorn'd: (127)

Alovisa in *Love in Excess*, on the other hand, lacks Irene's capacity for tactical restraint and declares:

...this tyrant husband braves me with his falsehood, and thinks to awe me into calmness. But if I endure it...No,...I'll no longer be the tame easie wretch I have been—All France shall eccho with my wrongs—The ungrateful monster! (141)

Not until the final act when Mustapha accidentally stabs her as she intervenes during his attempted rape of Isabella (again somewhat resembling Alovisa's accidental death at the hands of D'Elmont), does Irene finally proclaim his villainy:

Thou wak'st too sure, worst Monster of thy Kind.
Suspecting thy Deceit, I feigned a Journey,
But soon return'd, disguis'd to watch thy Purpose. (155)

The similar rhetoric—"tyrant", "monster"—employed by these angry spouses in the play and the novel is evidence of Haywood's common approach to articulating heightened female emotion in both genres.

Even Alphonso's "pure" love⁵⁰ for Isabella is compromised by masculine abusiveness. Early in the play, Alphonso pronounces the typical romantic sentiments for Isabella:

That lovely Maid, that dear, that heavenly Fair!
The brightest Soul that ever was infus'd
Into an Angel's Frame... (116)

However, when he suspects that Isabella has yielded her virginity to Mustapha to save his life—contrary to his own directive—Alphonso sings a different tune:

If I remember, I once lov'd a Woman,
Woman, did I say? Or Devil—a very Woman!
Frail wicked Woman! False inconstant Woman!
A Creature more deceitful than the Devil
In brightest, softest Angels form... (153)⁵¹

Again, Alphonso's male fickleness is echoed to some extent in the mistaken reaction of Frankville, D'Elmont's eventual brother-in-law "whose only fault was rashness," to the negative impersonation of his lover Camilla by the conniving Ciamara in *Love in Excess*. Like Alphonso, Frankville is young and naïve, as well as impetuous. When he learns that his mistress has dismissed him in favour of D'Elmont when she meets with the Count, who was acting as his envoy and mediator, but becomes the object of her seductive assault, Frankville "grew almost wild at the recital ...[and] flew into extremities of rage" (236), in spite of the obvious inconsistency in the lady's behavior and D'Elmont's tactful reportage of it. In both cases, these characters are stock figures of young male lovers, seen perhaps from a critical feminine perspective, whose passions are based on superficial appearances and are very volatile and unstable. In *Love in Excess*, however, Haywood provides a more reliable male alternative in the maturing figure of Count D'Elmont, who perseveres in his quest for Melliora despite disreputable appearances caused by her abduction from a convent and the repeated seductive distractions of a series of lustful women such as Ciamara. In *The Fair Captive* there is no such male character.

It seems apparent that Haywood embedded some measure of feminist resistance to the male-dominated, social spheres of her first play and novel as many critics have suggested (Ballaster, Schofield, et al.). Technically, as Behn does in her drama and fiction, she cedes the overall plot context to the male characters: in *The Fair Captive* it is the political intrigue within the Sultan's court as the male courtiers jockey for power, and in *Love in Excess* it is the amatory machinations of the men who court and/or seduce the women (and do little else). However, as Juliette Merritt points out in *Beyond Spectacle*,

the female gaze is consistently explored throughout Haywood's works. In the case of her first drama and novel, the female gaze manifests itself as curiosity, in the case of Irene in *The Fair Captive* who seeks to confirm her husband's infidelity by observing him in disguise and of Alovisa in *Love in Excess* who is obsessed with finding out who her husband's lover is. In both cases, this need to find out becomes the "fatal inquiry" that is the subtitle of *Love in Excess*, for both wives die at the hands of their husbands. Merritt suggests that "female curiosity overrides gender boundaries and becomes a usurpation of masculine privilege" (34).

This particular concern with transgressive female curiosity, however, is part of a broader strategy on Haywood's part to scrutinize the behavior of both men and women, sometimes from a woman's perspective, whether through her narrators in her fiction or by audience/reader identification with the viewpoint of strong female characters in her drama. This curious or critical female gaze is provided in *The Fair Captive* through the three prominent women characters, Irene, Daraxa and Isabella, whose observations and actions serve as a dissonant commentary upon the activities of the male characters in the court intrigue of the main plot. For example, the Vizier's public transgressions (such as embezzling the pay of the Sultan's janissaries) are matched with his private indiscretions with women, mostly revealed through the covert observation of Irene and Daraxa (and of course, his intended next victim, Isabella). While the male characters in *Love in Excess* don't seem to have much else to do than pursue women, Haywood in some of her later novels, such as *Fantomina* and *The Invisible Spy*, does deploy female characters "to appropriate, for women's use, the privileges of observation" (Merritt 11) in order to

reveal the failings and follies of both genders. Once again, the groundwork for this approach to wider social criticism seems to have been laid in Haywood's first play.

Besides having some common features with her first play, Haywood's first novel or amatory fiction, *Love in Excess*, also reflects her theatrical interests and background in its structure. As noted above, a number of critics have observed the influence of Spanish intrigue drama in this novel. Schofield finds more explicit evidence that

The work reflects Haywood's theatrical experience, as its three parts function as acts, with the whole "play" concluding in stereotypical fashion with marriages of all couples. Scenes are played until every possible emotion has been wrung from them, and the characters tend to be reminiscent of William Congreve's ever-popular *Mirabel and Millamant*, or George Etherege's *Sir Fopling Flutter*. As Whicher⁵² notes, the novel at this early date was "merely a looser and more extended series of sensational adventures" patterned on the act structure of Restoration drama. (A) 18

What seems apparent is that at the beginning of her literary career, Haywood's approach to writing a play and composing a novel was quite similar. In both cases, she relied upon established conventions of the stage (Spanish intrigue drama, she-tragedy) as modified by Behn, Trotter, Pix, and Manley; and those of romance/ amatory fiction (European models adapted and refined for English readers by Behn and Manley) that resemble each other closely in terms of plot, characterization, style and even "feminist" themes (Merritt 20). As noted above, Haywood chose around this time to focus her efforts in prose fiction although she did not completely abandon the stage. While her prodigious output of "novels" in the 1720s has been dismissed by some critics, such as John Richetti⁵³, as formula or pulp fiction, more recent studies of these works are

recognizing the experimentation and generic range of Haywood's fiction writing during this period (eg. Bakscheider 20-24).

Nevertheless, Haywood managed to write what is now regarded as her best play during this very period of frenetic novella-writing, *A Wife to Lett* in 1723. This English, domestic-citizen comedy represents a significant move away from the "foreign" Spanish model and derives its plot from the central action of Behn's late play, *The Lucky Chance*.⁵⁴ As noted in Chapter One, Julia Fulbank's ambiguous pre and post-marital behavior in Behn's play has a potentially amatory quality to it as she goes ahead with her emotionally empty and unconsummated marriage but apparently continues her sexual relationship with her lover, Gayman.

Haywood's reincarnation of Julia Fulbank, Mrs. Graspall⁵⁵, on the other hand, is the moral exemplar of domestic virtue in the later play as she fends off the advances of Sir Harry Beaumont in spite of her husband's mercenary abuse. As Derek Hughes points out in his General Introduction to the collection *Eighteenth Century Women Playwrights*:

Whereas Behn was able to bring the prostitution of the wife to consummation, by Haywood's time the resemblance between a bad marriage and prostitution could only be theoretical and unfulfilled, unless both characters are utterly contemptible... (xxiii)

Haywood lets Mrs. Graspall's moral challenge become even more intense by making her fully aware the "lessee" of her favours is to be Beaumont, the very man for whom she does harbor secret feelings, unlike Behn's heroine who is unaware that her husband has rented her to another man, let alone her lover, Gayman.

Haywood supplies the cross-dressed abandoned mistress of Sir Beaumont, Amadea, as a convenient plot mechanism to relieve Mrs. Graspall of her physical and moral dilemma, as “Haywood could not proceed to Behn’s disturbing conclusion” (Hughes xxiii). Amadea is an example of the redeemable victim of seduction described by Aleksandra Hultquist in her study of *Betsy Thoughtless* in relation to Richardson’s *Pamela*:

[Haywood] not only offers strategies for life after seduction, but proposes that the path from attraction to abandonment is complicated and offers many chances for redemption, provided the woman is smart enough to understand the situation and take advantage of its lessons. (2)

Amadea is such a “smart” woman, perhaps making her first appearance in Haywood’s work in this play, rather than in a novel.⁵⁶ She appears in Mrs. Graspall’s closet immediately after Mr. Graspall has informed his wife of his deal with Beaumont (two thousand pounds for one night) and his expectation that she fulfill this commitment. Amadea has overheard this conversation (much to Mrs. Graspall’s chagrin) and immediately proposes a means of exploiting the situation to the benefit of both women—the old substitution trick, the staple of much Restoration drama and amatory fiction.⁵⁷ Mrs. Graspall, who seems to extinguish her desire for Beaumont easily and transfer her emotion into indignation against her husband’s actions, readily agrees to Amadea’s plan.

The result is vindication for Mrs. Graspall and a come-uppance for her husband in front of a houseful of guests (in effect all the characters of the play) reluctantly invited to a dinner party by Mr. Graspall at his wife’s insistence. In a staged performance of a lovers’ quarrel by Amadea (back in her male disguise) and Sir Beaumont, Graspall and

his guests are led to believe that he has been cuckolded, not by Beaumont, but by the young man portrayed by Amadea. Mrs. Graspall publically taunts her husband, his pandering now exposed:

Did you not sell me? Let me out to Hire, and forc'd my trembling virtue to obey –
Did not I kneel, and weep, and beg – but you had received the Price you set me at,
and I must yield, or be turn'd out a Beggar. (210)

However, this play does not end with a “dance of the cuckolds”⁵⁸ as seems to happen at the close of Behn’s comedy. In spite of the brutal socio-economic marital reality for women that Mrs. Graspall depicts above, Haywood resorts to the sentimental style of the period to close her comedy (Hughes xxiii-xxiv, Rudolph xiv). Mr. Graspall is offered the opportunity to repent (at a steep financial price of twice two thousand pounds), and he accepts. Mrs. Graspall responds in true sentimental fashion:

Stay, Sir, your Sorrow moves me; if I may believe your Penitence sincere, I can
return your Embraces a true, faithful, and a vertuous Wife. (210)

There is no promise for a lover to “inherit” the old man’s wife or of a potentially ongoing adulterous affair as happens at the end of Behn’s play. Mrs. Graspall unequivocally commits to “prove myself a most obedient Wife” (211) and resigns herself to the bourgeois domestic destiny of so many heroines of mid-century novels. However, Haywood does offer some incisive commentary upon the realities of the process of marital domestication in her epilogue to the play:

But to be grave—the Heroine of our play
Gains Glory by a hard, and dangerous Way:
Belov'd, her Lover pleads—she fears no Spy,
Her Husband favours—and her Pulse beats high,
Warm glows his hope—her Wishes catch the fire,
Mutual their Flame, yet Virtue quells Desire.

Safe th' Untempted may defy Love's Call
Why should the Unencountered fear to fall?
Virtue must pass thro Fire to prove its Weight
And equal Danger make the Triumph great. (213-4)⁵⁹

This summation of Mrs. Graspall's experience is in effect a miniature "reformed coquette" narrative, the plot pattern Jane Spencer et al. would suggest as intrinsic to many subsequent courtship novels, including Haywood's own *Betsy Thoughtless*. Mrs. Graspall does flirt with Beaumont, leading him on, much in the manner Betsy plays with her lovers' affections, until she realizes her social error and promptly, though reluctantly, corrects it:

How shall I answer him, or how disguise the real Reason of my Change of Temper, for much I fear he will not think it Hate? (181)

Betsy Thoughtless experiences her epiphany before marriage, in contrast to Mrs. Graspall, and her self-reform steels her to bear the tribulations of an exploitative, loveless marriage, not unlike her theatrical counterpart's barren relationship. Mrs. Graspall still functions to some extent in the cynical matrimonial mode of Restoration comedy, but her brief yet intense experience of sexual error and reform in *A Wife to be Lett* anticipates later novelistic patterns of character development.

In a parallel but sentimental fashion, Sir Harry Beaumont also abandons his amatory ways and renews his engagement to Amadea after being the "dupe" of the women's substitution plot and learning of his fiancée's disguise:

This unexampled Tenderness and Generosity has charm'd my very Soul – nor will we ever be divided more; but as by solemn Vows we have long since been one, my Chaplain tomorrow shall ratify the Contract. (202)

Following the pattern in Behn's comedies and in her own work, Haywood provides in *A Wife to Lett* two other significant female characters as foils or parallels to the main heroine: Celemena and Marilla. Their names, perhaps, signify that their roles are closer to the romance mode of amatory fiction than to the gritty "city comedy" context of the Graspalls, and may offer an alternative view of female destiny although their suitors see them only in economic terms. Marilla is the beleaguered young woman betrothed by her deceased father to an unappreciative and unacceptable man, Toywell. She is loved by Courtly, but is committed by a sense of duty to her father to go through with the arranged marriage. Near the end of the play, when she has been released from this obligation by Gaylove's unsolicited machinations, she puts off Courtly saying "Perhaps I'm fix'd never to marry" (205), suggesting the "reformed coquette" model of feminine behavior Haywood explores later in *Betsy Thoughtless*. Celemena is another lady engaged to an unacceptable suitor, Sneaksby; she is "a woman of a World of Life and Spirit in her Conversation and has much Wit" (170) and is pursued by the scheming Gaylove. Unlike Marilla, Celemena asks Gaylove to get her out of her engagement to Sneaksby, but also tries to avoid a similar commitment to him, wanting instead to be romantically courted first. The pragmatic Gaylove, however, insists on her obligation to marry him in the "contract scene", warning her that "Sneaksby never read Romances" (204) implying the same "realistic" approach to life in his own case. This pair, in spite of Celemena's romantic fantasies, seems more like Restoration comedy figures in their wit, cynicism, and calculation than the more sentimental Courtly, Beaumont, Marilla or Amadea.⁶⁰

Mrs. Graspall, unlike her predecessor Lady Fullbank, does not encourage or allow her suitor Beaumont's adulterous advances once she is aware of his intentions. She does, however, harbor feelings for him although she manages to suppress them even in the face of her horrible husband's mercenary abuse of her. Like Marilla, she chooses the high road of morality and honour, proving her inner worth in spite of external appearances. (Early in the play Courtly describes her as "virtuous they say" (170)). Mrs. Graspall seems to anticipate the self-denying, domesticated lady of Haywood's later novels and female conduct fiction in general. Nevertheless, she does participate in Amadea's substitution ploy and is willing to stand up to her husband—at least until he commits himself to mend his ways.⁶¹

However, a familiar trope that Haywood employs in her amatory fiction (derived from a similar device in Manley's novellas) is applied to Mrs. Graspall early in the play: the vulnerability of a woman caught reading (preferably romances or erotic fiction) by her lover or suitor with the implied erotic effect such reading has on the female reader (Warner 108). Mrs. Graspall is "discover'd reading at a Toylet" by Beaumont, who rather presumptuously barges in on her and comments "You are disorder'd, Madam."

Mrs. Graspall acknowledges her disorder to herself:

Ha! catch'd in this Confusion of my Soul! when all my Thoughts were unprepar'd
and hurry'd! Unlucky Accident! (181)

Her anxiety is the result of inner emotional turmoil over her attraction to Beaumont that she has just revealed in a brief soliloquy that interrupts her reading:

How small a Relief can Books afford us when the Mind's perplex'd? – The
Subject our Thoughts are bent upon, forms Characters more capital and swelling,

than any these useless Pages can produce – and it’s no matter on what Theme the author treats; we read it our own way, and see but with our Passions Eyes – *Beaumont* is here in every line – *Beaumont* in all the Volume – I’ll look no more upon’t – These Opticks too are Traytors, and conspire with Fancy to undo me – To what shall I have recourse? (180-1)

Mrs. Graspall’s eyes, like Daraxa’s heart in *The Fair Captive*, are “traitors” to the poise and self-control of these women, “hysterical” responses to amorous stimulation that undermine their resistance to it. William Warner identifies a similar “scene that eroticizes reading” (117) in *Love in Excess* when D’Elmont catches Melliora alone reading Ovid’s *Epistles*, who “blushed at sight of the Count, and rose from off the couch with a confusion which gave new lustre to her charms” (Haywood 117). After a short conversation with D’Elmont, Melliora becomes “more disordered” (118), but “as much confused as Melliora was...she had spirit and resolution enough” to firmly disengage from the attentions of the Count, just as Mrs. Graspall also regains her self-control quickly in *A Wife to be Lett*. Warner’s point in bringing up this incident is to trace examples of “anti-novel discourse” in the fiction of Manley and Haywood that is used to pre-empt this kind of public attack on their work (novels as erotic stimulants) by incorporating it within their own texts (109).⁶² If we accept Warner’s analysis, it is interesting that Haywood deploys the same strategy in one of her plays, perhaps using the public stage as a means to defend her fiction writing, or her own personal reputation as an author.

A Wife to be Lett is the most “novelistic” of Haywood’s four dramas (Hughes xx).⁶³ It reflects a shift in her work from foreign settings and styles that has also been observed in her prose fiction, beginning with *The British Recluse* in 1722 (Backscheider

22), as it is set in an English household rather than in the Middle East as in her first play, or France as was the case in *Love in Excess*. It is also set within female domestic space, mostly the Graspall home, not the street or Court, repeating the progression from public (masculine) space to private (feminine) settings pioneered by Aphra Behn in her plays according to Annette Kreis-Schink (32). This more realistic context is reinforced by the explicit economic theme of the play, in which the women characters are unabashedly commodified in terms of their financial value to their fathers/husbands.

Several critics have noted that this play appeared after the financial crisis of the South Sea Bubble (Ballaster 162, Rudolph xii), suggesting that Haywood's critique of mercenary greed in this and other works was deemed by the likes of Richard Savage and Alexander Pope an inappropriate intrusion into the masculine public sphere by a disreputable woman (Ballaster 163). Yet, Haywood's dramas were much more "conservative in form and content" than her fiction, for "drama was much more hamstrung by rules of decorum and neoclassical precepts than the newly emerging genre of fiction, and a woman writer, who was likely to be attacked for her audacity in venturing into the field, would have been ill-advised to discard time-honoured conventions of genre if she wished to escape censure or ridicule" (Rubik and Mueller-Zettelmann xxxviii-xxxix). Haywood did not escape either fate by such a strategy, but *A Wife to be Lett* does adopt a conservative perspective in all three "love" plots, which not only conform to Restoration comedic models but also the more contemporary shift to sentimental comedy as noted above. This shift also anticipates Haywood's transformation from a notorious writer of scandal or amatory fiction to an anonymous⁶⁴

author of domestic conduct novels mid-century. The evolution of Behn's ambivalent Julia Fulbank into the domestic "paragon" (Rubik and Mueller-Zettelmann xl), Mrs. Graspall, in Haywood's play is the most telling aspect of her future fictional strategies.

Yet, Graspall's wife is not much different than the younger, but equally moral and conflicted Melliora, D'Elmont's ward and object of his relentless amatory pursuit, in *Love in Excess*. She too must resist her own erotic desires that threaten to betray her to the then married D'Elmont, her newly appointed guardian—even unconsciously as she dreams of him as he watches her sleep (127). Melliora does the right thing, though rather late; following the death of D'Elmont's wife Alovisa, in part the result of her own tempting presence in the household, she flees to a monastery where she remains (more or less) until her guardian-suitor is morally prepared to wed her.

There is some suggestion that Haywood's own performance of the role of Mrs. Graspall (and speaker of the Epilogue) made *A Wife to Lett* something of a box-office draw "occasioned by the curiosity of the public to see the author" though her acting "met with little approbation" (*Biographia Dramatica* cited in Rudolph xiii). Even more than Aphra Behn, who seems to have confined herself to addressing her public by means of prefaces and prologues, and Delarivier Manley, Eliza Haywood in the first part of her career seems to have exploited her public reputation and/or notoriety by actually appearing in public as an actress, cultivating her image as a media personality in keeping with William Warner's analysis of the emergence of "media culture" (xi) and the role of "performing authorship" (262) in the early eighteenth century. Catherine Blouch (also

citing Maria Heinemann) observes that this practice continued into stage productions of the 1730s “in which Haywood was evidently content to take her reputations—all of them—along...Haywood’s stage career in the 1730s was marked by her appearances in roles that not only suited but capitalized on her reputations as a muse and a licentious woman” (liii).

Before she began writing fiction, Haywood was a struggling actress, perhaps a “strolling actress,” (Savage cited in Schofield (A) 83), so selling herself on the public stage to make a living is perhaps not remarkable. However, even as she gained fame and some fortune as a novelist in the 1720s, she continued to present a public face in the theatre in the case of *A Wife to Lett*. By the end of that decade, her reputation as a “scandal” fiction writer was well established⁶⁵, yet Haywood resumed her theatrical career in the Henry Fielding’s highly politicized Little Theatre in the Haymarket⁶⁶ in the 1730s until the Licensing Act shut it down. In this environment, she not only acted but also continued writing for the stage, adapting Fielding’s *Tragedy of Tragedies* (*Tom Thumb*) in collaboration with William Hatchett into the newly popular ballad-opera format as *The Opera of Operas* (1733), her most successful dramatic composition.⁶⁷ Yet, it was also during this time that Haywood became the target of Pope’s famous attack upon her as a promiscuous, fecund Grub-street hack in his *Dunciad* (1728) and its sequels, as well as from pen of her estranged former lover, Richard Savage, especially his pamphlet, *An Author to be Lett* (1729).⁶⁸

Haywood's very public career at this time fits well into the wider cultural analysis by William Warner regarding the "rise of the novel". Warner comes at the "rise of the novel" question from a different perspective, challenging the Watt "fathers of the novel" thesis, but also not buying into the feminist "mothers of the novel" approach of Spencer, Todd, et al. Instead, Warner proposes that what "rose" was "media culture" in the form of print, with novels ("novelistic entertainment") being an ideal manifestation of this phenomenon. Thus the amatory fiction or "formula fiction" of Behn, Manley, and Haywood can be incorporated into an historical narrative that results in "the" novel without necessarily displaying the "realism" or other features that are considered intrinsic to the genre. Of particular interest here is Warner's notion of "media culture," which he sees as "a repertoire of objects in circulation—novels on the market—and an interrelated set of cultural practices...as each supports and expands on the other" (127).

Warner intends "cultural practices" to mean the activities and roles associated with publishing here, but I think his concept can be expanded to include public perceptions of literary figures generated by themselves or others, whether in the form of prefaces, satires, prologues and epilogues, or actual public performances on stage. We see this manifestation of media culture in Fielding's satirical farces such as *The Authors' Farce*, *Pasquin*, *The Historical Register* and *Eurydice Hiss'd*, at the little Haymarket theatre wherein the dynamics of writing, publishing, performing, spectating, and reviewing are satirically and self-consciously rendered (Freeman 58-63). Eliza Haywood may have performed roles in some or all of these plays, one of which was a satiric depiction of herself as "Mrs. Novel,"⁶⁹ while at the peak of her public notoriety as a

scandal-fiction writer. In the context of Warner's concept of emerging "media culture" as a kind of cauldron of brewing literary expression, Haywood's exhibition of herself as a woman novelist/actress/playwright/celebrity was a conspicuous, performative manifestation of this process, which is perhaps why she drew such a scathing response from Pope.⁷⁰ Warner addresses this relationship of the theatre to the emerging novel in more general terms:

Novel reading came to rival play going as principal form of entertainment. In order to pursue their careers as entertainers, Haywood and Fielding follow Behn in migrating from the theater to novel writing. Because the unease with the novel reader extends an earlier unease with the spectator of drama it is instructive to compare them. In both, it is supposed that pleasure puts moral conscience to sleep....If plays could cause riots, novels could act at a distance. If plays put too much control in the hands of the playwrights, actors, and directors of the theater, novels put too much power in the hands of the reader, and of those who wrote and sold what they read. If plays offer an unseemly spectacle of vice, novels invite readers to produce this spectacle in their own head. What sets novels apart from plays is their particularly opportunistic use of the print medium. (128-9)

Although he emphasizes "what sets novels apart from plays" here, Warner also demonstrates the close relationship of plays to novels as "forms of entertainment" in the emerging media culture during this period. It is also useful to recall Laura Visconti's observations about how much the reading of plays was part of the early Eighteenth Century's theatrical experience (301). Eliza Haywood seems to have been writing at a time when distinctions between these forms of media culture were still unclear or not yet established. Thus she could work simultaneously in both genres, transposing elements of each to the other, while developing a media "image" of herself as a notorious woman author (Blouch liv).

Warner places Haywood with Fielding at the historic cultural juncture when the theater would no longer be “unlicensed” with the Licensing Act of 1737, but argues that the novel was much more difficult to license or control for the reasons above and as part of a proliferation of “media culture”. Nevertheless, the novel, at least according to the feminist narrative of its rise, was subjected to an internal discipline that led to the supplanting of the amatory fiction in which Haywood, Manley and Behn specialized, by the more socially acceptable domestic conduct novel modeled by Richardson in the case of female authors, or the “comic epic in prose” promulgated by Fielding for male novelists. In the case of the former, it seems as if the “anti-novel discourse” that Warner describes as pre-emptive defensive postures in the amatory fiction of Haywood and Manley, now becomes the dominant mode, while some aspects of the scandalous earlier fiction (including feminine resistance to patriarchy and female desire) are discreetly embedded in the new polite novel (Hultquist 2).

Eliza Haywood’s theatrical career ended after 1737, and her prodigious output of amatory novels and scandal fiction also petered out in the 1740s. Some have attributed her literary “silence” to the impact of Pope’s attack upon her in the *Dunciad* (Schofield (A) 7), but this has been generally challenged in recent criticism (Blouch xl-xlviii, Merritt 7, Saxton 7). In any case, she wasn’t silent at all in this period, writing translations, her satire on *Pamela*, her *Female Spectator* and *The Parrot* magazines, plus several novels, including *The Fortunate Foundlings* in 1744, the first of her “conservative” novels, capitalizing on a sentimental interest in the treatment of foundlings at the time (Schofield

(A) 85) and anticipating Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones: A Foundling* by five years (Saxton 8).

Nevertheless, a clear change in subject matter and style occurs in Haywood's work in the 1740s, perhaps not coincidentally the decade in which the novel is "born" according to conventional literary history. Eighteenth-century commentators provided the first and long-standing explanation of this change as the manifestation of Haywood's personal reformation into an author of feminine morality and propriety, which was first captured in Clara Reeve's *The Progress of Romance* in 1785 (Ballaster 196, Blouch lxiii). More recently, this has been contested with some commentators believing that Haywood's canny sense of the literary market motivated her to reposition herself while others contend she kept on doing the same things but more discreetly and in keeping with current values and tastes (Blouch lxiv, Saxton 9).

The apparent change in Haywood's writing style and public persona in the 1740s has perplexed the critics, as noted above, with such explanations as her personal reformation, economic need, or her market savvy perhaps diminishing her artistic stature or integrity from a contemporary point of view. Haywood's transformation certainly puts her squarely in the midst of the larger shift in the public perception of the role of women authors, especially among themselves, that Nora Nachumi observes as dividing contemporary feminist critics into two camps: those who believe women novelists became more conservative as the century progressed and those who contend that "many novels discreetly subvert repressive ideas about women's nature and roles" (xxvi).

However, Nachumi suggests an alternative way to view this phenomenon: that while women novelists “were aligning their work with that of conduct book writers, they often used the prefaces to their novels as “a kind of theatrical performance, one that invested their authors with the authority to define what a ‘real’ lady should be” (xix).

This interpretation might also tie Haywood’s interest in the theatre to her fiction, for she seems to have engaged in a broader kind of “theatrical performance” in the 1740s to establish her credentials as a literary authority figure for women. Haywood “performed” this role in a number of ways, one of which was to adopt a Fieldingesque narrative role as a mature, but sometimes ironic commentator in her later fiction, such as in *Betsy Thoughtless* and *The History of Jenny and Jemmy Jessamy*. Another was to establish her own women’s periodicals, *The Female Spectator* (1744-1746), *The Parrot* (1746), and late in her life, *The Young Lady* (1756). The former “is generally considered the first periodical written for women by a woman, which has provided Haywood a claim to a place in the history of English journalism as the founding mother of the woman’s magazine” (Wright and Newman 18)⁷¹. It was at least moderately successful in terms of its longevity (Spedding 195) and quite lucrative financially for Haywood, more so than plays or novels, in spite of her best-selling author status ().

As Wright and Newman point out in their Introduction to a collection of essays on *The Female Spectator*, this periodical is “one of Haywood’s less glamorous literary projects” (13) dispensing conventional advice and wisdom to a female audience. However, they also note that Haywood modifies the approach of Addison and Steele’s

more famous and long-established journal by adopting a different editorial persona from Mr. Spectator's "pontificating from his position of intellectual and moral superiority" (14). "Instead, Haywood offers readers an older, experienced city belle past her prime who wishes to help readers avoid the follies she herself engaged in by sharing her experience and the knowledge she has gained from reflecting on it"(ibid). In her own words, Haywood declares her adopted persona in the opening of the first Book of her periodical:

I shall also acknowledge, that I have run through as many Scenes of Vanity and Folly as the greatest Coquet of them all.—Dress, Equipage, Flattery, were the Idols of my Heart.—I should have thought that Day lost which did not present me with some new Opportunity of shewing myself.—My Life, for some Years, was a continued Round of what I then called Pleasure, and my whole Time engrossed by a Hurry of promiscuous Diversions.—But whatever Inconveniencies such a matter of Conduct has brought upon myself, I have this Consolation, to think that the Public may reap some benefit from it. (Book 1, 8)

Given our sketchy information about her personal life, these follies and experiences might be more accurately attributed to the heroines of her fiction⁷², and the knowledge Haywood imparts is as much the insight of the professional writer of amatory novels as her own private experience. Patricia Meyer Spacks observes in the Introduction to her edition of *The Female Spectator* that Haywood's essays "seem to miniaturize entire novels, adumbrating elaborate plots and sketching multiple possibilities of character" (xviii). In effect, by writing "miniature novels" in her periodical, Haywood performs the role of female professional writer in the current stage of her career as she appears to have done previously in her theatrical self-promotion as a scandal fiction writer. This performance continues in her role as narrator of her late novels.

In any case, the transitions of the 1740s, both personal and at large, seem to have resulted in the composition of the prose fiction regarded as Haywood's best and most novel-like, *The History of Betsy Thoughtless* in 1751. Written in the style of Henry Fielding's novels, in the third person with observations at the head of each chapter, the novel traces the romantic life of the title character from early adolescence to her second marriage. The Haywood's theatrical legacy is still evident in this novel as Schofield points out that the characters' names and qualities "represent stock figures of Restoration drama" ((A) 92). Betsy's "thoughtlessness" is limited to a lack of insight into the consequences and dangers of her social behavior, especially with men, but otherwise she is consistently depicted as intelligent and virtuous. Betsy is an eligible woman of independent means (her parents having died) who does not want to marry and does not believe she is in love with any of her suitors. She enjoys the social perks of "dating" and playing one suitor off another, failing to see the pain and breach of courtship decorum she causes. Her suitors are good, serious men on the whole though she is also "courted" by rakes and fortune hunters, but she fails to discriminate between the two categories.

Most seriously, Betsy does not recognize the commitment and love of Truworth, nor her own growing affection for him, until she loses him to another. Instead, after a series of close calls threatening her honour, she cedes to the pressure of her brothers, Frank and Thomas, and her guardians Lord and Lady Trusty (having lost her first good guardian, Mr. Goodman) to marry the dour Mr. Munden, to save her from further scrapes or family embarrassment. Neither party loves the other from the onset, and Munden turns out to be abusive and selfish to the point that Betsy decides to leave him.

Through all this, Betsy develops a sober strength of character she previously lacked and behaves honorably throughout her marital ordeal, including returning to her husband on his deathbed (the cause of his mortality being anxiety about the potential divorce) and honoring him with the full mourning period. In the meantime, Truworth's wife conveniently dies shortly after their marriage, and Betsy and Truworth do re-encounter one another and realize they are still in love. However, Betsy is scrupulous in her response to him (he being less so) both while her husband is alive and after his death. Nevertheless, immediately following the mourning year, they are united happily. The moral Haywood supplies at the end, no doubt consciously echoing Richardson's famous sub-title, is:

Thus were the virtues of our heroine (those follies that had defaced them being corrected) at length rewarded with a happiness, retarded only till she had rendered herself wholly worthy of receiving it. (568)

The real message, however, seems to be about the dilemma faced by an unmarried woman during the courtship period of her life between her "power" over suitors and the pleasures of courtship and the inevitable need to "dwindle into a wife". Betsy does not want to enter the latter state and enjoys her autonomy (or the illusion of it), which Haywood seems to condone tacitly by insisting on her basic intelligence and perceptiveness and limiting the range of her folly. (Betsy does not marry until 500 pages into the novel, and it is far from a "happily-ever-after outcome.") The scrapes Betsy gets herself into are not unreasonably motivated—she wants to be able to function and enjoy herself in the social "world" as freely as possible, and believes (naively) that she can—and are dangerous only because of the unscrupulous behavior of men.

The narrative model Haywood adopts in *Betsy Thoughtless* is the “reformed coquette” pattern pioneered by Catherine Trotter in *The Adventures of a Young Lady (Olinda)* (1693) and Mary Davys in *The Reform’d Coquet* (1724), which Jane Spencer sees as a significant feature in subsequent novels by Frances Burney and Jane Austen. Spencer describes the “reformed heroines” of such novels as “learning to repudiate faults seen as specifically feminine, and accepting male authority instead of challenging it” ((A) 143). Beth Tobin, the editor of the Oxford World’s Classics edition of the novel, suggests in her introduction that this view is too conservative and cites Deborah Nestor’s contention that “adherence to conventional ideology applies only to the surface of the text” (Tobin xv).

Perhaps the most dramatic example in *Betsy Thoughtless* of the kind of subversion Tobin describes involves Betsy’s marriage to Munden, which turns out not to be the right thing to do at all, just as “thoughtless” in a way as her earlier actions. Indeed, Betsy shows an insight contrary to thoughtlessness just before her marriage:

“I must now look upon myself . . . as already married. I have promised,—it is too late to think of retracting. . . . I wonder what can make the generality of women so fond of marrying?—It looks to me like an infatuation.—Just as if it were not a greater pleasure to be courted, complimented, admired, and addressed by a number, than be confined to one, who from a slave becomes a master, and, perhaps uses his authority in a manner disagreeable enough. . . . And yet it is expected from us.—Mighty ridiculous!—they want to deprive us of all the pleasures of life, just when one begins to have a relish for them.” (431)

Yet, in complying with the insistence of her two brothers and the advice of the apparently ironically named Lord and Lady Trusty, Betsy adheres to conventional ideology by accepting that this marriage is the necessary and appropriate corrective to her

previous risky behavior. The marriage turns out to be her biggest mistake, which almost brings about her ruin in several ways. Betsy even finds herself in Mrs. Graspall's situation in *A Wife to Lett* at one point when Munden insinuates she should prostitute herself to his patron, Lord – in order to advance his career. Thus Haywood undermines the courtship or reformed coquette formula of women's domestic fiction by incorporating a failed marriage as an integral part of the heroine's experience. She also demonstrates some consistency in her plays and novels regarding marriage under scrutiny: the Graspalls in *A Wife to Lett*, or the Vizier's unsuccessful marriage to Irene in *The Fair Captive*, as well as the tragic marriage of Alovisa and D'Elmont in *Love in Excess*, all foreshadowing the Mundens' disastrous union in *Betsy Thoughtless*.

While this novel is very different in character from Haywood's earlier amatory fiction, such as *Love in Excess*; aspects of the earlier genre are overtly retained, particularly the immoral behavior and "histories" of other female characters, such as Miss Forward, Flora Mellasin and her mother, or Mademoiselle de Roquelair, as well as the predatory actions of the various rakes (Hultquist 6). The general climate of romantic danger (from inappropriate addresses through seductions to attempted rapes) in which many of the women become active players themselves, reflects the world of amatory fiction rather than that of the more restrained safer domestic environment of courtship or conduct novels of the eighteenth century.

If there is an ironic voice in Haywood's late fictions, it is an anonymous one, as noted above. Gone is the literary figure on public display on the title page or in the

theatre. Instead, Haywood retreats into the role of an omniscient, Fielding-like narrator, but one lacking his ebullient personality. Haywood's narrator is occasionally sarcastic and sometimes moralistic, but generally cautious, towing the line of convention, it seems, and perhaps relying upon internal dissonances within the narrative to articulate any subversive messages. However, this voice is not inconsistent with those of the personae Haywood creates in her periodicals during this period (Blouch lxxiii).

Eliza Haywood's literary career is tellingly representative of the fate of women dramatists and novelists throughout the eighteenth century. The theatre served as the initial public venue for women authors like Haywood, Manley and Behn, who later transferred their literary activity to prose fiction as part of the explosion of print "media culture" that William Warner describes. But while reading novels might have been an "unlicensed" private activity, the female authors⁷³ of these works remained on the stage, figuratively and literally, as public figures subject to controversy, occasional praise, and, more often than not, ridicule. Only after the Licensing Act of 1737, did a change occur in Haywood's career and in the public profile of women writers in general, when they seemed to need "license" to write.

If we extend the influence of Haywood's experience as an actress and a playwright beyond the specifically theatrical elements in her fiction, we can see that her "life-long (and largely unrealized) fascination and professional association with the theatre" (Ingrassia 30) contributed to the work and public career of this pivotal and transformational woman writer in the history of the English novel. As part of the "media

culture” of the period described by William Warner, Haywood participated in a shift, especially on the part of professional women writers, from the public spectacle of the stage into the privately experienced drama of readers of popular print publications as their primary venue.

Nevertheless, Haywood seems to have maintained a theatrical perspective as a fiction or journal writer, for “nothing took Haywood very far away from the linked theatrical and literary communities she had inhabited from the start” (Blouch li). Arguably, the reading public of the time did the same, for, as Laura Visconti observes, they read printed versions of plays published before or after performances (301). Novels and plays were shared aloud among family and friends, and as Catherine Ingrassia suggests, in some cases younger readers may have been “schooled in the codes of playbooks” (Note 1 in *Anti-Pamela* 65). Indeed, Haywood’s anti-heroine, Syrena Tricky in *Anti-Pamela*, is fortuitously caught reading Steele’s *The Conscious Lovers* by her “old Spark” Mr. W--- whose admiration for her is augmented by her taste for sentimental comedy (176), this incident being yet another example in Haywood’s work of the eroticism of a woman observed reading as noted by Warner (108).

Acting a part, then, seems intrinsic to Haywood’s conception of fiction. In her amatory novels, disguise and role playing empower many of the female characters, such as Alovisa and Ciamara in *Love in Excess* or Syrena in *Anti-Pamela*, who follow in the footsteps of Behn’s corrupted Sylvia in her *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister*. Haywood was not alone in this depiction of female performance in her fiction

during the 1720s. Her main literary rival, Daniel Defoe, produced *Moll Flanders* (1722) and the enigmatic *Roxana* (1724) during this period. Both novels feature female characters who adopt deceptive personae to exploit others (usually males). *Roxana*, in particular, seems to emulate and/or parody Haywood's amatory fiction as the subtitle (originally the title) *The Fortunate Mistress* evokes Haywood's *Idalia; or, The Unfortunate Mistress* (1723). *Roxana*, though initially driven to the sexual exploitation of her lovers by the economic necessity typical in Defoe, becomes a sexual predator among European and English society, not for physical gratification, but for social ambition (she hopes to marry a prince or be mistress to the king) and, it seems, for the sheer pleasure in playing the roles she adopts. She never is identified by a name—"Roxana" is assigned to her at the peak of her erotic and dramatic powers by the admiring court of Charles II who attend her parties and masquerades where she performs a "Turkish" dance in a stunning Ottoman costume. She takes on a series of other identities to attract or escape attention throughout Defoe's novel. She is a consummate actress who can even feign indignance when she is "likened to a publick Mistress, or a Stage-Player, and the like" (303, Defoe's italics), and even at the close of the novel, *Roxana*'s "real" identity remains unresolved as she disintegrates into several possible outcomes (penitent in a monastery, convict in a prison, reunited with her children) in sequels added (not by Defoe) to subsequent editions.

If Defoe meant to parody Haywood's amatory fiction, it is more likely he had *Fantomina* (1724) in mind than his novel's anti-namesake. *Fantomina* is perhaps most indicative of Haywood's preoccupation with female role-playing in her fiction. This

short novella locates us squarely in the perspective of the heroine though Haywood like her predecessors, Behn and Manley, eschews the first-person narrative Defoe favors. Yet, as in the case of Roxana, we do not learn the heroine's real name or identity. "Fantomina" is the name she chooses for herself in the first in a series of four roles. The plot is a twist on the "jilted mistress" theme. Fantomina is the ideal potential "reformed coquette" figure, a young lady of fortune just come into town from the country without parental restraints upon her. She soon indulges in the pleasures of London, including the theatre, where she observes the attentions the prostitutes receive from the "gentlemen" in the audience. She decides to play the part of one to see what the experience is like. Though she has prepared herself to defend her honour, and more importantly her identity, Fantomina is soon deflowered by the client/suitor she is attracted to most, Beauplaisir. She quickly recovers from her loss of virtue and manages to set herself up as his mistress, while retaining her "secret identity" as a virginal young lady of high rank. As routinely happens in Haywood's amatory fiction, Beauplaisir's zeal for her wanes, but instead of indulging in self-pity or recrimination, Fantomina decides to win him back—as somebody else. This time she plays the role of a chambermaid and allows herself to be seduced by the rake. Of course, this relationship must be short-lived, so Fantomina next becomes a grieving widow, followed by a "fair incognita" who clandestinely pursues Beauplaisir. Fantomina's role-playing is brought to an abrupt halt by pregnancy and the inconvenient return of her mother, who demands to know and find the father. A perplexed Beauplaisir is summoned to Fantomina's bedside where all is revealed to his, and her mother's, surprise. Convinced that Beauplaisir was "innocent," in the sense of

being unaware whom he was sleeping with, Fantomina's mother dismisses him without having to marry her daughter, who is then dispatched to a monastery, which the editors of the Broadway Literary Texts edition of the novella suggest is not necessarily the end of her sexual adventures (Croskery and Patchias 24). Indeed, the "confusing" (25) end of the story resembles the abrupt and ambiguous close of *Roxana*:

In fact, Haywood's story almost refuses to end at all. The heroine is sent to a monastery, but her future remains underdetermined. More shocking to Haywood's readers would have been the fact that the work contains no normative or prescriptive statement in its final pages. (24)

The editors above also bring the problematic conclusion of *Fantomina* explicitly into the theatrical context:

However, where Richardson borrows the platitudes of Christian humanism to subvert the conventions of the "persecuted maiden" genre [in *Pamela*], Haywood looks to a more recent literary tradition: the comic drama of the late seventeenth-century. Restoration comedies focused not on the tragedy of lost love and ruined virtue but on the joy and wit and danger of seduction. By importing elements of disguise, wit, and sexual freedom from Restoration comedy into a narrative that initially evokes the tragic plot of the persecuted maiden, Haywood draws attention to the fact that both genres share an interest in the process of seduction. Perhaps because Haywood refuses to choose between the two genres, *Fantomina* escapes the traditional ending of Restoration comedy (marriage) or the "persecuted maiden" story (typically, death or disgrace). (24)

Eliza Haywood's role as a kind of contrapuntal force in the development of the English novel, engaging in a form of fiction-publishing dialectic, first with Defoe and later with Fielding, is exemplified again almost twenty years after *Fantomina* in her response to Richardson's *Pamela*, which continues the theatrical patterns described above. Syrena, in Haywood's *Anti-Pamela; or, Feign'd Innocence Detected* (1741), is another consummate actress who exploits her Pamela-like demeanor of innocence to lure promising men of means to seduce her—usually on her own terms:

She had not reach'd her thirteenth Year, before she excell'd the most experience'd Actresses on the Stage, in a lively assuming all the different Passions that find Entrance in a Female Mind. Her young Heart affected with imaginary Accidents (such as her Mother, from time to time, suggested to her might possibly happen) gave her whole Frame Agitations adapted to the Occasion, her Colour would come and go, her Eyes sparkle, grow Languid, or overflow with Tears, her Bosom heave, her Limbs tremble; she would fall into Faintings, or appear transported, and as it were out of herself; and all this so natural, that had the whole College of Physicians been present, they could not have imagin'd it otherwise than real. (54)

Catherine Ingrassia argues in her introduction to the novel that “By demonstrating that virtue, arguably Pamela’s most pressing work, can be a performative signifier that women can strategically employ to their own ends, Haywood implicitly asks the reader to re-evaluate Pamela and Syrena as well” (41). This observation suggests how *Anti-Pamela*, despite its clumsy title, is more than merely a parody of Richardson’s novel and heroine as Fielding’s *Shamela* might be considered to be⁷⁴. Haywood’s novel might be considered a revisiting of the trope of *Fantomina* or *Roxana*, but now deploying the techniques of Richardson’s “new species of fiction.”

Despite her apparent reluctance for first-person narration or experiments with interiority, Haywood easily adopts the epistolary style of Richardson’s novel, but embeds it within her more usual omniscient third-person narrative technique. Haywood’s intent, like Fielding’s in *Shamela*, is to parody Pamela’s letter writing in terms of style and credibility, but she manages to relate segments (pages 58-71, 85-112, 173-193) of her story almost entirely in letter format (between Syrena Tricky and her conniving mother) and sustain narrative interest for her reader. Haywood even introduces some psychological conflict or development through this medium early in the book when the

inexperienced Syrena deviates from her mother's schemes regarding Vardine, her first lover, and loses her virginity as a result.⁷⁵ In effect, Haywood allows us to "detect" Syrena's "feigned innocence" through the protagonist's own words as well as through the authoritative commentary of the third-person narrator. Regrettably, she abandons this more subtle exploration of narrative potential as the novel progresses, but she does demonstrate an adeptness of integrating letters and narration reminiscent of Behn in *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister*.

Haywood takes her critical response to Richardson's *Pamela* further in her *Anti-Pamela* than Fielding does in his *Shamela* (Blouch lxvi, Ingrassia 10). Arguably, she accomplishes her own version of what Fielding does with *Joseph Andrews* by appropriating Richardson's new species of writing into her own well established style of amatory fiction. Haywood may not create a new genre with *Anti-Pamela*, but she does contribute significantly through this work to the evolution of amatory fiction into the emerging novel form. She does so on her own terms, however, as her protagonist Syrena remains unrelentingly self-serving and exploitative throughout this picaresque novella. While resembling Defoe's predatory women, Moll Flanders and Roxana, Syrena's motivation is not so much mercenary as sheer self-indulgence, for she repeatedly undermines her economic conquests by engaging in unremunerative sexual flings, to the frustration of her calculating mother (who would fit comfortably within a Defoe novel). Syrena remains true to Haywood's early dictum in her first novel about "that sort of love...which hurries people on to an immediate gratification of their desires, tho' never so prejudicial to themselves, or the person they pretend to love" (*Love in Excess* 119).

She doesn't develop as a character, even in the rudimentary way Defoe's protagonists do, but serves as an unchanging sign of an absolute disjunction between performed appearance and interior reality, that "uncalculated behavior may not exist" (Ingrassia 36). Haywood, like Fielding, seems to suggest that Pamela's depiction of herself as nonself-interested innocence can only be dissimulation given the hints Richardson provides of her incipient desire and the outcome she manages to bring about. However, unlike Fielding, Haywood makes her "anti-Pamela" a full-fledged character on the stage of her fiction rather than merely a figure of topical farce like those Fielding created for the Little Theatre in the Haymarket such as *Huncamunca* or *Mrs. Novel*.⁷⁶

Catherine Blouch observes that Haywood produced at least two other responses to *Pamela: The Virtuous Villager; or, Virgin's Victory* (1742), a translation of a French novel, *La Paysanne parvenue; ou les memoires de Madame la Marquise de L.V.* ((1735-7) by Chevalier de Mouhy and *A Present for a Serving-Maid; or, the Sure Means of Gaining Love and Esteem* (1743), a conduct book for servants like Pamela (Blouch lxiv-lxvii). The Pamela-like protagonist of the former work, Blouch, citing McBurney and Shrugue, suggests was actually more inspired by Marivaux's Marianne in his *La Viede Marianne, ou les aventures de Madame la Comtesse de ***** than Mouhy's heroine (lxv). Indeed, she argues that Pamela herself may be derived from Marivaux's protagonist (ibid), noting the "convoluted thematic relationships such as those among *Marianne*, *The Virtuous Villager*, *Pamela*, *Shamela*, and *Anti-Pamela* illustrate the irony and relative complexity of Haywood's later career" (lxvii). Perhaps more significant to this study is "the

dominant (male) influence on Haywood's later works" (lxviii) that Blouch attributes to Marivaux since he too was a dramatist as well as a novelist.

After the Licensing Act of 1737, female dramatists, along with many male counterparts, disappeared from the stage for a while, and men appropriated the field of prose fiction in the new form of "novels" (Tobin xxv). Women continuing or starting to write novels (such as Sarah Fielding) disengaged from the previous tradition of amatory fiction and its variants by becoming anonymous authors, working in the "new tradition" of Richardson or Fielding, following the path of renunciation and reformation Clara Reeve claimed for Haywood (Blouch lxiv). In effect, novel-writing, at least for women, fell under public scrutiny and control as much as the theatre did.

Nevertheless, the theatre remained a source of inspiration or even a kind of proving ground, for the next generation of mid-century novelists like Francis Brooke, Elizabeth Griffith and Charlotte Lennox. Plays by Behn, Manley, Centlivre, and even Haywood continued to be revived (and revised) on the London stage, serving as a reminder, perhaps, of the literary heritage of women's drama, as well as fiction, which could be accessed by this new wave of dramatists/novelists.

CHAPTER FOUR

“THE SECOND WAVE”: Lennox, Brooke, and Griffith

Eliza Haywood’s reappearance as a conduct book novelist in the 1750s with *Betsy Thoughtless*, and especially *Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy*, signaled a new era in eighteenth-century women’s writing that can be regarded as unprecedented in its extension and in its limitation of female literary activity. Throughout the last half of the century, this “second wave” of women writers not only filled bookshelves and circulating libraries with domestic novels, but also the London theatres with more productions of stage plays than had been seen since the 1690s.⁷⁷ Many of these works were written by female authors who found success in both genres, as a result, Nora Nachumi suggests, of the improving status of women writers in general (176). However, this status was dearly bought according to Nachumi, along with many other commentators, because it was contingent upon their “acting like a lady,” as she puts it (175). The idealization and domestication of women in the eighteenth century, documented by so many critics and literary historians, restricted the style and subject matter of women writers and required the repudiation of the female literary legacy of amatory or romantic fiction and Restoration-style drama of which they were heirs.

The peculiar status of Haywood in her role as a respectable lady writer in mid-century is a case in point. In contrast to her self-promotion as “Mrs. Novel” in her scandal-fiction heyday, Haywood’s conduct novels were discreetly anonymous in their authorship. Indeed, in Charlotte Lennox’s novel *Henrietta* (1758), published only seven

years after Haywood's *Betsy Thoughtless*, to which it owes much in theme and structure, the virtuous heroine primly rejects Haywood's "finest love-sick passionate stories" (along with Manley's *New Atalantis*) as bedtime reading in favour of Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (23). Ros Ballaster suggests this episode reflects:

...a major shift [that] had taken place in conceptualizing both the expectations and conditions of novelistic consumption in Britain. Although novel fiction remained feminocentric in terms of its content and thematic interest 'the female form' of the novel was rigidly conceived as an essentially private one, to be consumed in the boudoir or bedroom for personal pleasure. (206)

Resistance to this shift by many women writers in the mid-eighteenth century may have taken the form of writing "women's" novels in the third-person style of Fielding, as did Haywood, Lennox, Brooke and Burney, and of persisting to write for the public stage, in some cases blurring or bridging the distinctions between the two genres as Lennox and Brooke attempted.

Lennox might be regarded as explicitly leading the charge against this legacy of amatory fiction with her *The Female Quixote*, published in 1752, a year before Haywood's last novel, *Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy*. However, in this work the object of Lennox's satire is not the amatory/scandal fiction associated with Haywood, Manley, or Behn, but rather the already dated French romances by the likes of Mademoiselle de Scudery (Todd (B) 153). One might speculate that Lennox was adopting a more polite, indirect means to attack her "naughty" (as Janet Todd puts it, (B)153) immediate predecessors that would avoid presenting the lurid details of these authors' works, deploying instead the more whimsical, mock-heroic style of French romances.⁷⁸ Lennox

also appropriates in *The Female Quixote*, and to some extent in her other novels, the more conservative “reformed coquet” theme developed by Catherine Trotter, Mary Davys, and Haywood herself, as a moral counter-genre to the excesses of amatory fiction (Spencer (A) 144). By embedding this “feminine” theme into the comic narrative format developed by Henry Fielding in his “masculine” novels, Lennox, along with Haywood in *Betsy Thoughtless*, opens up domestic or conduct fiction to a satirical, social perspective and allies this novel form more closely to theatrical comedy⁷⁹.

Lennox’s career is also indicative of another pattern in the second wave of eighteenth-century women writers: the 1750s and 1760s were the decades in which female writers appropriated the new domestic novel popularized by Samuel Richardson into their literary realm, and in a broader sense, re-appropriated the genre as a whole, in a purified “lady-like” form, for their sex. Thus, writers like Lennox and Frances Brooke, as well as the reformed literary coquet, Haywood herself, would adopt the “masculine” narrative stance of Fielding in some of their novels, while others, such as Elizabeth Griffith, and including Brooke, would reclaim the “feminine” epistolary novel from Richardson, largely as a vehicle to exhibit admirable female and male sensibility. The middle decades of the century, then, not only established the credibility of the novel as a genre, but of women as respectable and versatile fiction writers, working in the developing the new genre.

This newly gained credibility and respectability arguably inspired many female writers to turn to the stage as a public venue and established genre to exhibit their talents.

As Ellen Donkin points out, such women found the theatre business more sympathetic to the production of their works:

As a group, these women were able to persuade the public that they had a rightful place in the profession. By the mid-1790s, although antagonistic currents survived—many from within the profession itself—women’s presence in playwriting had a modest momentum and stability for the first time in over a hundred years. . . . Women playwrights were useful because their presence publically demonstrated the generosity and benevolence of male patronage [by theatre managers like Garrick]. (185)

Before the relative heyday of successful female dramatists like Cowley and Inchbald in the 1780s and 1790s, a few women writers risked starting their literary career with drama, as does Frances Brooke’s heroine Mary Villars in *The Excursion*, who “placed her [economic] dependence” on the tragedy rather than the novel or epic poem in her “portmanteau” (16). Those who did try the stage first sometimes met with little success, as Brooke herself experienced (and documented in her novel) with her tragedy *Virginia* in 1756. A notable exception was Elizabeth Griffith, who began her career with a string of comedies in the mid-1760s, and then followed these with her successful novel *The Delicate Distress* in 1769. Later in the century, Sophia Lee would produce her comedy *The Chapter of Accidents* (1780) before publishing her first novel *The Recess* in 1783. (Nachumi Appendix, 187-297)

The alternate practice for women novelists was to establish their reputation in fiction first, as did Lennox, Frances Sheridan, and Frances Burney, before hazarding the stage⁸⁰. Sheridan, of course, presumably had exposure to the theatre, being married to the acting manager of Drury Lane—though it was Garrick who produced her first plays in that theatre (Donkin 30, 94)⁸¹—yet her first literary product was her successful novel,

Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph, published in 1761, two years prior to the production of her first two plays, *The Discovery* and *The Dupe*. Yet, despite the apparent risk of public exposure and/or humiliation of a woman writing professionally for the stage, even at mid-century, there seems to be no clear pattern of preference on the part of female dramatist/novelists for which genre to pursue first. It seems to have been a matter of individual opportunity and literary ego. This equivocal attitude might suggest that in the minds of many women writers at the time, there was not a significant distinction drawn between the two genres or the appropriateness of their participation in either—despite the inevitable prologues and epilogues that defend or apologize for the feminine dramatic muse.

Another pattern that seems to emerge among the women dramatists of this period is a preference for comedy. Though pathetic tragedy or “she-tragedy” remained popular throughout the century, and Richardson’s immensely admired *Clarissa* transferred elements of this form into fiction, women novelists/dramatists did not seem predisposed to favour this genre. While some tragedies by women were produced, sometimes successfully, such as Hannah More’s *Percy* (1777), Brooke’s *Siege of Sinope* (1781), Hannah Cowley’s *The Fate of Sparta* (1788) or Lee’s *Almeyda* (1796), the majority of women’s plays were comedies.⁸² This may reflect the taste of the time or the general decline in quality and thus quantity of tragedy produced by either gender as the century progressed, but also may be indicative of an affinity between the domestic/conduct novel and comedy, especially sentimental as opposed to “laughing” comedy.⁸³

Charlotte Lennox's long literary career (her last novel *Euphemia*, was published in 1790) represents an early appearance of the patterns outlined above. Hers falls into the perhaps more cautious pattern of establishing her literary reputation as a novelist first and then attempting to write for the stage. Lennox's case is especially interesting because unlike any other of the dramatist/novelists in this study, she adapted one of her own novels for the theatre. However, Lennox's first dramatic effort *The Sister* (1769), despite her success with *The Female Quixote* (1752) and *Henrietta* (1758), was booed off the stage during its first performance at Covent Garden, ostensibly for her remarks about Shakespeare in a previous work, but according to Donkin, the hissing was orchestrated by playwright Richard Cumberland's "cabal" (106).⁸⁴ This may be the first instance of a (female) novelist putting her own work of fiction into dramatic form since *The Sister* is closely based on the second volume of her novel, *Henrietta*.

Charlotte Lennox's *Henrietta* (1758) consists of two volumes that appear to follow the "reformed coquet" theme in a manner similar to Haywood's *Betsy Thoughtless*. *Henrietta* is narrated in the third person by a Fielding-like narrator, much in the same manner as Haywood's *Betsy Thoughtless*, and Lennox's own *The Female Quixote*, and includes sometimes witty or facetious chapter captions. The novel traces the adventures of eighteen-year-old Henrietta Courteney, who is the indigent daughter of a nobleman spurned by his father and prestigious family for marrying without his consent (a major theme of the work). Like Haywood's *Betsy*, Henrietta lacks parents or an effective guardian to supervise her entry into the world, but unlike *Betsy*, she also lacks

any fortune. Throughout the book, Henrietta must navigate the perils faced by a young woman of rank, but no means, in eighteenth-century society.

The first volume, however, can be considered independently as it has a different quality to the succeeding volume, in part because the work is somewhat picaresque in style. Characters who play major roles in volume one, like Miss Woodby, Mrs. Eccles, Lord B. and the younger Mr. Damer, disappear from volume two. (A quick conclusion at the end of the novel attempts to revisit these characters in a judgmental way.) Only the reliable Mrs. Willis and Henrietta's antagonistic relative, Lady Meadows, bridge the two volumes though they too, drop out of the action. Lady Meadows, an important character, ceases to be a factor early in volume two (a conciliatory visit to her, orchestrated by Mrs. Willis, serves as a link between the two volumes) though she does reappear at the end of the story. Notable is the absence of key male characters—Henrietta's missing brother, Charles Courteney, and her guardian, Mr. Damer—in the first volume, which contributes much to her difficulties. This absence leaves the conduct-book heroine largely in control of her own destiny within the limitations of her situation. She makes some possible social errors by trusting such dubious women as Miss Woodby and Mrs. Eccles, as well as men like young Damer.

It is Henrietta's flight from her Aunt Meadows' household because she learns of the plot between her Aunt and Mr. Danvers, her chaplain, to place her in a French convent in retaliation for not marrying Meadows' marriage choice for her, the aged Sir Isaac Darby, that is her most questionable act in the lady's conduct book context of this

novel. She is continually urged by the morally sound characters, like Mrs. Willis and her brother, to reconcile herself to her Aunt with some insinuation the convent plot may be a delusion or misunderstanding on her part, or just improbable (in keeping with a possible anti-romance theme as in *The Female Quixote*) (116). It is interesting the romance-like convent plot is never confirmed, even by the compromised Mrs. White, the only source of the information that is heard indistinctly through a keyhole (73). Lennox toys with a fascinating topic here, a more subtle exploration of her theme in *The Female Quixote*, in posing the question of whether Henrietta acted correctly in fleeing her Aunt, thereby exposing herself to all the social dangers that follow. The answer remains ambiguous as Lennox insists on Henrietta's behavior being that of a female paragon, for her heroine consistently displays good breeding, sensibility, and moral judgment, and yet allows persistent, though gentle, criticism of her heroine's only major initiative in the plot. Henrietta's usually supportive landlady, Mrs. Willis succinctly raises the issue that the story never answers:

Can a young woman who voluntarily sets herself free from constraint hope to escape from unfavourable censures? (116)

Even her brother, late in the novel, remains ambivalent about the appropriateness of her flight from Lady Meadows: "It was a rash step...but your subsequent conduct has effaced it; and I see not how you could have otherwise avoided being in the power of that villain-priest" (227).⁸⁵

In volume one, Henrietta has some agency, as much as is possible for an attractive woman of questionable rank in the predatory world, not unlike that of amatory fiction.

She is much like a pristine Betsy Thoughtless navigating through a series of close calls, including an attempted rape by Lord B early in the book. Lennox, however, gradually moves Henrietta away from this mode. Once she decides to go into service in volume two as a kind of penance for her unsympathetic kin, she becomes increasingly passive, and the melodramatic threats of her male antagonists (Danvers, Lord B) disappear to be replaced by violations of propriety and decorum—the attentions of the married young Damer, the “reformed” but engaged Lord B, and the ultimately successful Marquis are not violent or menacing, just inappropriate for a lady of virtue to respond to.

In volume two, Henrietta’s passivity with regard to her female employers, Miss Cordwain (her unwelcome suitor, Lord B’s “cit” fiancée), Mrs. Autumn (a delusional matron recommended by Lord B’s aunt who flirts with infidelity), and Miss Belmour (a real coquet who wants her servant to be her confidante and panderer), has the detached performative quality of “acting like a submissive lady,” to adapt Nora Nachumi’s phrase, that the reader recognizes as the only acceptable posture a lady of her class can assume in such indecorous situations. The heroine’s discomfort is compounded by the dubious values and behavior of her mistresses who involve her in their affairs. However, this servitude is appropriately short-lived in each case, and Henrietta abruptly abandons each situation for strategic reasons that grow increasingly out of her control (the moral conflict with Lord B, getting fired for a petty error, being directed to leave by her brother). In effect, in volume one, Henrietta has some agency, but in volume two she does not, as she willingly puts herself first into service and then under the control of her brother and her guardian (and once again her Aunt Meadows). In this novel, Lennox seems to shift from

the “reformed coquet” model, wherein the heroine has the agency to make her own mistakes, in volume one, to the conduct book mode, in which the heroine behaves correctly as the only possible option, in volume two.

Nevertheless, besides modeling appropriately passive female behavior, Henrietta’s ambivalent role in service provides Lennox with a satirical perspective, other than the narrator’s, on the foibles of women in society, especially the nouveaux riches. Henrietta’s terse responses to the excesses of her employers represent a controlled cover for her internal perception of indignant outrage or scorn for her interlocutors that anticipate the narrative dynamic of Frances Burney’s *Evelina*.

As noted by Ruth Perry and Susan Carlile in their Introduction to their edition of the novel, Lennox in *Henrietta* also anticipates Burney’s later novels. First, the sympathetic relationship between the Countess, Lord B’s mother, and Henrietta, who both accept the impossibility of the marriage between the son and the heroine, anticipates the more complex interaction between Cecilia and Mrs. Delvile regarding her son Mortimer in *Cecilia* (xiii-iv). The friendly alliance between the possible mother and daughter-in-law is maintained in Lennox’s novel because Henrietta has no amorous feelings toward Lord B to undermine her obedience to the mother’s wishes, unlike Cecilia’s passion for Delvile in Burney’s novel. Lennox does capture the equivalent Cecilia’s dilemma, though, later in her novel when Henrietta does struggle with her attraction to the Marquis while conspiring with her brother to extinguish any possible match between them in deference to the nobleman’s father who is hostile to the notion.

The other prototype of Burney's fiction found in *Henrietta* is the situation faced by "Miss Benson," Henrietta's assumed identity, early in Lennox's novel as she tries to avoid recognition as Miss Courteney, much as "Ellis" does not reveal herself as Juliet Granville in *The Wanderer* (Perry and Carlile x). Burney, of course, sustains Juliet's role as an incognita throughout most of her novel while Henrietta's identity as Miss Courteney is revealed with more rapidity, though her alias as Miss Benson is still functioning in her service to Miss Belmour until quite late in Lennox's book. The opening scene in *Henrietta* when the unnamed heroine tries to get a seat on the stagecoach clearly anticipates Juliet's efforts to board the ship in France at the beginning of Burney's novel. Perhaps the early episode when Miss Woodby decides to call "Miss Benson" "Clelia" (the name of one of de Scudery's heroines) anticipates the consciousness of identity construction and performance developed so extensively in *The Wanderer* (11). Lennox's narrator also makes at least one theatrical reference to Henrietta "overacting her part" (210) and later reports her "not wholly free from those romantic notions which persons of her age readily admit" as the novel's heroine "could not help fancying herself the future heroine of some affecting tale" (138).

Lennox's first dramatic effort *The Sister* (1769) was turned down by Garrick at Drury Lane, but was accepted by Harris and Colman (the Elder) at Covent Garden (Donkin 106). Though it failed on stage, the printed version sold out two weeks later and was followed by a second edition (Perry and Carlile xxi), once again demonstrating that during this period plays were read like novels, in addition to watching them being performed, as Laura Visconti suggests (301). Despite its ill-fated debut, *The Sister* is a

lively, brisk comedy, featuring a lot of dramatic irony in the dialogue as pairs of characters converse based on totally opposite assumptions or expectations (Lady Autumn and Courteney in particular). The plot is focused around the second half of Henrietta, now Harriet, Courteney's trials as an indigent gentlewoman dependent on the whims of the ladies she works for. In the play, this situation is collapsed into her dependent residency in the household of Lady Autumn and her daughter Charlotte: Lady Autumn is still the aged coquet of the novel (but now at least respectably widowed) while her daughter takes on the function of Henrietta's last "employer" in the novel, Miss Belmour, though without the scandalous affair with Mr. Morley. She also assumes the flighty characteristics of Miss Woodby but turns out to be a more reliable friend to Harriet and merits the hand of Harriet's brother at the end (to the chagrin of Mrs. Autumn whose amorous delusions about "Languish" in the novel are transferred to Courteney in the play).

As in volume two of the novel, the central event is the discovery of Henrietta/Harriet's brother in his role as "governor" to a young nobleman, Lord Clairville (the Marquis in the novel), the heroine's successful suitor in both cases. The two men are travelling under false identities, her brother as (Charles) Freeman and the lover as Belmour (Melvil in the novel), because of the pupil's desire to make his European tour incognito with a "minimum equipage," and to avoid his father who has unacceptable marriage plans for him. Harriet also uses a false name, Miss D'arcy (Miss Benson in the novel), to conceal herself from her Aunt and other hostile relatives. In both the novel and the comedy, Courteney tries to dissuade his pupil from pursuing his sister (even before

being aware of their kinship) because he knows the father (the Earl of Belmont, the Duke of ___ in the novel) would not approve the match because of an intended marriage to another and because the heroine lacks any fortune.

In both works, Courteney, on behalf of his employer, attempts to entice Miss D'Arcy/Benson into consenting to a non-marital relationship with his pupil to avoid an unacceptable marriage. This pandering is contrary to his principles, but he assumes she must be a woman of lax morals because she is living with a lady of dubious morality (Mrs. and Miss Autumn, Miss Belmour in the novel). Of course, Courteney immediately realizes in both play and novel that his target is a lady of pristine virtue (as do all her admirers in the novel) in keeping with the depiction of inner moral worth described by Laura Brown as intrinsic to sentimental comedy (145). When he learns she is also his sister, ironically in the very act of making his compromising proposal, he continues his efforts with even greater vigour to discourage a marriage between his pupil and his sister, as much to preserve his own "honour" (in terms of his obligation to his pupil's father) as anything else. In the play, the confusion resulting from Courteney's machinations to remove his sister—he seems to be taking Harriet for himself—results in hilarious misunderstandings and misinformation on the part of Lady and Miss Autumn who both are infatuated with him.

In both works, a more serious result of Courteney's secretive effort to separate his sister from her suitor (relocating her in various places, including a convent, in the novel, conflated to word of a coach leaving for London the next morning in the play) is the

breakdown of the friendship between the two men. In the play, Courteney is almost as hot-tempered as his pupil, which leads to their participation in a duel—though, in true sentimental spirit, neither can bring himself to shoot the other—while in the novel the young marquis' resentment and sense of betrayal are documented in more prolonged and realistic terms. In both cases, though, Courteney tries to stay on the high road of honouring his obligations to his pupil's father, maintaining his friendship and loyalty to the son, and protecting his sister. In the novel, Courteney eventually tries to orchestrate the creation of a sufficient fortune for his sister to marry his pupil through their Aunt Meadows, and the fortuitously generous intervention of Henrietta's long-absent guardian, Mr. Damer, while the happy resolution of the play depends on a sentimental change-of-heart on the part of Belmour's father, the Earl, who recognizes Harriet's true worth. Courteney is rewarded with the Earl's fatherly patronage and Miss Autumn's hand in the play, but in the novel he inherits Lady Meadow's estate (which he immediately shares with Henrietta as prearranged) and marries a rich heiress who is in love with him.

The Sister preserves Harriet/Henrietta's back story from the first volume of the novel with regard to Lady Meadows and her conniving Roman Catholic chaplain, including the ultimatum to convert to Catholicism to be Meadow's heir. It seems Lennox expected her theatre audience to be familiar with this part of her novel's plot. Miss Autumn chides Harriet early in the play for wasting the first part of her life that is featured in the first part of *Henrietta*:

Indeed, Harriet, you are a silly girl, with all your knowledge—you have spent eighteen years of your life cultivating your understanding, without reflecting that it is by your beauty only you can hope to make your

fortune; cease to be wise, child, and grow prudent; do not study the belles letters but the belle air—reason less with your tongue and more with your eyes— (3)

We have the unusual situation here of an early conduct novel paragon being wittily challenged by a coquet, a scene that captures a transitional moment, perhaps, of the older amatory order in conflict with the new domestic one, and a scene in which the established manners of theatrical comedy collide with those of the new women's fiction. The latter values prevail, however, as Harriet easily copes with Miss Autumn's witty sallies⁸⁶ and eventually converts the good-hearted coquet to her more respectable approach to courtship. This dialectic of sensible versus romantic embodied in pairs of female characters, derived from the Restoration comedy of Behn and others, becomes a motif in many subsequent novels such as those of Frances Brooke. The pattern is retained in the Juliet/Elinor dynamic in Burney's *The Wanderer* and the similar one with Jane Austen's Elinor and Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility*. What is especially interesting to this study, though, is that this relationship is distilled by Lennox from her novel into dramatic form, which seems to have had some resonance in the theatrical vision of Burney's last novel. (See Chapter Five below.)

The Sister does shift attention away from the heroine, Harriet, to the activity of the male characters, to a greater extent, perhaps, than in the novel. Perry and Carlile contend that the play "puts the dilemma of the brother at the center of the drama" (xxii) while Henrietta's brother and guardian appear quite late in the novel when "the plot takes over" according to Mary Anne Schofield ((B) 141). The play does open with the two male characters discussing their romantic interest in the eligible females, Harriet and Miss

Charlotte Autumn. Clairville announces his attachment to Harriet, but Courteney disclaims any feelings for Miss Autumn. The second scene, however, consists of an extended conversation between the leading ladies on the same subject. Lennox is careful to keep this kind of balance throughout her comedy alternating genders or combining the sexes in various ways. Nevertheless, the women have little agency though Miss Autumn talks as if she had. Her coquetry has little impact on Courteney and the conniving of her mother, Lady Autumn, in trying to claim Courteney for herself is ineffectual. Harriet's power is passive, resisting the advances of her brother on behalf of Clairville and Clairville himself (despite her attraction to the latter) and diligently obeying her brother once he assumes command of her destiny. She takes no risky unilateral action, unlike Henrietta in the first part of the novel.

On the other hand, Clairville and Courteney don't accomplish much either, as exemplified in their non-duel. The romantic dilemma is not resolved until Clairville's father reveals his change of heart and sanctions a marriage between his son and Harriet. Patriarchal intervention is required to set things right in both the play and the novel though in each it is sentimentalized as an expression of the benevolence and good-heartedness of the patriarchs (the Earl in the play, and the guardian Mr. Damer as well as the duke, the Marquis' father, in the novel). It is interesting that in the novel, the one matriarch, Lady Meadows, does not show an equal amount of goodwill, refusing to make Henrietta her heir, which would have provided her with a sufficient fortune to marry the Marquis without needing the further intervention of Mr. Damer. Instead she insists on her

frivolously motivated choice of Henrietta's brother, Courteney to whom she has taken a fancy. Lady Meadows does not play a role in the resolution of the play.

Lennox's only other play, *Old City Manners*, was staged in 1775 at Drury Lane by Garrick (Donkin 30), but Perry and Carlile suggest the performance may have served as a benefit night for the author, who had fallen on hard times (xxiv). Lennox's career prefigures Frances Burney's in a number of ways: early success and fame as a novelist with support and encouragement from a coterie of prominent literary figures such as Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding for Lennox (Kraft 88); Richard Sheridan and Samuel Crisp for Burney—they shared Dr. Johnson as a mentor and promoter⁸⁷-- followed by a perplexing failure on the London stage. Lennox's work, particularly *Henrietta* and perhaps the close relationship of her play *The Sister* to it, appear to have had some influence upon Burney's fusion of the novel and the theatre in her fiction, especially as manifested in her final novel, *The Wanderer*.

Frances Brooke (1724-1789) took the opposite approach to Lennox at the start of her literary career by submitting a tragedy, *Virginia*, to David Garrick at Drury Lane.⁸⁸ It was rejected because two other dramatic versions of Livy's Roman story were competing with her play, one by Frances Burney's "daddy" Samuel Crisp, which was produced in 1754 and another under the title *Appius* in 1755. Brooke contended that Garrick received her manuscript before the other two versions became available, but disregarded it in favour of the better known male authors. She published her version in 1756 with a rancorous preface making this contention (Donkin 41-44). This began a life-long feud

between the two (though Garrick claimed little impression of her or her work) that was exacerbated five years later by a second slight by Garrick who allegedly prevented Brooke from being the authorized translator of Marie Jeanne Riccoboni⁸⁹ novels, whose work she had already translated with considerable acclaim and success (Backscheider and Cotton xvii-iii, Donkin 48-9). Brooke approached Garrick once again in 1770 when she submitted her comic opera *Rosina* to him, only to be rejected once more (Donkin 51).

After gaining a favorable reputation as a novelist, with *The History of Lady Julia Mandeville* (1763) and *The History of Emily Montague* (1769), and travelling to Quebec, Canada with her husband, Brooke resumed the quarrel with Garrick by chronicling the rejection of her first tragedy as the fictitious experience of Maria Villiers in her third novel, *The Excursion* in 1777. In the meantime, she had teamed up with her friend the actress Mary Ann Yates as owners (along with her husband) and co-managers of the King's Theatre in the Haymarket (commonly known as the Opera House), which because of the restrictions of the Licensing Act, could only produce musical pieces. This experience may have inspired her own comic operas *Rosina*, finally produced with great success at Covent Garden in 1782, and *Marian* in 1788 (Donkin 52). Ellen Donkin suggests Brooke may have decided to get into theatrical management because of her frustrations with Garrick and Drury Lane (51-2). Prior to her musical theatrical successes, Brooke also managed to get a tragedy produced at Covent Garden, *The Siege of Sinope*, in 1781, thus ending her career as dramatist (although a revised second edition of *The Excursion* was published in 1785 and a sequel to her first novel was published posthumously in 1790).

Brooke's first tragedy *Virginia* is a genuine "she-tragedy" as the heroine, Virginia, dies at the hand of her father Virginus, who is trying to save her from rape by the villain Appius (who also dies). The play is set in ancient Rome in pre-Imperial days when the tyrant decimvir, Appius, seizes power, but typical of the genre, is distracted by his lust/love for Virginia, who is betrothed to his enemy Icilius. Appius is somewhat honorable in his intentions, considering divorcing his wife and marrying Virginia, but is easily convinced of the folly of this by his henchman, Claudius. Virginia is very fatalistic even before the final events unfold and resists encouragement from her friend, father, and her fiancé that things will work out, so her demise seems inevitable. This play is mostly talk with very little action or even conflict on stage, unlike in Brooke's later performed tragedy, *The Siege of Sinope*. Sentiment and pathos are plentiful in Brooke's first play, even among the men, including the villain. Despite all the history, war and politics in the plot, this drama is definitely about the heroine and the love of the major characters for her. Virginia is a paragon of feminine virtue and is a willing martyr to her chastity and honour, as well as to the Roman causes represented by her father and lover. Its conventional characters and its lack of dramatic action make Garrick's lack of enthusiasm for this play understandable.

Brooke's successful tragedy, *The Siege of Sinope*, performed at Covent Garden years after her failure with *Virginia*, could also be described as a "she-tragedy," and certainly as a "pathetic" one. It is also close to tragic-comedy, or melodrama, as only the villainous Athridates, who threatens all the sentimentally attractive characters (mother, son, and husband), dies—by his own hand, even after being forgiven and spared by his

chief antagonist, his son-in-law, Pharnaces. The play is largely centred upon the one female character, the beleaguered Thamyras, in an otherwise masculine “heroic” environment of war and politics. The play seems to have been written to feature Brooke’s friend and theatrical partner, Mrs. Yates, in the role of Thamyras. She delivered the Epilogue as well.

The classical story line involves the struggle between Thamyras’ father, Athridates, king of Cappadocia, against Pontus (Sinope) governed by her husband Pharnaces, who has succeeded his father, Athridates’ arch-enemy, the deceased Mithradates. Mithradates had defeated Athridates, abducted his daughter Thamyras, and married her to his son, thus inspiring Athridates’ quest for vengeance. The play begins with the Cappadocian siege of Sinope having apparently ended, with the supporting characters in both camps spouting platitudes about a new era of peace. After having “exchanged vows” with Pharnaces in the temple of Themis (a prominent symbol of divine justice in the play), Athridates treacherously takes advantage of the truce to overwhelm Sinope with the aid of Roman forces with whom he is in league. His quest for revenge is relentless and personal as he seeks the death or humiliating captivity by the Romans of Pharnaces, Thamyras and his own grandson, Eumenes.

At this stage, the plot focuses on Thamyras’ struggle to save her son, and to some extent herself and her husband. She shows great courage, resolution and dignity in her repeated trials as her father threatens torture as well as captivity or death. Her “flaw” though is her feminine, maternal nature. When given a dagger by her husband, she

promises to use it to kill herself, but can't quite bring herself to commit to killing their son to avoid his capture. Instead, she attempts to hide him from Athridates in Mithradates' mausoleum, but inevitably she reveals his location in the tomb while under surveillance by her father's men, as Athridates cynically anticipates. In keeping with the sentimental values of the times, even the ruthless Athridates seems to relent in his vengeance against his daughter and her son, once he has captured them, but only if she betrays her husband to him. Brooke does not explore this interesting dilemma for long, though, as the battle shifts back and forth, changing the dynamic. After a series of close calls, just when all seems lost, Pharnaces with the aid of his Armenian brother Cyaxeris, gains the upper hand and comes melodramatically to the rescue of his wife and son just as Athridates is about to carry out his revenge in the hallowed halls of the temple of Themis, despite the valiant efforts of Orantes, the chief priest, to dissuade him on "religious" grounds. As Pharnaces is about to kill her father, Thamyris begs for him to be spared, and Pharnaces relents—only to have Athridates do the job himself. Nevertheless, he indulges in a sentimental death scene, expressing his love for his daughter and grandson!

In spite of the creaky plot and overblown heroic dialogue, Brooke delivers well paced action and character conflict, along with plenty of sentiment and pathos, even among the hardened male warriors she depicts, all embellished by music and elaborate scenery, which reflect her experience with performances at the "opera house" in the Haymarket, which she and Yates co-managed. One can see how this work might have influenced Frances Burney when she attempted to write her tragic plays, especially *Edwy and Elgiva* and *Elberta*, the latter focusing on a beleaguered mother's efforts to save her

children. Brooke shows a greater ease than Burney would, however, in transferring her mastery of one genre (the novel) to the other (drama). Perhaps this was the result of Brooke's access to the theatre and its actors as a manager and friend of an actress, which Burney was unable to achieve because of issues of propriety. Brooke did meet and may have maintained a friendship with the younger Burney (Backscheider and Cotton xxxiii), so her success not only in fiction but on the stage may have inspired Burney to consider becoming a dramatist as a feasible creative venue.

Backscheider and Cotton assert in their introduction to *The Excursion* that "Brooke's literary and historical significance rests in part on her experimentation and development of the form of the English novel, and nothing Brooke does with traditional elements is conventional" (xxii). She seemed to be able to absorb and adapt others' materials, such as Ribbiconi's epistolary novels that she had translated, to create original works of her own, like her highly successful first novel, *The History of Lady Julia Mandeville*, which won praise not only in England, but also on the Continent from literary figures such as Voltaire who ranked Brooke's novel with those of Samuel Richardson (xix). In her first two novels, Brooke expands the epistolary mode to include a number of correspondents commenting on the same events as did Tobias Smollett in *Humphrey Clinker*, published several years after her works (1771).

In her second novel, *The History of Emily Montague*, the correspondents' communications reflect a realistic depiction of the time factors involved in sending letters between Canada and England in this era—though there are some breathless, *Pamela*-like

moments. Brooke prides herself in getting such details right as she does with the precise chronology in *The Excursion*. Touted as the first Canadian novel because it is mostly set in post-conquest Quebec, *The History of Emily Montague* is foremost a novel of sensibility in which the heroine resists a loveless match (though she had agreed to the engagement willingly) in favour of the ideal courtship of Colonel Edward Rivers, a true “man of feeling,” who is a prime example of the feminization of the hero in this kind of fiction (Spencer (A) 185). Paralleling the central figures’ romance is the process of reforming a coquet and a rake, who are appropriately tamed by their mates by the end of the novel. While Emily and Rivers are the central lovers, it is the vibrant, coquettish Arabella Fermor⁹⁰ who attracts the reader’s sympathetic attention. As Emily’s confidante—and potential rival—“Bell” is a deliberate contrast to the subdued conduct-book character of her friend. Likewise, Emily’s ultra-considerate suitor is paired with his best friend, the rake/libertine, John Temple, who courts and weds Rivers’ sister, Lucy (both of whom are in England and beyond Rivers’ ability to intervene). The four main characters, along with several others, report on and speculate about the developing romances among themselves in letters that arrive after the fact, accumulate unread or appear in the nick of time. Besides providing a rich multiple perspective upon the relationships between these characters and their motives, this epistolary technique simulates theatrical effects like dramatic irony.

The ending of the novel sentimentally produces Emily’s missing father, Colonel Willmot⁹¹, who returns from the Indies a wealthy man, though he is intent upon marrying his daughter to the son of a friend he owes much to, who turns out, ironically, to be

Rivers. The combination of a comedy of manners and a sentimental journey in this novel is juxtaposed against the rugged setting and the unsentimental portrayal of the people: the natives are “savages” and the French settlers are the “Canadians,” both of whom are depicted as lazy and unproductive in contrast to the conquering English. “Nature” is celebrated, especially the mountains, waterfalls, and the mighty St. Lawrence river. Even winter gets a favorable depiction despite its harshness (the description of the spring ice breakup being particularly awesome). Most of the characters manage to stay comfortable in Canada and can consider the possibility of living there permanently. There seems to be the possibility of “taming” nature and the locals, just as the coquettes and rakes can be tamed. Arabella’s father, William Fermor’s intermittent commentary on the place and its manners provides the encompassing British colonial perspective that condescendingly reinforces that perspective. Nevertheless, all the principal characters pack up and leave, only to reassemble in the more pastoral rural estates of Kent where Emily and Rivers set up housekeeping⁹². Brooke has her main characters congregate in an idyllic rural enclave of adjacent estates at the end of this novel as she also does at the conclusion of *The Excursion*.

Brooke’s experimental side is revealed in her next novel *The Excursion* in which she abandons the epistolary model and adopts a Fielding or Lennox-style third-person intrusive narrator to sustain a satirical tone throughout the work. Brooke does not use chapter captions, however, in the manner of Fielding, Haywood, or Lennox. The satirical flavor is also a sharp contrast to the sentimental atmosphere of her earlier novels where the sensibility of the main characters is exhibited and highlighted. Instead, Brooke reverts

to the “reformed coquet” and “reformed rake” paradigms in her later novel, although some of the lesser characters behave in appropriate sentimental/conduct-book fashion. There is also a theme of “the vanity of human wishes” in the treatment of the heroine, Maria Villiers, as she aspires to construct her identity in several unrealistic ways. Brooke’s approach appears to anticipate or parallel the tone and style of Burney’s *Evelina*, published a year after, with its critique of fashionable society and the “ton.”

The main plot centers on the “excursion” of Maria Villiers, on her own, to London to seek a husband of rank and to pursue her literary ambitions. The latter motive makes this work unique for the period, but the courtship aspect is also unusual in that Maria embarks on her mission not only voluntarily, but entirely on her own initiative, and not as a result of flight from domestic trauma (like Henrietta) or even the invitation of a friend or relative (like Betsy Thoughtless or Evelina). Unlike these heroines, she actively seeks a place in fashionable society and an appropriate suitor. Maria most closely resembles Lennox’s Arabella in *The Female Quixote* (or her own Arabella Fermor in *The History of Emily Montague*) in her spunky endeavour to impose her own vision of the world upon the world. Maria’s more retiring and lovesick sister, Louisa, acts in the minor plot as a foil to her and chooses to remain in her country home instead of going to London.

Maria is innocent and naïve, though feisty; and as a result makes a series of social mistakes that lead her to potential ruin, or at least a significant loss of reputation. Her first error is going to London on the assumption that her friend of the previous summer in the

country, Mrs. Herbert, would be available to provide her “protection.” She is not, so Maria must find lodgings herself with Mrs. Merrick who is reliable but unknowledgeable of the ways of the social elite, and engineer her introduction to society through the morally questionable Lady Hardy, a gamester. The milieu into which she is led by Lady Hardy is “a certain set” who are regarded by the truly fashionable personages with disdain because of their gambling, social mixing, and loose morals, but who consider themselves as an exclusive group. It is among these people that Maria meets and promptly falls in love with the novel’s rake, Lord Melvile. With the naïve vigour of Lennox’s Arabella, Maria fully expects a prompt and honorable matrimonial proposal from Lord Melvile, who of course, is only seeking a sexual dalliance before his impending marriage.

Melvile’s part of the story is interesting because he does “reform” somewhat as the novel progresses since he recognizes the innocent charm and social caliber of Maria. He resembles Lennox’s Lord B___ in *Henrietta* as he struggles with his attraction with a virtuous lady while bound to marry another he considers less appealing, but Melvile’s character and dilemma are complicated further by his real affection for his French mistress, the feisty but not especially good-looking Mademoiselle Dorignon, whom he must give up to marry his intended—who turns out herself to be very attractive when he finally meets her, and quickly wins Melvile’s hesitant heart. Maria Villiers, then, though depicted as attractive, is not supremely so, at least in the eyes of her main suitor in the novel. Nor is she ever Lord Melvile’s potential bride, for the best role he can envisage for her is as his well kept mistress.

The main dynamic of the plot then is the ironic clash of Maria's romantic delusions with the predatory motives of Lord Melvile, which lead her into indiscretions, the most serious of which is to arrange a private supper with him during which she expects a marriage proposal from him. Lord Melvile, of course, has a proposal of a different sort to make, but is interrupted by the accidental intrusion of Colonel Herbert (Maria's eventual fiancé) catching them in the 18th century equivalent of *in flagrante delicto*. When word of this and other indiscreet behavior of Maria towards Lord Melvile reach Lady Hardy and the gossip Lady Blast of "the certain set," she is in real danger of being exposed publically and having her reputation ruined. Maria's problems are compounded by a series of financial misjudgments, including some gambling, which lead her into the embarrassment of debt, a pattern into which Burney's Camilla falls, perhaps inspired by Brooke's plot. Maria is saved from both dilemmas, like many reformed coquets, by an elderly mentor-figure, the ubiquitous Mr. Hammond.

Hammond is also crucial to the aspect of the plot that pertains to Maria's literary aspirations as he acts as her intermediary between her and the Garrick character regarding Maria's tragedy. It is he that rhapsodizes about the quality of her play and reports the unattractive behavior of the theater manager to her (and us). It is he who at the end of the novel joins the happily reconciled party in their vision of living in proximity of each other in the country with a stipulation:

"And there," said the good old man, "your lordship shall build us a theatre; and Miss Villiers and I will, in defiance of managers, write tragedies and play them ourselves." (152)

Maria heads to London with a portmanteau that contains “a novel, an epic poem, and a tragedy,” and “though she had expectations of the two first, yet it was on the last she placed her dependence” (16). She is confident that the play had merit because “the fable was interesting and pathetic, the characters strongly marked, and the language at once mellifluous and sublime” (16). She also has created roles for the actors popular at the time, Brooke’s real-life actress friend, Mary Ann Yates, and Garrick himself. Maria also calculates the financial value of each genre: 100 pounds for the epic poem, 200 for the novel, and no less than 500 for the tragedy (55). These amounts she counts on to supplement the meager 100 pounds she has to live on during her “excursion” in London, at least until Lord Melville begins to fund her activities as his fiancée. These expectations are what lure her into indiscreet spending habits (fueled by the advice of Lady Hardy who resembles Mrs. Milford in Burney’s *Camilla* in this capacity).

Maria’s financial expectations are interesting in terms of the relative value of the genres at the time and, of course, are satirically inflated by Brooke who knew well the value of literary products. In any case, they are dashed by the economic and social reality of Garrick’s Drury Lane. The manager is overwhelmed by manuscript submissions and petitioning authors and says he’s “overstocked” (81). The manager, who has not bothered to read Maria’s script, claims to have “six and twenty new tragedies on my promise-list” and offers to consider putting hers on in seven years (82)! In his discussion with Mr. Hammond, he raises another interesting issue:

“But why tragedy? Why not write comedy? There are real sorrows enough in life without going to seek them in the theatre—tragedy does not please as it used to do, I assure you sir.”

“You see I scarce ever play tragedy now? The public taste is quite changed within these three or four years?” (question marks are in the original 81)

The manager says this in spite of the current success of Jephson’s *Braganza* in Drury Lane at the time of the novel, a point raised by Mr. Hammond, but this tragedy is dismissed by the manager as a “lucky hit” (81). These events parallel Brooke’s own experience years earlier with Garrick regarding her first tragedy *Virginia*. Brooke revised the novel in 1785, a number of years after Garrick’s death, and reduced the section devoted to the reception of Maria’s tragedy to a third of the original (Backscheider and Cotton xxxiii). She also deleted some critical commentary and satiric description (his stutter) articulated through Hammond about Garrick that justified her depiction of him (xxxiii, 84). The editors of the “Eighteenth Century Novels by Women” series edition used for this study retain this deleted material. In both editions Hammond’s “essay speech” (xxxiii) on the state of the English theatre serves as a more generalized and conventional explanation of the difficulty of authors, especially women, getting plays on stage:

...he proceeded to give her his opinion on the general subject of writing for the theatre; a pursuit in which her sex, her delicacy of mind, her rectitude of heart, her honest pride, and perhaps her genius, were all strongly against her success.

He advised her to keep her piece—not nine years, but till more liberal maxims of government should take place in the important empire of the theatre; an empire on the faithful administration of which depended, not only national taste, but in a great degree national virtue. (83)

The “liberal maxims of government” Hammond refers to are the restrictions of the Licensing Act, the result of which was that:

...we have no occasion for new pieces while there are only two English theatres in a city so extensive and opulent as London; a city which, in the time of Elizabeth, when the frequenters of the theatre were not a tenth part of the present, supported seventeen. (84)

Miss Villiers' response to this advice is a bit petulant. She thanks Hammond while nonchalantly tossing the manuscript into a desk drawer, but after he departs, decides his approach to the manager was ineffective—she should have gone herself; he should have revealed the author to be a woman, even though Brooke suggests in Hammond's approach that her gender would have been a big liability (Donkin 54). She imagines that her success will be guaranteed once she is Lady Melvile, a prospect that is as improbable as the union itself since current standards of propriety would especially preclude ladies of rank writing for the theatre. Nevertheless, Backscheider and Cotton point out that Brooke strengthens Maria's literary resolve in her 1785 revision of the novel by prefacing Hammond's theatre speech with Maria's impression that he was just trying "to dissuade her from a pursuit in which her whole soul was irresistibly engaged" (174).

According to the editors, this change shows the importance of this theatrical pursuit to Brooke as one of the "groundbreaking aspects" of the novel (xxxiii). Jane Spencer, however, reads Maria's fate in this novel as an affirmation of Dr. Fordyce's prescription for appropriate female behavior (18-19). Spencer allows that Brooke might have felt conflicted by this outcome, which was contrary to the aspirations and accomplishments of her own life: "Frances Brooke may present literary ambition as a dangerous thing, but she certainly appreciates its power, which is hardly surprising considering the evidence of her career" (19). The novel's closing reference to private

theatricals as the appropriate forum for women with dramatic ambitions like Maria's, anticipates the vexing questions this practice will raise later in the novels of Burney, Edgeworth, and Austen.

On her part, Brooke seems to disparage the notion of women performing their identity or "acting like a lady" in Nora Nachumi's sense, in *The Excursion*, which is intimated in the works of Haywood and her predecessors. Maria, her heroine, is described as "natural in all" and "unstudied, spontaneous, and varied" (7); in part this is the characteristic of feminine sensibility in which "every turn of temper and of sentiment was painted instantaneously on her countenance" (7), but for the narrator, this essence of her character is "native, I had almost said *wild*" (7), suggesting the idealizing of nature of Romanticism applied to identity. Maria, as well as her milder sister Louisa, cannot dissemble her inner feelings, her natural self, just as the heroine of Brooke's tragedy, *Thamyris*, cannot suppress her maternal instincts in order to deceive Athridates' spies. In contrast, the people Maria must cope with are consummate social actors, like the self-serving Lady Hardy and the cynical schemer, Lord Melvile, who has been raised by his Chesterfield-like father to "dress vice in the garb of virtue, and conceal a heart filled with the deepest design, under the beautiful veil of unsuspecting integrity" (63) Elizabeth Kraft, in comparing Melvile to Burney's Sir Sedley Clarendel, concludes that "On the whole, *The Excursion* argues, undesigned behavior is to be preferred to the too-careful presentation of the public self" (147).

Nevertheless, Frances Brooke's own literary career can be seen as a kind of public performance, like that of Haywood, in which her vocation as a novelist intersects with the public stage. Brooke's struggle to have her plays produced is fictionalized in *The Excursion* but only thinly, so that the publication of the novel becomes a theatrical gesture that points back to the author's "real life" with regard to the stage. Her subsequent success as a dramatist in the 1780s completes the narrative, validating the "true story" and contradicting the fictitious one.

Another representative of the "second wave" of women dramatists/novelists is the accomplished Elizabeth Griffith (1727-1793). Like Charlotte Lennox and Eliza Haywood before her, Griffith began her career as an actress in Ireland, and like Frances Brooke, she began her literary career with translations of continental fiction, before producing an unperformed "verse tragedy," *Amana. A Dramatic Poem* that she published in 1764. However, before turning to the novel, Griffith did manage to get three comedies performed at Drury Lane and Covent Garden in the late 1760s: *The Platonic Wife* (1765), *The Double Mistake* (1766) and *The School for Rakes* (1769). While she had her own squabbles with David Garrick, Griffith seems to have had a somewhat more harmonious and productive relationship with the manager of Drury Lane, and the other theater managers, than did Brooke. Griffith also shared the pervasive mentorship of Samuel Johnson⁹³ and his circle with many of the female dramatists in this study.

While Lennox gained literary recognition with her novel *The Female Quixote* and Brooke with her early periodical *The Old Maid*, Griffith attracted literary attention in an

unusual way—in a collaboration with her husband, Richard. They published and republished their own correspondence as lovers before their marriage in the two volume *A Series of Genuine Letters Between Henry and Frances* (1757, revised 1760). They would follow up on this collaboration with the publication of their first novels in a combined edition in 1769, his, *The Gordian Knot*, and hers, the more successful *The Delicate Distress*.

Griffith, like Brooke in her later years, wrote successfully as a novelist and a dramatist in the 1770s, with two novels, *The History of Lady Barton* (1771) and *The Story of Lady Juliana Harley* (1776) and two plays *A Wife in the Right* (1772) and *The Times* (1779) performed at Covent Garden and Drury Lane respectively. Griffith also continued to do translations of authors like Riccoboni, who inspired the style of her own novels (Ricciardi and Staves xviii). Griffith also established herself later in life as a conduct writer with her *Essays, Addressed to Young Married Women* (1782) with her focus upon the behavior of married women, an interest that is evident in her plays and her fiction (Todd (B) 127).

In this capacity, Griffith took on the job of sanitizing the works of female literary predecessors, such as Aphra Behn and Eliza Haywood, for mid-eighteenth-century audiences in her *A Collection of Novels, Selected and Revised by Mrs. Griffith* (1777). Of particular interest, is her reworking of Behn's *Oroonoko* that Ros Ballaster examines in some detail. Ballaster addresses Griffith's three excisions from Behn's still popular work (perpetuated mainly by the dramatic adaptations of it discussed in Chapter One): the

love-making scene between Oroonoko and Imoinda in the seraglio, Oroonoko's contempt for and mockery of the Christian religion, and the presence of her mother and sister at Oroonoko's gruesome execution (202). She concludes that "these excisions clearly indicate the attempt on Griffith's part to present *Oroonoko* within the sentimental and moral frame of fiction that her readers had come to expect from women's writing" (ibid.). Ballaster adds that in the last excision "of the women's presence at the execution, Griffith complies with the new idealization of femininity in her own period, and the belief that middle-class women were too delicate and refined to review scenes of violence or the naked exercise of political power" (ibid).

Griffith also rewrites Haywood's *The Fruitless Enquiry*, a series of "stories of marital unhappiness held together in a thin frame narrative...of a mother in search of her lost child" that made this "an attractive novel to include in Griffith's *Collection* for an age much preoccupied with the sentimental appeal of maternal love" (203). Ballaster notes that Griffith removed whole tales rather than modifying each one. The stories deleted often involved rape, or more generally "marital infidelity, male sexual violence, active female desire and female duplicity or personal ambition" (204). Thus, Griffith can be seen playing a key role in the transformation of what Ballaster calls women's "amatory fiction" into the conduct model of the later eighteenth century. At the same time, she can also be recognized as contributing to a similar process in the theatre in her series of successful comedies.

Griffith's early comedies reflect concerns shared with the novels of the period, in particular the proper conduct of a lady. Her first play *The Platonic Wife* explores the issue of marital separation in terms of the clash of "romance" and "reality" found some novels of the period like Lennox's *The Female Quixote*. Lady Frankland has left her husband because he has not shown his affection for her in the extravagant form of the romances she reads. Her first appearance on stage reveals the aftereffects of having stayed up late reading a romance and weeping. She imagines that being separated and independent, she can conduct "platonic" relationships with men such as her suitors Sir William Belville and Sir Harry Wilmot (the rake of the plot). Lady Frankland has no sexual aspirations, but of course, her male admirers do. Her friend, Lady Fanshaw, a happily liberated widow, sardonically comments: "no woman ever parted from her husband with a design of playing the prude with all the rest of the world" (61). Lady Frankland is urged to take social and sexual risks by her "friends," Lady Fanshaw and Clarinda, whom we learn have grudges to settle with her and seek her ruin. On the other hand, her sensible friend Emilia (who is the potential victim of a conniving middle-class fortune hunter, Mr. Frankland, a distant relative—a recurrent theme in Griffith—in the subplot) sees through Lady Falkland's illusions and counsels her accordingly. Emilia describes contemporary fiction as "vile romantic trash" (16) and refers to a poet as "a romance-monger" (17).

Lord Frankland still loves his wife, more ardently than ever, but tries to keep his distance until she sorts herself out. Curiously, the marital conflict is resolved by a very romantic gesture: Lady Frankland steals the portrait of herself from her husband's house,

paints tears and an expression of remorse upon it, and returns it in time to have the appropriate effect on Lord Frankland—who immediately comes to her rescue from the machinations of her evil friends.

Lady Frankland begins to see the light late in the play, declaring “How I detest the writers of romance” (58) and learns the social moral of the story from Emilia: “Nor can a wife ever find a place of safety, but under the protection of that heaven-appointed guard, her husband” (59). Lady Frankland keeps up the anti-romance theme as she prepares to confront the reality of her situation: “Now for the last act of an expiring romance”. Later the malicious Lady Fanshaw, believing she has discovered that Lady Frankland is caught engaging in an actual assignation, snidely remarks: “I find her grave ladyship has not confined her studies entirely to romance, but has dipt a little into the more practical business of novel too” (67).

In her first comedy, Griffith chooses to blend or blur the distinctions between the two genres, fiction and drama, in pursuit of her anti-romance theme. She announces this practice in her “Advertisement” to the play when discussing her source for the play, a tale, which she calls a “novel” from Marontel’s *Contes Moraux*, called “L’Heureuse Divorce”:

The novel was too barren of incident to furnish out an entertainment for the stage, which obliged me to contrive an entire under-plot, and introduce several new characters into the comedy... (A2)

In their introduction to Griffith’s *The Delicate Distress*, Cynthia Ricciardi and Susan Staves note that this melding also reflects “the closeness of French and English literature during the mid-eighteenth century”:

In drama and fiction, writers in both countries tried to create new kinds of works that would be more “natural,” less “artificial”; more engaged with representations of “ordinary” domestic life and less concerned with public events, and more committed to the exploration and representation of “virtue.” (xi)

They specifically point out how Lord Frankland in this play resembles the male heroes in the novel, men of sensibility who are “fundamentally virtuous, intelligent, sensitive, capable of strong feeling, and able to adore a woman” (ibid.)⁹⁴.

Griffith continues this practice in her next comedy *The Double Mistake* though to a lesser extent, as this play is a “more old-fashioned comedy of courtship and intrigue” (Ricciardi and Staves xi). For example, the beleaguered Emily Southerne’s confused suitor, Sir Charles Somerville, refers to his own life story as an “extraordinary novel” (14). Lady Louisa, who, like Emilia in *The Platonic Wife*, is the object of a predatory middle-class suitor, Mr. Freeman, is a kind of romantic coquet, who imagines herself a heroine in a tragedy or romance. She apparently takes after her aunt, Lady Bridget, who has acquired a classical education⁹⁵, unlike her sensible sister, Lady Mary.

Of greater interest to this study, however, is the dilemma of the heroine, who, like one of Frances Burney’s female characters, is trapped by deceiving appearances that occur under the male gaze of her potential suitor. Emily, perhaps unwisely, engaged in a private meeting with Somerville to discuss a clandestine marriage (to evade the disapproval of her father because he wishes to marry her to another) when a man unknown to her rushed out of her closet. This event is not staged but reported in an extended narrative by Emily to her protector cousin, Lord Belmont. Somerville, concluding that Emily is two-timing him, has abandoned her and is planning to leave the

country. Belmont's efforts to get the two back together and engineer winning her father's approval of their marriage constitute the play's main plot.

The next Griffith comedy, *The School for Rakes*, based on Beaumarchais' *Eugenie*, borders on "she-tragedy," as it deals with the impact of a "feigned marriage" on the heroine and her family. Young Lord Eustace is in love with Harriet Evans but obliged to marry Lady Anne as arranged by his father. As a way of continuing his relationship with Harriet, he has conducted a fake clandestine marriage with her, which appears not to have been consummated yet (or at least the issue is not raised). Harriet is left on her own except for the dubious company of her aunt, Mrs. Winnifred⁹⁶, who had encouraged the secret wedding. When Harriet inevitably learns of Lord Eustace's ruse, she responds with heroic dignity and refuses to accept Eustace's apologetic offer of a legitimate marriage, even when faced with the prospect of her father Sir William and her brother fighting a duel with Eustace to salvage her honour. Harriet does conveniently relent to achieve the comic resolution, however, when she learns Eustace's father has also approved of the marriage. The conflict is also resolved by the humorous coincidence that Harriet's brother Colonel Evans has eloped with Eustace's intended, Lady Anne!

All three of these comedies provide a kind of bourgeois realism that might be described as novelistic, in keeping with Ricciardi and Stave's comments above, though enlivened by "entertainment for the stage". One aspect of this is the increased role and interest in the characters of the servants in these plays. Some of these subordinates, such as the scheming Fantage in *The Platonic Wife*, or Willis in *The School for Rakes*, behave

like the conniving underlings of Elizabethan or Jacobean drama, but their mercenary self-interest reflects the bourgeois aspirations of the eighteenth century. Other servants, such as Ambrose, Ralph, and Robert in the consecutive plays, while often bumbling, are revealed to be naturally good people whose virtue assists the higher ranking characters in their moral dilemmas by thwarting the schemes of their fellow servants or other antagonists. The servants are occasionally provided with extended scenes or dialogue among themselves. This interest in the servant class as interesting characters in themselves is continued in Sophia Lee's *Chapter of Accidents* and all of Burney's comic output.

The sense of a more complete social hierarchy, a "Great Chain of Being" of sorts, emerges in the linkages and alliances between the servant class and the rising middle class. As noted above, each of Griffith's comedies feature a scheming middle-class character aspiring beyond his station, often aided and abetted by a servant of similar ilk. In *The Platonic Wife*, Mr. Frankland attempts to abduct the virtuous Emilia with the aid of her French maid Fantage (comically depicted with a heavy French accent) while in *The School for Rakes*, Willis the valet tries to manipulate Mr. Frampton, Lord Eustace's dependent, to facilitate the cover-up of the feigned marriage to serve his own ends. In the more conventional *The Double Mistake*, the younger Mr. Freeman, whose family money is earned from liquor and banking, plots his seduction of the romantic heiress Louisa from within the household of the benevolent Lord Belmont aided and abetted by his servant Ralph and his subordinate, James.

Griffith's attention to a wider spectrum of society, domestic virtue in men and especially women, and the issues of appropriate female conduct in these early comedies continues in her novels and later comedies, which are more realistic and explore the inner life of the characters in greater depth. Thus, Griffith may represent a turning point in the rise of the novel in relation to the "decline" of drama that Laura Brown describes in *English Dramatic Form*. Of all the writers reviewed in this study Griffith appears to function with the greatest ease between the two genres since Aphra Behn, and accomplishes the same end in both of representing sensibility, virtue and appropriate conduct in a realistic manner. It is telling, perhaps, that Griffith inserted an advertisement for her first novel *The Delicate Distress* into the published version of *The School for Rakes* following the Prologue and dedication to David Garrick (at least in the online, microfilmed British Museum version). Both volumes were published in 1769 and explore the domestic damage that can be caused by rakish or libertine behaviour. Much of *The School for Rakes* centers upon the Evans family (who already experience a subtle form of alienation as Welshmen, the "Ap-Evans") as they cope with the sense of betrayal, humiliation, and outrage they feel as a result of Lord Eustace's selfish and cowardly treatment of Harriet. The internal dynamics of the relationship of the father, daughter, aunt and brother to each other achieves some real depth as character studies. They could constitute the elements of a novel.

This internal family or domestic perspective is developed in *The Delicate Distress*, which presents "the situation of a wife who suspects that her husband may be unfaithful...a well-established topos in bourgeois drama and the sentimental novel"

(Ricciardi and Staves xv). Griffith's first fiction is an epistolary novel, the letters written by a number of characters, male and female, although the primary writers are Lady Emily Woodville (the "heroine") and her sister/correspondent, Lady Straffon. Lady Woodville's husband also contributes quite a few letters to his primary correspondent, Lord Seymour, providing a male perspective on the events. Griffith shows a similar attention to the realistic depiction of communication by correspondence that Brooke does in *The History of Emily Montague* published in the same year.

Griffith goes to some lengths in her preface to *The Delicate Distress* to locate her fiction apart from romances and the novel. She disingenuously claims it to be "a new species of writing, which I had never attempted before" that lacks "the principal article of such compositions, namely, invention" (4). By "invention", she means "extraordinary adventure, or uncommon situation," the expectation of "NOVEL READERS," which she eschews in favour of "stories and incidents [that] ...certainly happen, in the various contingencies of real life" (ibid.). Griffith goes on to counterbalance her claim of authenticity by assuring the reader that she has protected the original "real persons" by "by changing scenes, and altering circumstances" in the fiction she notably calls "my drama"(4). Nora Nachumi describes Griffith's stance here as "representing her book as a healthy alternative to novels that teach their readers to expect the fantastic", and observes that "[u]nlike the playwright, who had no choice but to defend her play as a play, a novelist could deny her work was a novel"(59). However, it is interesting Griffith does so by describing her novel as a "drama" and early in the book one the female characters,

Lady Straffon, seems to meld the genres in her generalization about the primary cause of domestic affliction:

When I was very young, I used to be surprised that so many tragedies, and novels, were founded on the perfidy of men: but I have, for some years past, been perfectly convinced, that most of the miseries in this life, owe their being to that fatal source. (47)

The main plot of the novel involves Lord Woodville's almost succumbing to the attractions of his former mistress although he is only recently married to Emily and is about to become a father. The mistress is the Marchioness, who is a true coquette, who seems a relic of an early Haywood amatory fiction. Emily Woodville must struggle with her anxieties and disappointment as she suspects her husband may engage in an affair—while counseling and assessing the similar marital and premarital problems of her friends and relatives through her letters and visits. The focus then is not upon courtship, although there is also some pre-marital romance or intrigue involving some of the characters, but on a number of other post-marriage plots that occur. The novel is clearly sentimental in that even the most villainous characters (in particular Ransford who runs off with the Marchioness, abandoning the woman who longs for him) repent and sometimes change their ways.⁹⁷

Ricciardi and Staves point out, however, that in *The Delicate Distress* “plot [is] often subordinated to discussion of urgent questions: amorous, social, ethical, and philosophical” in keeping with French romance and the new novel tradition perpetuated in England by Richardson (xvii). Regarding the central plot issue of Lord Woodville's

fidelity, the editors suggest that Lady Straffon poses a kind of debating point for the novel's characters to discuss:

The passions of the human mind, I fear, are as little under our command, as the motions of our pulse:—you have, therefore, just as much reason to resent your husband's becoming enamoured of another person, as you would have to be offended, at his having a fever⁹⁸. (145)

They go on to list some more practical issues that are debated in this novel, such as whether a mother should inoculate her child without informing the father, and so on (xvii).

This attention to “urgent questions” found in the novel was evident to some extent in Griffith's first three plays, especially *The Platonic Wife*, about marital separation, and *The School for Rakes* in its dealing with the impact of aristocratic libertinism upon a family. Griffith's later and arguably best play, *The Times* (1779) certainly does address an urgent social issue, the rampant gambling and the resulting squandering of fortunes and financial ruin of the gentry in the latter part of the century.

This play addresses this major concern of “the times” in a manner similar to Frances Burney's treatment of the issue in the Mr. Harrel subplot of *Cecilia*, published three years after the production of Griffith's play at Drury Lane. Mr. Woodley and his wife Lady Mary, like the Harrels, are living beyond their means and are heading for financial ruin as a result of his gambling and his indulgence of his wife's excessive lifestyle in keeping with “the ton.” Although they share his house, Woodley's uncle, Sir William, has virtually disowned the couple because of their dissolute ways. To compound their dilemma, the Woodleys are egged on by the scheming, self-interested Bromleys, a

malevolent couple that recalls Congreve's Fainal and Marwood. Woodley realizes that his bubble is about to burst, but can't bring himself to tell his wife for fear of upsetting her—though late in the play, when she does find out the truth, she behaves sensibly and responsibly (a somewhat arbitrary character change of the kind Laura Brown criticizes as “inconsistency” resulting from affective or moral action). This main plot is very explicitly about money and commodities, which are constantly mentioned by all the characters, including the servants.

The second plot involves Woodley's sensible sister, Louisa, who is in love with the benevolent Colonel Mountfort, who seeks her hand. However, the garrulous Uncle William tries to arrange a marriage to his “old” (48) best friend, Belford (a lawyer), having dismissed all the males of the younger generation as “macaronis”. While trying to appeal to her uncle on behalf of her disowned brother and sister-in-law, Louisa also has to elude this marital arrangement, without drawing Sir William's wrath upon herself too. Belford realizes very quickly the impossibility of a match with Louisa, and as a truly benevolent man, works to persuade Sir William to sanction the true lovers' union and to acknowledge his nephew and his wife. Considerable humour results from misunderstandings between these characters mid-play as no-one has a complete picture of what is going on.

The climax of the main plot occurs just before the bailiffs perform an “execution” on the Woodley household (triggered by Bromley who has secured a bill for 7000 pounds from the unsuspecting Woodley) when Montfort comes to the financial rescue of his

future brother-in-law. He and Belford pursue the matter farther and will expose Bromley in his nefarious doings. (He had changed the date on the document illegally.) Louisa in the meantime evades Sir William's marriage scheme because her uncle, though gruff, is also benign at heart, so when he learns that Belford has turned down his offer, he feels sorry for Louisa! He is then maneuvered into thinking more positively about Montfort as a suitable match with little fuss. Thus, in true sentimental fashion, the conflicts are resolved through the good nature of the attractive characters, which sometimes, though, is quite inconsistent with their "character" as antagonists in the dramatic action. Lady Mary, Sir William, and even Belford abruptly abandon the attitudes and behaviours that created the conflict and tension in the plot. Only the nefarious Bromleys remain true to their initial character depictions—ironically, since they are the characters who dissemble and consciously play roles. Griffith insists that inner worth, or the lack of it, will always manifest itself.

The moral focus of the play can be found in the gambling theme as household "routs" are depicted on stage with players spouting the jargon of "Loo" and Whist. Some of the action/dialogue of the play takes place on the forestage set against the backdrop of card table talk and activity upstage (taking advantage of the deeper stages of the time). Melinda Finberg, the editor of the Oxford World Classics edition of the play describes the elaborate depiction of the final card party occurring upstage as "carnavalesque" and suggests that the large cast of players (in both senses) may have been dressed in their masquerade costumes since a masked ball was set to follow the gambling session (xxxiv). The surreal language and behavior of the gamblers are presented as a corrupt, decadent

contrast to the wholesome benevolence and morality of characters like Belford (a “water drinker”!), Montfort, and Louisa.

Once again there is a prominent role for the servants in the plot. The main characters are often overheard (or try to avoid being so) to their disadvantage by their servants who look out for their own welfare. Forward, Woodley’s servant, in particular, is such a conniving menial, while the bumbling Waters, Sir William’s man, manages to create conflict and confusion in the plot. As noted above, the significance of the servants in a comedy of this period may indicate a greater interest in, and perhaps anxiety about, the underclass at this time. The social disorder represented by the rampant gambling of the upper classes is paralleled by the restiveness and insubordination of the lower.

The Times manifests the issues of “interiority” and “character” discussed by Laura Brown and Lisa Freeman in their studies of the relationship between drama and the novel in the eighteenth century. As noted above, Griffith seems intent upon giving her characters an inner life. The play could well serve as the outline of a novel—like Burney’s *Cecilia*. Key characters struggle with moral and social choices in frequent short soliloquies and asides. Mr. Woodley opens the play by soliloquizing—while being overheard by his servant, Forward. Later, he begins another meditation upon his financial dilemma by noting “So, I am once more left at leisure for my own reflection” (156). We follow Woodley’s thoughts throughout the play, much as we would a “centre of consciousness” in a narrative as he blunders his way through escalating crises. Similarly, we share Belford’s ambivalence as he allows himself to entertain the hope of

marrying the much younger Louisa while the realization of its impossibility becomes apparent. He and Louisa conduct a dialogue that consists of a series of perplexed asides (178-9). The villainous Bromleys are exposed in private scenes as not only plotting against the Woodleys but also against each other. These features are consistent with Brown's contention that sentimental or moral drama focuses upon the characters' inner life at the expense of the social context or the generic form of the play.

On the other hand, the Bromleys are also revealed as consummate performers of deceptive behavior: as they prepare to witness the entrance of the bailiffs to perform an "execution" in the Woodley home, which they have precipitated, Bromley tells his wife, "it will be proper for you to faint, I think," to which she replies, "Never fear my acting properly" (193). Ironically, they also perform to deceive each other. Bromley interrupts his words of endearment to his wife with an aside "dissembling jade!" and Mrs. Bromley responds in kind with "hateful wretch!" (ibid.). This aspect of *The Times* may reflect the dramatist's resistance to a "novelistic" reliance upon interiority as the sole means of character depiction as Freeman argues on behalf of the drama of the period.

Most of Griffith's characters do not demonstrate their identity so much by what they do on stage, as Lisa Freeman would expect, as by what they reveal of themselves in direct addresses to the audience. Woodley seems happy and financially solvent on stage but isn't; the Bromleys appear to be helpful friends and a happy couple, but aren't; Louisa acts as a compliant niece for Sir William but is actually working against his plans; and Forward plays the role of the obedient servant while systematically looting his

master's goods and preparing for his exit at the most opportune moment. We know all this about these characters because they tell us in asides and soliloquies. While this technique has always been standard dramatic practice to reveal motive, Griffith seems to widen the gap between the action being performed on stage and the thoughts of the characters, by relying on the latter to establish true identity. She could serve as another example of an eighteenth-century playwright diminishing the dramatic effect of her play by focusing so much on the interiority of her characters in support of Brown's thesis. Yet, critics interested in performativity, like Lisa Freeman or Nora Nachumi, might dwell instead upon Griffith explicitly highlighting how the "characters" portrayed by the actors are themselves acting out roles that differ from their proclaimed identities. This metatheatrical effect may not have been intentional on Griffith's part, but the inevitable result of a writer working comfortably in the two genres, depicting "character" in Freeman's sense and "interiority" at once, and perhaps not distinguishing between the two. Her earlier comments about the kinds of writing she was producing, describing her novels as dramas or her dramas as novels, support this possibility.

In Griffith's work, and in *The Times* in particular, we can see a convergence of the two genres brought about by a common interest in depicting the ideals of sensibility, virtue and proper social conduct through the exploration of the interiority of characters—what they think and feel—rather than what they do. Indeed, there is a lot of interest in the discrepancy between how people behave and their internal state of mind, and thus their true identity. The notion that true sensibility or real virtue will reveal itself regardless of contrary appearances is tested in the novels and plays of this period, especially in

Griffith's work. However, sometimes these admirable qualities may be only performed by the cunning and devious, like the Bromleys in *The Times*, or as Nora Nachumi argues, may *have* to be performed by even virtuous women in order to live up to the ideal code of conduct of "acting like a lady."

Elizabeth Griffith's plays and novels represent a culmination of a trend common among women writers of the mid-eighteenth century to blur or meld the distinctions between the two genres, unlike their predecessors, such as Behn, Manley, Davys or Haywood, who also worked in both forms, but largely kept them separate, following the existing or developing conventions of each. This new close relationship between drama and fiction, with the possibility of a woman writing successfully in both, was prevalent when Frances Burney, Sophia Lee, and Elizabeth Inchbald began their public literary careers. It is not surprising that Burney would assume, along with her friends and supporters after the success of *Evelina* in 1778, that she could transfer her talents to the London stage by writing a comedy.

CHAPTER FIVE

“THE PLAY’S THE THING”: FRANCES BURNEY

“...I have all my life been urged to, and all my life intended, writing a Comedy....My imagination is not at my own control...The combinations for another long work [a novel] did not occur to me. Incidents and effects for a Drama did. I thought the field more than open—inviting to me. The chance held out golden dreams.” (*Journals and Letters* 397-8)

“...I would a thousand times rather forfeit my character as a *Writer*, than risk ridicule or censure as a *Female*” (*Early Journals and Letters III* 212).

These often quoted statements from *Journals and Letters* by Frances Burney, successful late-eighteenth-century novelist and frustrated dramatist, reflect the conflicted motivations of a writer whose career “has been read as emblematic of the struggles faced by women authors more generally” (Thompson 16). Most of the writers discussed in this study did risk and often received the ridicule or censure Burney refers to above by venturing beyond the private realms of novel readers onto the public stage. They apparently recognized that “the female playwright, even more than the novelist, is engaged in a profession that assumes a desire for attention and publicity...writing for the stage was thought to force the playwright unequivocally into the public eye” (Anderson 632), but Burney, despite (or perhaps because of) being somewhat more socially and economically secure than most of her contemporaries and predecessors, was reluctant to face the prospect that “if she worked in this genre, she would inevitably make a spectacle of herself” (633).

Nevertheless, she wrote eight plays, four comedies and four tragedies, twice as many dramas than novels, as Peter Sabor points out (xli), during the course of her career,

three of which were actually offered to London theatres and accepted for production: *The Witlings*, *Love and Fashion* and *Elwy and Elgiva*.⁹⁹ The latter play, Burney's first tragedy, had the dubious distinction of being the only one of her dramatic works ever performed in her lifetime, a theatrical disaster that dodged censure by attracting almost universal ridicule in a farcical single performance at Drury Lane in March, 1795.¹⁰⁰ In spite of this fiasco, Burney continued to write plays and to revise them until late in her life (Wallace 58). Even at the beginning of her career, with the successful publication of *Evelina*, it was widely anticipated in Burney's literary circle—that included Richard Sheridan and Samuel Johnson—that her next work would be a comedy (Doody (A) 70).

It seems generally acknowledged that Burney's lack of success on the stage was the result of her personal and domestic issues (especially her relationship to her father) that Doody documents thoroughly in *Frances Burney: A Life in the Works* (1988), not a lack of talent or cultural support. Her female contemporaries, such as the Lee sisters, Hannah More and Hannah Cowley, Mrs. Inchbald, and Joanna Baillie, many of whom also wrote novels, did manage to achieve some success in the theater, so arguably the well known impediments to female dramatists, documented by Donkin and others, should not in themselves have prevented Burney from extending her literary accomplishments to the stage, which she dearly wanted to do and was expected to do by many of her admirers.

Frances Burney's relatively recent emergence from obscurity and "minor" status as a novelist to become a figure of considerable stature in the "rise of the novel" narrative

has made her four novels the focus of literary attention, relegating her unpublished and unperformed plays to at best a supporting role in the critical assessment of her work, much like Jane Austen's "Juvenalia."¹⁰¹ Margaret Doody's critical biography *A Life in the Works* establishes this pattern. Although she admires Burney's plays, allowing the comedies at least to be "stageable," Doody argues that "drama was always for Burney a means of dealing with new experience" before transforming this material in her novels ((A) 302).

More recent critics, however, allow the plays not only more merit in their own right, but also a more intrinsic role in the creative process of Burney's writing. Barbara Darby, who has written the first full-length study of Burney's plays, strives to distinguish the qualities of her drama from her fiction:

Burney's plays are not casual, dramatized variations on the themes and stories found in her novels. She was clearly attentive to the demands of writing for the stage, with its concomitant generic particularities of embodiment, movement, and blocking, the elements of both space and time that distinguish this genre from prose fiction. (4)

At the same time, she seeks to show the relationships between the two genres in Burney's work:

...Burney's plays reveal a thorough awareness of the conventions of the theater of her day and of the ingredients of possible successful production. Her knowledge and love of theater is [sic] also well represented in the novels. Her heroines all attend and comment on plays and other public entertainments. Indeed, in the novels, the theater provides a metaphor for female experience and the performance aspects of femininity: learned appropriate behavior, movement, manners, and speech. Each heroine must discover the proper way to 'act' for a given audience, and more often than not, she is performing for a male audience whose watchful gaze is emphasized in the narrative: Edgar Mandlebert is quintessentially the spectator, a quality shared by Lord Orville, and the other heroes. (165)

To Darby, the interconnection of writing in the two genres wasn't always a good thing for Burney's art:

The honing of the works and skills of Frances Burney, dramatist, was thus hampered, in a paradoxical way, by her ability to write successfully in another genre. She was not forced to develop her skills as a dramatist as others did, out of a need to make money, though she seems to have wished these skills could be acknowledged and she was perpetually returning to her dramatic creations. (166)

Nora Nachumi, on the other hand, sees only a positive influence of the theatrical in Burney's novels as she pursues her thesis that a performative reading of "acting like a lady" is central to her fiction:

...Burney's novels reveal their debt to the eighteenth-century theater in general.... At the same time, they call into question definitions of female nature found in conduct material—especially the assertion that a lady's appearance and behavior are the spontaneous and unmediated manifestation of her quality of mind. (144)

Emily Hodgson Anderson also argues "for a relationship between [Burney's] novels and plays, which in turn resonates with [her] experiences as a novelist and a playwright" (629-30). She notes that Burney's "entire career as a novelist is located within her attempts to succeed as a playwright" (629). In the same vein as Nachumi and Darby, Anderson explains the nature of this relationship:

...the drama offers a forum for public female expression, something that is a vexed matter within her own life and within the lives of her novelistic heroines. Her novels tackle a problem made literal in theatrical performance and implicit in the social interactions surrounding a theatrical career: how a woman's feelings could or could not be publicly presented—staged. (630)

These critics all make the case that an awareness of the performative aspect of appropriate female behavior as modeled in conduct books and courtship novels is

metaphorically linked in Burney's fiction, and according to Nachumi, in the work of many late-eighteenth-century women writers, to acting in the theater.

As in the case of her predecessors discussed in this study, the critical analysis of Frances Burney's novels has been conducted largely in isolation from her plays, understandably in her case, because of the relative obscurity of her unperformed and until relatively recently, unpublished drama. Now scholarly editions of the plays by Tara Wallace (*A Busy Day* 1984) and, in particular, Peter Sabor (*The Complete Plays* 1995) have made Burney's dramas more accessible to scholars and critics for a number of years, and as a result, a few studies dedicated to the plays have appeared, such as Tara Wallace's piece in *The Cambridge Companion* (2007), but the only full-length study to date is Barbara Darby's *Frances Burney, Dramatist* (1997).

Darby's announced purpose for her book is "to place Burney's plays in a context that acknowledges their importance to the writer, substantiates other critics' arguments ...in favor of carefully reading the drama, and contributes to the ongoing feminist analyses of eighteenth-century works by women" (3). The latter objective seems to be her primary one, to argue that "late eighteenth-century women writers used the stage and its conventions to analyze the position of women in their society and their gender-specific experiences of such institutions as family, government and marriage" (3). However, the second purpose of justifying the merits of these works as "stageable" drama seems dependent upon Darby identifying the gender-specific issues she locates in Burney's plays, rather than on their particular theatrical strengths.¹⁰² Darby does discuss the plays

sometimes within the context of the novels, but generally eschews extended commentary on Burney's fiction.

On the other hand, Emily Anderson begins to take Burney criticism to the next stage of integrating the study of the novels and plays in her article (2005) about "staged insensibility" in the novels. Her approach recognizes the complicated relationship between writing drama and fiction in Burney's work (as anticipated by Doody to some extent):

To juxtapose Burney's first play and second novel reveals a pattern that persists for the rest of Burney's literary life: her novels were always preceded by some type of frustrated theatrical endeavor. She would turn then from theater back to the novel, only to return to dramatic projects once her novel was complete. (638)

This creative pattern informs my approach to the examination of Burney's plays and novels taken in this chapter.

Let us begin with Burney's first novel *Evelina* (1778). It is remarkable how much commentary about this novel at the time and to this day focuses upon "comedy." Yet the work itself is written in the well established, non-comic "Richardson" tradition of the female epistolary novel. Its subtitle "The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World" meets the expectation of the conduct-book-based fiction of the period. Readers might have anticipated a "reformed coquette" novel in the vein of Haywood's *Betsy Thoughtless* or Lennox's *The Female Quixote*, or a "she-tragedy" like *Clarissa*. To some extent, Burney delivers these formulas, but with a twist: *Evelina* is the victimized or erring heroine *and* the perceptive, even ironic narrator. The second point of view in the novel provided by Mr. Villars in his letters is not authoritative or insightful—he is more

“out of it” than the neophyte ward from the country is, regarding the dynamics and conventions of the society Evelina finds herself in.

The story, narrated mostly through a series of letters between Evelina and Mr. Villars, who is her guardian, mentor and substitute father, traces the heroine’s introduction into London society, with all its temptations and dangers, to the great anxiety of her correspondent. Evelina lacks a real patronymic, and thus recognition of her true place in genteel society at the beginning of the novel. She uses an anagrammatic surname “Anville,” much like Juliet Granville’s “Ellis” in *The Wanderer*, until she finally reclaims her father’s name of “Belmont.”¹⁰³ As in the case of Burney’s final novel, the virtually anonymous subject/narrator can function as an effective platform to observe and satirically critique society and its conventions: in *Evelina* the shallow, hypocritical values and behavior of the “Ton” and in *The Wanderer*, the political and cultural sources of “female difficulties.” The plot of the novel unravels like a mystery, following Evelina’s inadvertent progress through various social barriers until culminating in the dramatic, but arguably unsentimental reunion with her biological father, who upon recognizing her kinship exclaims “I can see her no more!” (*Evelina* 355).

Like many novel heroines, Evelina is a “child of bounty—an orphan from infancy,—dependent, even for subsistence, dependent, upon the kindness of compassion!—Rejected by [her] natural friends,—disowned forever by [her] dearest relation” (*Evelina* 350). Her mysterious mother Caroline (who also became the dependent of the ubiquitous Mr. Villars) is deceased, and her father-figure is an unrelated

substitute for (even rival of) the remote Sir John Belmont, who has effectively disowned her in favour of an imposter daughter (which anticipates the similar situation of Sophia and Joyce Wilmot in Burney's late comedy *The Woman-Hater*).

Such a vulnerable heroine would be a prime candidate for a seduction plot or the "reformed coquette" formula, but Evelina's story turns out to be neither. She has her share of close calls (like Betsy Thoughtless) with sexual predators like Sir Charles Willoughby, and she does make social errors in the early stages of her "introduction into the world," but she is never morally suspect or stupid. In fact, her morally sound common sense transcends her gaffes or inadvertencies. A case in point is Evelina's early slight to Mr. Lovel by refusing his offer to dance and then dancing later with Lord Orville at her first ball. Evelina's first impression of Lovel as a person of "negligent impertinence," "foppish", and "very ugly" (18) proves valid in his unmannerly outburst at her later on (22), while her assessment of Lord Orville, with whom she chooses to dance, as "his understanding and manners being far more distinguished" (21), of course, turns out to be entirely true. The gravity of Evelina's social error is largely dismissed by Mrs. Mirvan's comment about being expected to know about "such common customs" (23), and the heroine's earlier survey of the male-dominated social order at the "private" ball represented by these customs undermines their importance and credibility:

The gentlemen, as they passed and repassed, looked as if they thought we were quite at their disposal, and only waiting for the honour of their commands; and they sauntered about, in a careless indolent manner, as if with a view to keep us in suspense. (17-18)

Mr. Lovel is clearly representative of such “gentlemen” while Lord Orville obviously is not, so Evelina’s choice to dance with one and not the other is reasonable and justified despite “common customs.”

Much of the novel is narrated in this way, with Evelina’s observations and judgments turning out to be perceptive and insightful—and comic, rather than naïve or self-indulgent. As a result, the reader’s attention is directed away from the workings of Evelina’s consciousness for its own sake or her rather passive, personal behavior, towards her vivid description of the “world” into which she has entered. In spite of the “interiority” of the first-person narrative, then, the orientation of the novel’s perspective is external, upon the comic characters and situations that unfold as the story progresses, more like the narrative in Fielding’s “comic epics in prose,” but without his kind of authorial intervention, or perhaps more accurately, with a more subtle form. *Evelina*’s plot also follows the sentimental pattern of the recovery of aristocratic social identity established by Fielding in *Tom Jones*, but in Burney’s case involving a female subject and narrated largely from a feminine point of view. Margaret Doody picks up on this aspect of *Evelina* in her description of much of the novel as farce, the “masculine mode of comedy” and Fielding’s most successful dramatic genre¹⁰⁴:

Burney is truly innovative in doing what no English woman novelist before has done—writing not only a novelistic comedy (like the works of e.g. Charlotte Lennox) but employing sustained emphatic and expressionistic farce. In the English theatrical world at large, traditional five-act comedy during the eighteenth century had become increasingly more controlled, timid, and formulaic; farces and burlesques were the last resort of satire and sustained the real tradition of English comic writing. Burney’s fiction reflects this dramatic situation. She seizes a “masculine” mode of comedy, largely derived from the public medium of the stage,

wraps it up in the “feminine” epistolary mode, and uses the combination for her own purposes. ((A) 48)

Doody supports her claim by noting that “the novel’s connection with stage farce is pointed out in the references to Colman’s *The Deuce Is in Him* (1763) and two plays by Samuel Foote, *The Minor* (1763) and *The Commissary* (1765). Evelina goes to Foote’s theater in the Haymarket...with...Madame Duval...and the Branghtons.... The party bear a marked resemblance to characters in the plays” ((A) 49).¹⁰⁵ Citing Christopher Ricks’ study of eighteenth-century blushing and embarrassment, Doody touches on the unusual role of Evelina as subject/narrator in the novel: “The narrative form of *Evelina*, combining private letter with public farcical scenes, is perfectly designed to exhibit embarrassment—it is embarrassment’s objective correlative” ((A)59).

Commenting on Doody’s observations about this aspect of *Evelina*, Nora Nachumi argues that instead of naturalizing “conduct-book models of the feminine ideal,” Burney “actually presents a theatrical view of female experience that undermines them” (132) by using the epistolary technique to differentiate between how Evelina behaves publically (often submissively or unassertively) with how she actually feels about the behavior of those she comes into contact with (eg. Madame Duval, Captain Mirvan etc.) (134). Nachumi also notes how “many of the scenes of the novel read like scenes in a play” and cites Marjorie Morrison’s observation that the structure of this novel “resembles that of a genteel comedy; like such comedies, the majority of scenes in the novel are built around parties of people who meet in public places and reveal their

characters through dialogue and gestures. The fops, rakes, fashionable ladies and educated women are standard types that appear in these plays.” (135)¹⁰⁶

Barbara Darby reads Evelina’s narrative role in a similar vein, combining the notion of “acting like a lady” with the heroine’s narrative function of dealing with embarrassment in a farcical environment:

Evelina’s main task is to discover the proper way to ‘act’ when she is with genteel company, so that she might claim her birthright without embarrassment. Her experience with the theater provides a touchstone for her evolving sense of social place....she moves from the position of spectator (viewing Garrick’s acting and the fine people in St. James’s Park), to that of an actress costumed in new silks and a hairdo, to a female spectacle observed at a ball and evaluated by a large, male audience. Evelina eventually becomes a ‘natural’ at the part that her patrilineage finally allows to claim legitimately. (147)

In keeping with her approach of privileging Burney’s plays over her novels, Darby adds:

In the novel, Evelina struggles to *tell* her readers of the trials of fitting in; the play [*A Busy Day*] renders the tangible side of emotional and intellectual fears about vulgar behavior and class encroachment, *showing* us some of the prejudices that try to maintain a rigid social structure” (148).¹⁰⁷

Nevertheless, Evelina’s way of telling her readers about social prejudices and follies and the absurdities of the process of trying to fit in were obviously regarded by her contemporaries as a form of comedy. Thus “after her triumphant debut as a comic novelist, it was natural for Burney to turn to comic drama: she clearly possessed the gift of creating sparkling dialogue, and success as a dramatist would help establish her place in literary society” (Sabor xviii). Doody corroborates this observation with an important recognition of the practical, economic interest Burney would have in the theatre: “The relation of scenes in the novel to theatrical pieces had not gone unnoticed.

A successful play could make real money...for its author [vs. a novel]. Also dramatic works were supposed to belong to a higher species of literature than the novel” ((A) 70).

Finally, in a metatheatrical observation, Nachumi suggests that in spite of Burney’s disclaimers about her embarrassment in being discovered as the author of *Evelina*, Burney was “self-consciously playing a role” (131). This performance includes publishing *Evelina* anonymously, a “theatrical move” to “dramatize her modesty” (ibid.), perhaps like the later Haywood in her post-scandal-fiction-writer role as a conduct book novelist. Just as Haywood in her younger notoriety continued to perform on stage as “Mrs. Novel,” perhaps the young Frances Burney, despite her strong reservations as a female, thought she could capitalize on her recent fame as a novelist and “take her act” to the London stage. Even as *Evelina* was being published, Burney was writing her first comedy, *The Witlings* (1780, unpublished). Her experience with this theatrical venture would personally traumatize her and influence the course of her novel writing career.

The Witlings and Burney’s second novel *Cecilia* are closely related, not only in time but also because the fate of heroine of the comedy, Cecilia Stanley, resembles, albeit in simpler form, the plot of the eponymous novel. The much documented withdrawal of *The Witlings* from theatrical production because of the “dis-encouragement” (*Journals and Letters* 398) of Burney’s “two daddies,” Charles Burney and Samuel Crisp, despite enthusiastic support from the rest of her literary circle, was followed promptly by the composition of the novel, promoted as a kind of “consolation prize” by her father (Doody (A) 99). Clearly, Burney transferred some elements of the comedy to her novel though

she transformed them into a more complex and somber tale: “It is as if Burney in her comedy had written out a more superficial approach and was ready for bigger issues and a more independent design in *Cecilia*” ((A) 118).

However, Burney also continued to attach value to her first comedy as Doody points out, suggesting that “all of the late comedies grew out of earlier efforts to rewrite and salvage *The Witlings*” ((A) 300). Sabor reports that the theater mogul Arthur Murphy was ready to produce it, telling Burney “I will promise not to let it go out of my hands without *engaging* for its success” (cited in Sabor xix).¹⁰⁸ The play is regarded today as stageable, but with defects that Burney no doubt would have corrected given the opportunity (Doody (A) 77, Sabor xx). One such problem is the complexity of its plot, with several sets of interconnecting characters and events.

The story line of the title, the antics of Lady Smatter and her Esprit party, was the ostensible source of concern for Charles Burney and Samuel Crisp about staging the play, for they feared it would offend Lady Montagu and her Bluestocking circle. Burney lampoons Smatter’s literary pretensions and those of her group, particularly the poet, Mr. Dabler, quite rigorously though she claims on her title page to be a “Sister of the Order.” The main plot is about the fortunes of Cecilia Stanley, an heiress about to marry Beaufort, Lady Smatter’s nephew. Her fortune suddenly disappears in a financial collapse, and she is no longer considered an eligible match by Lady Smatter who, of course, controls Beaufort’s future fortune. Cecilia struggles with maintaining her engagement to Beaufort while confronting the frightening prospect of having to earn a

living. In spite of her central role, Cecilia is remarkably passive and silent through her ordeal, and when she does attempt to communicate, struggles to be heard at all. In a way, she is the equivalent of the externally shy and demure Evelina, but without access to her opinion of the array of comic figures she interacts with in the play, that generates the farcical perspective in the novel.

Cecilia's financial dilemma occurs within the context of the activities of a group of middle and working-class characters in Mrs. Wheedle's milliner's shop, who generate a third plot of sorts, depicting the every day life of people who must work to survive and who depend upon wealthy persons like Cecilia for their income. As Barbara Darby points out, there is a "real gulf" that separates the genteel characters like Cecilia and Beaufort from "the working-class figures," and she adds that "The working women regard Cecilia's class-based effusions on dependence as verbal posturing" (39). Doody suggests that the opening scenes in the milliner's shop wherein some of the characters actually make things are unprecedented in eighteenth-century English drama (A 78). Similarly, the domestic scene in Mrs. Voluble's house that opens the final act, especially at the supper table where people are offered food (or denied it in poor Bob Voluble's case), discuss "victuals" in folksy detail, and actually eat some,¹⁰⁹ demonstrates a tentative novelistic realism in Burney's first theatrical piece. In later works, Cecilia Beverley and Camilla will visit shops like Mrs. Wheedle's in *The Witlings*, as gentlewomen customers or investors, and Burney will eventually put her heroine, Juliet Granville, to work in such shops in *The Wanderer*, thereby establishing an interesting connection between her first play and her last novel.

Unifying and ultimately resolving the plots of *The Witlings* is the acerbic character Censor, who blackmails Lady Smatter, by threatening to publish lampoons about her literary pretensions, into agreeing to the match between Cecilia and Beaufort. This action alleviates the economic distress not only of Cecilia, but also the financial anxieties of Mrs. Wheedle and her workers, who depend on receiving payment for Cecilia's wedding orders. The pseudo-poet Dabler also gets his comeuppance through Censor, who exposes his claims to write spontaneous and original verse. It is telling that the agent of the comic resolution of this play is essentially a negative force—censorship—that stifles the creative efforts of the other characters, however, lame.

Peggy Thompson in her article on *The Witlings* picks up on this theme of censorship and follows in Doody's tradition of reading Burney's plays as autobiographical documents. She argues that Burney not only documents her conflicted feelings and aspirations as a writer, in particular of comic drama, in her diaries and letters, but also embeds her conflict within her first comedy (16-17). Thompson sees Burney representing herself in at least five of the play's characters: Lady Smatter (unashamed of shoddy literary pursuits), Cecilia Stanley (private, self-effacing femininity of "ladies of the strictest character"), Bob Voluble (silenced victim of parental abuse), Dabler (the insecure secretive writer) and Censor (who like Burney¹¹⁰ is willing to burn all his works). In the plots of the comedy, Burney plays out the possibilities for all these competing self-depictions, allowing Smatter, Dabbling and Bob to be silenced, Cecilia to be saved from public scrutiny by marriage, and Censor to erase all the literary efforts of these characters.

Besides the non-sentimental working-class realism Doody observes in *The Witlings*, she also suggests Burney's manipulation of time in the play is "ingenious" with "relaxed" characters and the "clever dramatic structure...of things *not* happening" and characters constantly forgetting things ((A) 79). In effect, much of the play's plot involves waiting for something to happen (the lower-class characters working as they wait while the gentry just talk). Doody proposes calling the opening act "Waiting for Cecilia" ((A) 79) as the other characters talk about her as they await her arrival. The frenetic character Jack, who never gets around to completing a task, such as conveying the message of Cecilia's delayed arrival or the news of her loss of fortune, because of so many other competing distractions, is contrasted to the plodding, single-minded Codger who exasperatingly tries to follow one thought at a time to its conclusion; both consume the other characters' time, impeding any progression or resolution of the plots.

Burney's first play apparently lived up to the expectations of her literary supporters as a lively, innovative comedy that seemed to be the logical sequel to her first novel. "A reading of [*The Witlings*] shows that ...[Burney] did find some real solutions to the problems besetting theatrical comedy in her time. If Burney had been able to produce her play in 1780, she might have made a career as a dramatist" (Doody (A) 77). However, the personal anxieties about her literary aspirations that Burney embedded in this play according to Thompson, were ironically realized when her "two daddies" performed the role Censor did in *The Witlings* by dissuading her from having it produced.

Instead, Burney moved on, at her father's prompting, to write her second novel, *Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress*, published in 1782. Although identified as "memoirs," this novel departs from the first-person, epistolary narration of *Evelina* by being told in the third person. In doing so, Burney places her fiction into the Fielding tradition and that of most of her female novelist predecessors, including Eliza Haywood, where it would remain (Spencer ((E) 35). This long novel is divided into five volumes (far too long for the conventional three-volume format) with numbered and titled chapters, again like Fielding or Haywood.

However, Burney does not adopt the intrusive, omniscient narrative persona of her predecessors, but instead as Jane Spencer argues, she employs "a less egotistical authority," the ironic narrative voice of Samuel Johnson in *Rasselas* ((E) 35). "Such an impersonal voice, not strongly marked by gender, became for Burney a way of taking authoritative control without sounding like a man" ((E) 35). Margaret Doody observes in her introduction to the Oxford World's Classics edition of the novel that while "Burney is certainly not employing the conduct-book formula of novel-writing whereby a heroine's errors are incessantly pointed out in order to be corrected" because "there is nobody in Cecilia's world capable of correcting her," the narrative makes it evident that "where [Cecilia's] emotions are involved she is consistently blind" ((B) xxxiii) as she misreads her childhood friend, Priscilla's character or the motives of Mrs. Delvile and Mr. Monkton, for example. When the reader is centered in Cecilia's consciousness, the narrative becomes unreliable regarding such complex characters, although Burney reserves the right to provide accurate insight through omniscient reportage in the case of

Monkton, but she more frequently does this through dramatization—using dialogue and visual description, so that the reader “witnesses” the character in action—best illustrated in the great confrontation scene between Mrs. Delvile, Mortimer, and Cecilia late in the novel.

On the other hand, Cecilia can instinctively judge the merits of many of the characters in this novel as well as Evelina did in her world. Her distaste for Mr. Delvile, her growing distrust of Mr. Harrel, and her amused discomfort with Mr. Briggs, her three guardians, are reliable indicators of their ineffectiveness or insincerity as her protectors. As a comic heroine, Cecilia is able to navigate through the flat, typical characterizations of the genre, but when the novel plunges her into darker, potentially tragic realms populated with dangerously ambiguous or ambivalent figures, like Monkton or Mrs. Delvile, her capacity to decipher their true nature easily vanishes. Instead, Cecilia, along with reader, must learn the truth about these characters through experience. Doody detects this complication of characterization in the novel, which she claims in her introduction “anticipates techniques we associate with the historical novel” ((B) xxxvi):

If her characters are “type characters” they are so in the sense that Scott’s characters are so—they have gone far beyond the shallower typifications of contemporary drama, beyond Sneerwell, Sir Brilliant Fashion, and Joseph Surface. The dramatic comedies from Congreve to Sheridan operated in an acceptable framework of social assumptions that allowed individual aberrations to be noted, but gave increasingly less room for disturbing discussion of general defectiveness. ((A) 118)

The “general defectiveness” of human nature produces “mixed characters” (Doody (B) xxviii) who puzzle audiences or readers¹¹¹ by not behaving within the framework of social assumptions.

Jane Spencer in her contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney* on the first two novels claims an even more significant development in *Cecilia* that influences Jane Austen and has a great bearing on this study, the development of the “free indirect discourse” method of narration “in which Burney is a pioneer”, and which she defines as follows:

This style, in which the third-person narrative takes on a colouring from the character’s idiom and consciousness, can be used in the representation of speech, but in *Cecilia* is more often used to indicate a character’s thoughts, generally the heroine’s. Cecilia is an introspective heroine, and the reflective passages, which punctuate her story, chart the movement of her mind and the progress of her feelings.... (E) 35-6)¹¹²

Spencer sees this narrative technique as an enhancement of the Johnsonian style adopted by Burney in this novel with far-reaching effect on the development of the genre:

If the heroine’s reflections show the influence of Johnson, they also look forward to Austen, who develops free indirect discourse more fully in *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*. Jane Austen took a great deal from *Cecilia*....Austen’s free indirect style is much more flexible than Burney’s, consistently achieving a combination of sympathy and subtle irony which Burney achieves only occasionally, but Austen’s debt to the earlier novelist is considerable. Cecilia’s experiences illustrate Johnson’s maxims [the vanity of human wishes], and Burney develops a new narrative medium for reflection on these experiences: one that brings the gravity and balance of Johnson’s style into a free indirect discourse that blends narrative commentary with a close rendering of the heroine’s consciousness. As Burney, writing her history of an heiress, takes on her own inheritance from Johnson, she simultaneously prepares a rich legacy for Jane Austen. ((E) 36)

However, Spencer also notes that “much of the novel is in dialogue form, and her highly dramatic practice of defining her characters through their idiolects saves her from the fault critics found in *Rasselas*, of making everyone speak in the same elevated manner”(E) 35). This “highly dramatic practice” most likely derives from Burney’s

experience as frequent spectator of public and private theatrical performance (as her journal and letters attest), and especially her recent experience of writing dialogue for her comedy and her first novel. The ability to reproduce “idiolects” in dialogue seems very close to the skills required to narrate in “free indirect discourse” which simulates a “character’s idiom and consciousness.”

Evidence of the emergence of this technique can be found in Cecilia Stanley’s brief soliloquies in *The Wiltings*, which in their exposure of the character’s interiority bridge the distinction between dialogue and narration. In one example, Cecilia addresses the audience just after being affronted by Lady Smatter who has found out about her loss of fortune and dismissed her as Beaufort’s potential fiancée:

Follow you? No, no. I will converse with you no more. Cruel, unfeeling Woman! I will quit your inhospitable Roof, I will seek shelter—alas where?—without fortune, destitute of friends, ruined in Circumstances, yet proud of Heart,—where can the poor Cecilia seek shelter, peace, or protection?... Yet, fly I must—Insult ought not to be borne, and those who twice risk, the third time deserve it. (36)

This speech echoes Cecilia’s somewhat pompous and self-pitying dialogue such as occurs in her conversation with Lady Smatter just before:

No more, I beseech you, madam! I know not how to brook such terms, or to endure such indignity. I shall leave your Ladyship’s House instantly, nor, while any other will receive me, shall I re-enter it! Pardon me madam, but I am yet young in the school of adversity, and my spirit is not yet tamed down to that abject submission to unmerited mortifications, which Time and long suffering can alone render supportable. (36)

One can imagine substituting “she would” for “I will” in the former soliloquy (or for that matter, in the latter bit of dialogue) in order to narrate this character’s state of mind in a

fiction—which Burney does do with Cecilia Beverley who finds herself in a similar position to that of her dramatic namesake near the end of her novel:

Her situation, indeed, was singularly unhappy, since, by this unforeseen vicissitude of fortune, she was suddenly, from being an object of envy and admiration, sunk into distress, and threatened with disgrace; from being every where caressed, and by every voice praised, she blushed to be seen and expected to be censured; and, from being generally regarded as an example of happiness, and a model of virtue, she was now in one moment to appear to the world, an outcast from her own house, yet received into no other! A bride unclaimed by a husband! An HEIRESS, disposed of all wealth! (868-9)

We can see here the “Johnsonian” style evolve into “free indirect discourse” as Cecilia’s emotions overtake her rational meditation upon her dilemma. (A few pages later she will “go mad” briefly.) Burney’s ability to depict Cecilia’s state of mind here evolves from the dialogue of the character’s prototype in *The Witlings*. It is arguable that Burney’s ear and facility for dialogue derived from the stage as well as the theatrical conversations and events in her personal life recorded in her journal contributed not only to her own dramas but her novels as well, as Barbara Darby suggests:

It is not surprising that as an accomplished novelist Burney is more astute when working with comic prose. The clear dramatic style of the novels and many sections of the journals and letters, which prompted Burney’s friends and mentors to encourage her to try drama, makes the dialogue of the comedies and novels stylistically similar. (193-4)

Cecilia also owes the basic elements of its plot to *The Witlings*. Both Cecilia Stanley and Cecilia Beverley are heiresses potentially in control of their fortunes. Both are courted by aristocratic men, Beaufort and Mortimer Delvile, who do not control their own fortunes, the former dependent on Lady Smatter, and the latter on his pretentious parents. Ironically, in the process of marrying these men, both women lose the bulk of

their fortune, Stanley to the exigencies of the market and Beverley, much more insidiously, to the legal consequences of giving up her name in her benefactor's will. Both suitors establish a tradition in Burney's work of being ineffectual men. Beaufort protests much but doesn't do anything concrete overcome his aunt's prohibition of his marriage to Cecilia. The conflicted Mortimer vacillates between his love for Cecilia and the contrary expectations of his parents. In the novel, however, no Censor solves the dilemma: young Delvile finally gathers the courage to defy his parents—partially, but not entirely—by marrying Cecilia, without her fortune or his, as the couple cobbles together a modest income from other sources.

Both heroines share a conspicuous lack of agency. Cecilia Stanley, once she is financially insolvent, withdraws from society, almost lurking in the background, and when she does attempt to communicate or act, she is not listened to or acknowledged. Cecilia Beverley believes she is empowered as an independent heiress and makes plans to assist others and better society, a “‘subject’ who can act and change the world” (Doody (B) xxxiv). Instead she is manipulated by others and robbed of much of her fortune by Harrel, her suicidal guardian, and then of course, loses not only the rest of her fortune, but also her name, by marrying Delvile. In effect, her history is the inverse of Evelina's, her story moving from the comic to the almost tragic as she flirts with madness and death near the end of the novel on the verge of being “rendered pure object,” the heroine of a novelistic she-tragedy, like Richardson's *Clarissa* (Doody (B) xxxv). Cecilia is salvaged, nevertheless, but the outcome is “mixed,” as Doody describes it, in keeping with the mixed characterization that Burney “pioneers” in the English novel ((B) xxxviii):

We can also see that Burney had broken a 'rule' in an aesthetic derived from dramatic theory of the neoclassical school, when she wrote her conclusion. She had not arranged totally exemplary fates for the characters, and deliberately ended her novel in a minor key, on the note of ironic 'cheerful resignation.' (Doody (A) 144-5)

Another legacy of *The Witlings* in *Cecilia* is the theme of economic "self dependence" awkwardly and ironically raised in the play. Beaufort rhapsodizes on the notion at the close of the comedy:

"...Self-dependence is the first of Earthly Blessings; since those who rely on others for support and protection are not only liable to the common vicissitudes of Human Life, but exposed to the partial caprices and infirmities of Human Nature." (101)

If anything, *The Witlings* shows the interdependence of people upon each other, crossing class and gender divisions: the gentry rely on the lower orders to make and do things for them; the working classes depend on the financial solvency and responsibility of their betters for their living. The only characters in the play who seem at all self-dependent financially are the entrepreneurial Mrs. Wheedle or the old money aristocrat Lady Smatter. (Where Censor gets his income is unknown, but he appears to function independently as well.) One could imagine Cecilia Beverley at the beginning of the novel applauding the sentiments Beaufort expresses as she imagines herself to be in such a position when she gains control of her fortune. The course of the novel demonstrates the contrary, however, as Cecilia never gains control of her diminishing finances or even of her own identity. If the conclusion of *The Witlings* was meant to be ironic as Tara Wallace suggests (68), the outcome of *Cecilia* can be read as a realistic study of that irony in action, particularly in the case of an aspiring self-dependent woman.

Finally, *Cecilia* also echoes other eighteenth-century dramatic sources, besides Burney's own play, *The Witlings*. The scenario of the three guardians of the heiress (Briggs, Harrel, Delvile) who are of strikingly different personalities and values is modeled on Susannah Centlivre's *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (1718), but also borrows from Cumberland's *A Fashionable Lover* (1772) (Doody A 122).

Despite the frustrating demise of *The Witlings*, Frances Burney's literary career reached a first peak with the highly successful publication of *Cecilia* in 1782. However, a difficult turn in her personal life that followed—the unfulfilled courtship of George Cambridge and her appointment as (assistant) Keeper of the Robes for Queen Charlotte—resulted in a long 14-year hiatus in her novel writing. Nevertheless, during this period Burney managed to write her four tragedies, which many critics, following Doody, regard as a kind of therapeutic psychological exercise for her, of little literary merit in their own right—though this is an judgment applied to most late eighteenth-century tragedy, especially by women (Darby 43, Sabor xxx).

Barbara Darby, however, is among the few who do argue for a more positive assessment of these plays, particularly as manifestations of a consistent feminist stance she sees in Burney's work. She asserts "...the tragedies have merit not only as a stage in the development of a writer, nor purely as psychological documents, but also as stageable plays" (106). Darby contends that Burney developed an alternative tragic vision to the much-demeaned "she-tragedy" formula dismissively defined by Allardyce Nicoll in his *A History of English Drama* (46-7): Burney's "revision of the tragic formula" is not

“exalted female nobility or...villainous temptresses...[r]ather...female victimization that results from untenable alternatives” (48). As part of her reclamation of Burney’s plays, she also challenges (along with Jeffrey Cox) the apparent critical consensus that “the theater began to decline into Victorian melodrama and farce at the end of the 18th century” and notes the “steadily increasing [critical] regard for late-century novelists, particularly women novelists, has not been matched by a similar increase in studies of late eighteenth-century drama by women” (19). Darby points how “Burney uses the qualities of drama that differentiate it from prose fiction or poetry; its basis in physically embodied figures, visual and aural clues for the audience, a real experience of time, and a stage space in which to depict movement” (16) and hinges her defense of the tragedies on the fact that “dramatic genres and their conventions provide strong possibilities for powerful representations...because they offer us the body as *body* on the stage” (80). In particular, two of these plays, *Edwy and Elgiva*, her first tragedy, and *Elberta*, her incomplete last effort, feature beleaguered wives whose physical presences on stage affect the action, even after death in the case of Elgiva. Similarly, the death of the pathetic figure of Cerulia, who melodramatically and sentimentally expires of heartbreak in *Hubert de Vere*, is witnessed by all the characters on stage as well as the audience and is not just reported after the fact in the manner of Ophelia in *Hamlet*.

Darby’s point is that Burney effectively uses the stage to show or to allow her audience to *witness* the experience of female victimization in corporeal form in her tragedies. The ability to exhibit (female) experience in this powerful way was clearly valued by Burney and explains, perhaps, her persistent efforts to write and stage plays.

The relevance of this dramatic practice to this study is whether or not, after once again failing to have her tragic vision embodied satisfactorily on actual stages, Burney transfers this phenomenon in some way into the novels that follow, *Camilla* and *The Wanderer*. Emily Anderson offers just such a connection in her article on “staged insensibility” in the novels. Anderson argues that the only avenue for a lady to express her true feelings in Burney’s fiction is to stage them—act them out—but paradoxically only by absenting her conscious self from the performance—“a planned moment of staged insensibility” (630). Anderson finds such moments in the story of Albany’s fiancée in *Cecilia*, Camilla’s “death wish and subsequent ‘deathbed’ scene, and Elinor Jodrell’s second suicide attempt and “subsequent swoon” in *The Wanderer* (631). “Such scenes depict the dilemma of dramatizing genuine feeling by staging a representation of emotional repression. Burney makes her heroines responsible for their own insensibility, yet ultimately unconscious of the spectacle they create; these women simultaneously exhibit and excuse a kind of female agency over expression and presentation that Burney found so troubling about a theatrical career” (632).

Setting aside Anderson’s psychoanalytical/autobiographical claims, the tactic of “staged insensibility” does seem to be an attempt to reconstruct the kind of theatrical experience of showing or witnessing identified in the drama by Darby and others (Nachumi 80, Doody (A) 302¹¹³) within the narrative of a novel. Anderson’s three examples involve a female character who is suffering but unable to communicate her pain to an uncomprehending or insensitive (male) audience, and therefore deliberately constructs the scene of her own demise as the only way to express her anguish or

abjection. In discussing the case of Albany's fiancée, Anderson echoes some of Darby's notions about the abused female body in Burney's tragedies, such as in the cases of Cerulia or Elgiva: "By ensuring that Albany witnesses her agonies, she dooms him to what seems to be endless suffering" (637) an outcome similar to the prolonged (if ultimately transient) anguish of Dunstan confronted with Elgiva's tortured body in *Edwy and Elgiva* or De Mowbray and de Vere after Cerulia expires in *Hubert de Vere*. The villain Dunstan in *Edwy and Elgiva* experiences regret for bringing about the death of the king, Edwy, but reserves his most intense (and somewhat incoherent) reaction for the sight of Elgiva's mangled body:

...Hah! A Corpse
 Perhaps 'tis Elgiva—yes, 'tis even So!
 Her lifeless frame—that deed is surely done.
 True, as the Villain [the actual murderer] said, her look is innocent—
 Would I not had encounter'd it!—a sickness
 Deadly, unfelt before, benumbs, confounds me—
 Where may she be?—Who sent her hence?—Was't I?—
 By what authority?—Hush! Enquiry!—Hah!— (*Edwy and Elgiva* 83)

DeVere (responsible for her death by heartbreak) responds to Cerulia's imminent demise in similar dash-riddled, exclamatory utterance, "Oh!—What to this were death?—Terrific crisis!—How go?—How stay?—Kind phrenzy! Seize me wholly!—" (*Hubert de Vere* 157), while the villain De Mowbray, Cerulia's unrevealed father who engineered her tragic fate, echoes Dunstan in his remorseful shock:

Victim?—What victim?—Hah!
 Who is't it lies there?—Speak!—Answer me!—what horror
 Play ye upon my senses?—I'st Cerulia? (159)

Burney's stilted tragic style, much criticized by most commentators (eg. Doody (A) 178, Sabor xxviii) and even Barbara Darby in her defense of Burney's tragedies

(193-4), does reappear in the scenes of “insensibility” in the later novels witnessed by male characters. We see this “staging” in the depiction of the “mad” Cecilia’s discovery in the inn, first by Albany (himself somewhat crazed) and then by her secret spouse Delvile. Albany upon recognizing Cecilia “—stept back,—he came forward,—he doubted his own senses,—he looked at her earnestly,—he turned from her to look at the woman of the house,—he cast his eyes around the room itself, and then, lifting up his hands, ‘Oh sight of woe!’ he cried...” (*Cecilia* 902). Albany’s histrionics are followed by Delvile’s equally theatrical reaction:

...when he perceived her [being physically carried out of the building by the landlords],—feeble, shaking, leaning on one person, and half carried by another!—he started back, staggered, gasped for breath,—but finding they were proceeding, advanced with trepidation, furiously calling out, “Hold! Stop!—what is it you are doing? Monsters of savage barbarity, are you murdering my wife?” (*Cecilia* 905)

When Cecilia swoons and falls to the ground (staged or not), Delville almost comically fails to catch her in time:

[He] had vehemently advanced to catch her in his arms...but the sight of her changed complexion, and the wildness of her eyes and air, again made him start,—his blood froze through his veins, and he stood looking at her, cold and almost petrified. (*ibid.*)

The internal responses of both men are for the most part narratively depicted in visual terms as the scene might have been portrayed on a stage. Albany’s “doubting his own senses” is represented entirely by his physical gestures while Delvile’s internal confusion is cleverly depicted in terms of movement as a transition from “vehemently advancing” to “petrification”. This kind of narrative description corresponds to the “mimetic”

(Doody (A) 302) depiction of similar incidents in Burney's tragedies based on stage gesture and fractured dialogue.

Discussing "staged insensibility" in *Camilla*¹¹⁴, the novel that follows the four tragedies, Anderson notes that the novel's composition "is clearly intertwined with her theatrical experience [the failed production of *Edwy and Elgiva*]" and that "[f]or the majority of the novel, Camilla is forced into a theatrical position: unwillingly on display before a public gaze... The novel criticizes the artifice of such social acting that encourages a discrepancy between her behavior and her feelings" (640-1). Camilla then "stages a scene in which her external sufferings accurately communicate her internal torments to her lover and her parents" (641). Anderson details how Camilla "desires an audience" and uses letters to her parents and Edgar to set up her death scene (642). All this portrays "simultaneously the absolute necessity of female performance and the inappropriateness of obviously staging it" (643). Sarah Selih views the climactic event of this novel in similar terms:

[Camilla's] self-neglect has already produced the desired result, and the heroine is eventually ushered back into the family unit in a final piece of theatre... For, in precipitating her own illness, Camilla is still playing a part, and at the end of the novel it is evident that she has merely exchanged the feminine scripts which proved so ineffectual (coquette, spendthrift, mad, or dying woman) for another more convincing role... (45)

It should be noted that the "real mad woman" that Mr. Tyrold takes Eugenia and sisters to see is not included in Anderson's "staged insensibility" scenes, but like Cecilia's insensibility as she goes temporarily mad, it is witnessed by an audience to dramatic effect.

Anderson's cases from *The Wanderer* focus on Elinor Jodrell's suicidal theatrics, which unlike Camilla's, backfire again and again. She quips that Elinor "becomes the first Burney heroine to be taken advantage of while unconscious," referring to the unwanted male medical attention she receives on her body that saves her life, contrary to her design, after she stabs herself during Juliet's musical performance (646). The downside of "insensibility," staged or not, is the loss of any control over events. This is accentuated ironically, for the obviously staged performance of Elinor is "upstaged" by the genuine swoon of Juliet (who has been performing herself, musically)—"the ladies...were hiding their faces or running away; and the men, though eagerly crowding to the spot of this tremendous event, [were] approaching rather as spectators of some public exhibit, than actors in a scene of humanity"—while Juliet receives urgent attention from Harleigh (*The Wanderer* 339). As discussed in greater detail below, Burney emphasizes in her final novel the theatrical nature of social conduct, especially for women.

In these cases, and arguably a number of others that don't feature "staged insensibility," the physical and/or psychological collapse of female characters before an "audience" of other characters, especially male ones, may have been deployed by Burney to recreate in narrative mode the theatrical or "mimetic" effect of witnessing the damaged bodies and identities (of women) on stage that figure so prominently in her tragedies.¹¹⁵ "The importance of *witnessing* is explicitly linked to drama, which displays passions without the mediation of narration and is most effective when most 'natural'" (Darby 186). However, in her novels, Burney also seems interested in the effect of the collapse of

female characters upon witnesses (especially males), and ultimately her readers, just as she would calculate the impact of such gestures in her plays.

The scenes in *Camilla* and *The Wanderer* that Anderson claims are “staged” also reflect a developing interest on Burney’s part in representing the internal responses of the witnesses by other means than visual gesture. Burney seems to be experimenting here with novelistic interiority while maintaining the reader’s experience of witnessing female performance. Edgar’s discovery of the nearly dying Camilla at the Marls’ inn is more subtly depicted than Delvile’s equivalent experience in *Cecilia*. In order to gain discreet access to the dying maiden (whom he at first doesn’t know to be Camilla), Edgar adopts the guise of a clergyman and in that role, realizes who his client is. Burney narrates this scene, in keeping perhaps with the chapter title “A Vision,”¹¹⁶ largely from Camilla’s delirious point of view but includes fleeting glimpses into Edgar’s state of mind through “free indirect discourse” combined with external gesture. The depiction of Edgar’s experience of witnessing Camilla’s abject state is further complicated by having him report it to her later in the novel (Book X, Chapter XIII) when she is lucid, in a mixture of dialogue and free indirect discourse.

The initial scene is narrated through a deft rapid shifting of point of view, with the added twist of the two characters speaking through a curtain—while Peggy and Mrs. Marl observe. It begins with Camilla waving the “preacher” in, and then the perspective shifts to Edgar:

He complied, though not immediately; but no sooner had he begun, no sooner devoutly, yet tremblingly, pronounced *O Father of Mercies!* than a faint scream issued from the bed!—

He stopt; but she did not speak; and after a short pause, he resumed; but not a second sentence was pronounced when she feebly ejaculated, ‘Ah Heaven!’ and the book fell from his hands. (*Camilla* 877)

The viewpoint then reverts to Camilla’s until she tries to say “O Edgar!” Once again his perspective takes over:

He attempted not to unclose the curtain she had drawn, but with a deep groan, dropping upon his knees on the outside, cried, ‘Great God!’ but checking himself, hastily arose, and motioning to Mrs. Marl and Peggy, to move out of hearing, said, through the curtain, ‘O Camilla! What dire calamity has brought this about?—speak, I implore!—why are you here?—why alone?—speak, speak!’

He heard she was weeping, but received no answer, and with an energy next to torture, exclaimed, ‘Refuse not to trust me!—recollect our long friendship—forgive—forget its alienation!—By all you have ever valued—by all your wonted generosity—I call—I appeal...Camilla! Camilla!—your silence rends my soul!’ (*ibid.*)

Edgar “checking himself” in order to clear the room before proceeding alone establishes the authenticity of his narrative “voice” here! Once again, however, our perspective returns to Camilla who manages to extend her “feeble hand” through the curtain, which Edgar clasps in his and “moistens with tears.” Her non-verbal sensations are then replaced by a last glimpse into Edgar’s perception: “wringing his hands as he looked around the room, he tore himself away” (878).

We can see Burney’s dramatic dialogue re-deployed in this scene that manages to portray the experience of witnessing the heroine’s plight in a much more sophisticated narrative context. Clearly she is developing her novelistic narrative technique in new ways that incorporate her dramatic experience. At the same time, we should keep in

mind the possibility that these “almost parodic, stagey final scenes” as Sarah Selih suggests (45) along with Emily Anderson, may also be intended to remind readers of the theatrical, performative nature of women’s fictional or social roles.

Besides being sites for witnessing “challenging depictions of female subordination and martyrdom along with more general representations of the victims of political upheaval, victims who can only speak through their damaged bodies” (Darby 107) that are translated into her novels as scenes of insensibility and abjection, Burney’s tragedies also offer another indication of how the drama has been intrinsically related to developments in the evolution of the novel in their “gothic” aspects. While none of her plays could be described as “Gothic” dramas, Burney, ever conscious of current cultural trends, did incorporate many Gothic features into her dramatic works, particularly the tragedies.

Jeffrey Cox in his extensive introduction to his anthology *Seven Gothic Dramas 1789-1825* (1992) argues for a strong relationship between the Gothic movement and the novel at the end of the eighteenth-century, observing that it is “not surprising that the masterworks of the Gothic arise at moments when the ‘great tradition’ [of the novel] suffers ruptures in its development, with the key moment of the Gothic novel coming between the providential novels of the eighteenth century, and the historically and socially grounded novels of the nineteenth...” (7). At the same time, Gothic drama became popular on London stages, particularly plays by Matthew “Monk” Lewis and Joanna Baillie, as well as some of the Romantic poets. Cox relates the advent of Gothic

drama to the expansions of the theatres and resultant changes to dramatic taste at the end of the century, large venues putting on spectacles emphasizing the sensational (8-11). Burney is known to have read the play considered the original Gothic drama, Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* (1768), and to have been appropriately shocked by it (Doody 184).¹¹⁷ She also attended Monk Lewis' *The Castle Spectre* (1797) "in a period when she undertook some brisk theatre-going, catching up with the new actors and the new dramatists," according to Doody (291), who sees the Gothic influence in the ghost scene and the "Strange Man" in her comedy *Love and Fashion*.

Cox also discusses the merging of high and low culture—"legitimate" (generically pure tragedy and comedy) and "illegitimate" (mixed genres, melodrama etc.) theater—that gothic plays embody (11). Burney's "tragedies" are rarely "pure;" only *Edwy and Elgiva* is a complete representative of the genre. *Hubert de Vere* incorporates the tragic demise of Cerulia and the downfall of the conniving De Mowbray within a comic resolution (de Vere survives and gets the girl, Geraldine) while *The Siege of Penvesey* perplexed Burney's husband in determining its genre since no one dies and the outcome is also positive for the beleaguered heroine Adela, who gets to marry the man of her choice with her father and the King's approval. Her last tragedy *Elberta* is incomplete and has multiple possible outcomes. Also, as the titles of these plays suggest, they all could be classified as "histories," for Burney preferred to set these darker works in the historic past. The term "melodrama" could also be applied to *Hubert de Vere* and *The Siege of Penvesey*, and to all four tragedies, in the sense of domestic harmony being invaded by external, political violence, with morality eventually prevailing (Cox 41).

While she was not a practitioner of the Gothic genre like Lewis, Radcliffe, or Baillie, Burney was clearly influenced by it and sought to incorporate Gothic features in both her plays and novels. Barbara Darby notes that Burney's tragic plays are in keeping with Gothic and melodramatic fashions of the period:

Tragedy at the end of the eighteenth century was a fluid genre that included challenging depictions of female subordination and martyrdom along with more general representations of the victims of political upheaval, victims who can only speak through their damaged bodies. (107)

Darby also records that Burney had contacted Monk Lewis about having *Hubert de Vere* produced on stage (84).¹¹⁸

The confinement of women, including physical abuse or the threat of it, is a significant component of Burney's tragedies: Elgiva is hunted, kidnapped, tortured and killed; in *Hubert de Vere* Geraldine is forced into a marriage and then hunted down by villains while Cerulia experiences death by heartbreak in a spooky churchyard; Adela in *The Siege of Penvesey* is confined in an enemy castle and threatened with starvation as well as a forced marriage (or the convent); and Elberta is harassed and hounded as she seeks to feed and protect her children. Castles and remote locations (like the Isle of Wight in *Hubert de Vere*) are prominent in Burney's settings and contribute a "gothic" atmosphere to these plays.¹¹⁹

The most significant Gothic episode in Burney's plays, which is reworked in her novel *Camilla*, is Cerulia's encounter with the supernatural in the "country churchyard" in *Hubert de Vere* (Doody (A) 342). Cerulia is an innocent, naïve, pastoral maiden who is used by her villainous father, De Mowbray, to sideline the hero, Hubert de Vere, by

preventing any chance of marriage to his true love, Geraldine (now a widow of her forced marriage). De Mowbray tricks his daughter into believing she is in love with Hubert and he with her. Cerulia's pathetic "courtship" of Hubert (who has some Gothic/Byronic heroic characteristics in his alienation from the world as a result of his political and romantic losses) succeeds when Hubert reluctantly succumbs to her pleas. Geraldine's arrival on the island and Hubert's immediate transfer of his affections to his former love breaks Cerulia's heart once she realizes the situation. She undergoes an extended emotional and physical decline (resembling Ophelia's behavior in *Hamlet*) that includes an overnight stay in the churchyard where she encounters manifestations of Death which urge her to suicide:

Long in dread silence, watching some portent,
Shuddering I lay; chill'd, frozen, bloodless.—
Clos'd were my aching Eyes, and yet I slept not;
Hush'd were my Sighs—I fear'd to hear their moan;
And Hour chac'd Hour, in awful mute expectance;
At length—appeared a vision!—white it's garb—
...That deep in the bowels of the Earth
These feeble hands must fashion my last home.
...Holding a taper whose red flame illumined
Three hideous Spectres that before me glar'd.
...Come to thy task! It cried; thy work awaits thee! (149-150)

Cerulia succumbs to this command after an extended discussion of what the worms would do to her body:

Prostrate I fell; eager, I bared my breast,
With fresh damp mould I strew'd it o'er:
Thrice then I cried aloud: Inter this First! (151)

She survives the night (to tell her story to her witnesses), but “the dew of Death crept, clammy, o’er me/And Icicled my Heart: and There, even now,/ Cold, cold it clings” (151). Cerulia then dutifully expires before Hubert and the local crowd.

Of course, in the recasting of this scene in *Camilla*, the voice enticing the heroine to die is from her own consciousness, which Burney is careful to keep ambivalent, alternating between seeking “release” and hoping for reconciliation with her parents:

...I am now certainly going; and never was death so welcomed by one so young. It will end in soft peace my brief, but stormy passage, and I shall owe to its solemn call the sacred blessing of my offended Mother!
(*Camilla* 866)

It is the voice of “conscience” (872) that persuades Camilla that it is not appropriate to make herself die though she believes it is too late to salvage herself. In any case, the notion of an internal debate about choosing to die that takes place in a “gothic” environment (the churchyard for Cerulia, being alone in the presence of Bellamy’s body for Camilla) originates in Burney’s play but is narratively transformed in the novel. The pattern of a “vision” (confronting specters alone in the churchyard) followed by a “spectacle” (her public expiry) in Cerulia’s tragic demise is curiously reversed in the case of the chapter titles in *Camilla* that relate to that heroine’s similar experiences. The “spectacle” chapter (Book X, Chapter IX) deals with Camilla’s “gothic” encounter with Bellamy’s corpse while the “vision” (Chapter X) refers to her subsequent discovery by Edgar in her state of delirium. Perhaps Burney is questioning the relationship of empirical and subjective “reality” in a more sophisticated way here by blurring the distinction between subjective vision and objective (and abjective?) spectacle. In any case, we can

see evidence of the blending of theatrical and narrative technique through the use of Gothic features in Burney's third novel that perhaps reflects the broader fusion of the two genres as a result of the Gothic movement at this time, which Cox documents.

Another aspect of contemporary theatrical taste in *Camilla*, deriving from "domestic" tragedy, that Doody has observed is the pervasive reference to Shakespeare's *Othello* throughout the novel:

In all the devices of narrative language reflecting the characters, Burney in *Camilla* shows the relation of public to private as disturbing. Shakespeare's *Othello* is the play above all others in which private emotion and domestic life are transformed into the public and the spectacular....The introduction of this domestic play of jealousy into *Camilla* reminds us of the potential dangers of the pressure of private feeling and misconstruction, while the play as enactment reminds us of an art that makes emotions appear artless. ((A) 257)

The "play as enactment" is the farcical performance of *Othello* watched by the major characters, which Doody sees as an example of "the novel's ...constant motif of perverse theater" ((A) 236) that underscores the apparently "artless" acting engaged in by the more sophisticated characters. Doody cites Sir Sedley Clarendel's sarcastic commentary on the play's performance as an illustration of this effect:

In this instance, the lack of art on the part of the players becomes the occasion for a more skilled art on the part of Sir Sedley Clarendel, who transforms the play back into farcical comedy. He achieves this by decontextualizing the play, deliberately confounding presenter (actor as human being) with the presented (character)... ((A) 257)¹²⁰

Even more insightful is Doody's observation about how the Edgar-Marchmont-Camilla plot echoes the Othello-Iago-Desdemona triangle in Shakespeare's play, with the Iago-Marchmont parallel being particularly conspicuous ((A) 224).

Just as *Cecilia* can be seen as a product of Burney's dramatic effort in *The Witlings*, *Camilla* owes much to the female-centered tragedies that preceded it. However, though she had achieved another successful bestseller with this novel, Burney's attention once again returned to the stage in the late 1790s, in her writing three consecutive comedies. As Doody suggests, this transition was not inconsistent with what she had just accomplished:

Yet the gap between *Camilla* and *The Wanderer* is partly filled by work on three dramatic pieces; anxieties and bitter affliction did not cast the writing of plays out of Burney's power....The dramatic *oeuvre* was not to consist of dismal tragedies, but of 'laughing comedies,' written with stage production in mind. Yet Burney's new stage comedies resemble the tragedies in that they involve the use of psychological material, a translation of inner experience. ((A) 286)

Darby corroborates Doody's assessment in her extended treatment of the later comedies:

In her late comedies, Burney also considers the power of the family, marriage, and finance to mold and direct female behavior and to confine female choice, but she does so without the intense concentration on physical confinement and torture. (107)

The first of the three comedies, *Love and Fashion*, was the last play Burney submitted and got accepted for production, at Covent Garden for the 1800 season, and once again, it was withdrawn, at her father's behest, because of the recent death of her sister Susanna. She was also discouraged from reviving the play a year later, but her bitterness about her father's attitude remained with her for the rest of her life (Sabor 106-7, Doody (A) 287-8, Darby 112-4). On the other hand, her last comic drama, *A Busy Day*, has been the only Burney play to enjoy a successful run in English theatres, the revivals performed in 1996 and 2000 (Sabor 290-2, Wallace 56).

Although Doody suggests that “all of these late comedies grew out of earlier efforts to rewrite and salvage” *The Wivings* ((A) 300), each of these works is distinctive in its style and subject matter and arguably innovative like her first play. As noted above, *Love and Fashion* contains some “gothic” elements, including an hilarious “ghost scene” (in which characters mistake each other for specters in a dark “haunted” room) and a “Strange Man” who turns out to be a bailiff trying to arrest the hero, Valentine, for his debts. Critics like Doody and Darby focus, however, on the conflicted heroine, Hilaria, who considers herself empowered to make her own marriage choice, between Lord Arville (“fashion”) and Valentine (“love”). Burney comically explores Hilaria’s vacillations between the two options, allowing her to elect “fashion” for a while, before engineering a resolution that provides both. (The proud Arville lets her keep his jewels as a wedding gift.) Like the Cecílias that preceded her, Hilaria seems to have some autonomy and agency, but in the end has to settle for patriarchal largesse, a theme that is prevalent in Burney’s novels according to critics like Kristina Straub, who in her study of Burney, *Divided Fictions*, identifies “the gap between the promise of empowerment and the actuality of women’s economic helplessness in love and marriage” that “rub[s] in the contradiction between the role of feminine ‘treasure’ in the ideology of romance and women’s real economic powerlessness to sustain the cost of such a role without a male backer” ((A) 194). Citing Straub (120), Darby applies this observation to Hilaria and the other “economically empowered” heroines in Burney’s drama and fiction:

Burney represents in *Love and Fashion* an aspect of female experience she would explore in other works, such as *The Wanderer*: how female ‘choice’ in matters of money, marriage, and family is highly circumscribed, and how women who have few opportunities to direct their futures are

nonetheless subject to public and private chastisement, no matter what their decisions may be. These ideas are familiar also to *Evelina*, Cecilia and Camilla. (128)

The Woman-Hater, on the other hand, could be described as a sentimental, domestic melodrama, with its reunions/discoveries of long lost wives and daughters. Although Lady Smatter from *The Witlings* reappears in a similar satirical role and the eponymous central figure, Sir Roderick, is a caricature drawn from humours or manners comedy, the main plot of this play is more serious and realistic domestic drama. Wilmot (whom some critics see as the real “woman-hater” in the play) has been estranged and separated from his wife, Eleonora, for many years and has raised their daughter “Miss Wilmot” himself (with the aid of a Nurse). He believes he and his child were abandoned by Eleonora for an adventurer during their stay in the New World. He has now returned to England, only to discover his wife has come back as well, with a child (Sophia). Eleonora’s story is, of course, quite different. Fearing her husband’s jealous but unjustified anger, she had fled his house and decided to take their child with her. The Nurse, seizing the opportunity, substituted her own illegitimate child (fathered by a shoemaker), Joyce, as “Miss Wilmot.” Eleonora has returned to England to seek financial support and recognition for Sophia from her relatives, Sir Roderick and Lady Smatter. The resulting confusion of identities is the source of much of the comedy, but Wilmot’s almost bipolar attitude to his wife once he learns the truth is disturbing. As the critics have pointed out, Burney is revisiting the plot of *Evelina* in this play with its imposter daughter and Sophia’s struggle to reclaim her patronymic identity (Doody (A) 308, Darby 107). Darby observes further that “In *The Woman-Hater*, the range of familial

identities is expanded to include daughters and wives, and the figure that holds familial power, the husband/father, is examined more carefully and developed more fully than the shadowy Belmont is in *Evelina*” (149).

However, the most original and interesting character in this play, perhaps, is Joyce, who happily loses her status as “Miss Wilmot” to Sophia. In a telling early scene, we see this false Miss Wilmot playing the role of the demure young lady studiously obeying her bookish father (who is the witling Lady Smatter’s brother) until Wilmot leaves. Then a rowdy, fun-loving young woman is revealed who disdains the sedate, literary lifestyle of her father. Subsequently, she invades Lady Smatter’s home driving the proprietress from the room with her irreverence and impropriety. Once the plot unravels, and her real identity is revealed, Joyce rejoices (pun intended by Burney?) and exclaims:

...What must I do?—what will become of me?—I can’t scrub rooms—and I won’t scrub rooms!—(*sobbing*) And I can’t turn ballad-singer, and—(*suddenly brightening*) yes, I can, though, that I can, Nurse! And if I must be something —I had rather be a ballad singer than anything else. (251)

This immediately follows a previous declaration of rebellion uttered to her working-class boyfriend (another hapless Bob) while she still thinks she is Miss Wilmot: “And I don’t choose to put up with it any longer, Bob. I’m all for Liberty!—Liberty, Liberty, Bob!” (248). Joyce is possibly the only truly “liberated woman” in Burney’s works, but as some critics claim, the “loud and outspoken” Joyce may also be the rough prototype of the romantic Elinor Jodrell in *The Wanderer* (Anderson 644). Darby also notes the class issues raised by Joyce’s exuberance:

The fact that she is not devastated by the news that she might have to be a ballad singer both announces her ‘natural’ affinity for the work at the same time as it undercuts the class-based abhorrence of female work and female play that Burney was to explore later in *The Wanderer* (159).

Once again, there is a reciprocal pattern of influence between Burney’s novels and plays; not only does *The Woman-Hater* anticipate the novel to come, but it also reflects previous work, as Doody points out:

The last of these three comedies [*The Woman-Hater*]¹²¹, however, shows a blending of the concerns of the tragedies, and of themes and images of *Camilla*, with the interests and manners of the preceding two comedies. [It] is a nodal work, taking account of a great deal of Burney’s earlier fiction, narrative and mimetic, and trying to resolve issues in these other works and in the author’s life. ((A) 302)

A Busy Day, chosen to be the first Burney play to receive a modern performance (possibly because the Tara Wallace edition of the text became available), is the closest of her dramas to the spirit of the comedy of manners in its mischievous depiction of the clash of genteel and “Cit” behaviours in direct conflict. In this play, both classes are equally satirized, however, with the indignant critique of aristocratic attitudes and lifestyle by the bourgeois characters given a prominence that locates the drama as an early nineteenth-century piece. Also included is a broader social criticism of English racial prejudices of the time as the heroine Eliza Watts’ East Indian servant “Mungo” is ignored and snubbed by the waiters in a London hotel. (Tellingly perhaps, this “Black” character does not appear on stage or in the *dramatis personae*.) The sympathetic heroine’s attempts to get him decent treatment is met with disdain by these Englishmen of the “lower orders,” and even Eliza’s servant Deborah declares: “for after all a Black’s

but a Black; and let him hurt himself never so much, it won't shew. It in't like hurting us whites, with our fine skins, all over alabaster" (*A Busy Day* 296).

This opening scene sets the stage for a general treatment of prejudices and discrimination in this comedy (Wallace 69). Later, for example, Eliza's socially snubbed sister disparagingly enquires about her life in India: "La! Can they make things there? I thought they'd been all savages" and follows with racially charged remarks about "nasty black things" (309). Although Jane Austen could not have read this play, the discomfort of the genteely raised Eliza about the manners of her family that could well jeopardize her prospect of marrying Cleveland, nephew of the arrogant aristocrats, Sir Marmaduke and Lady Wilhelmina Tylney, certainly anticipates the dilemma of Elizabeth Bennett regarding her family and Fitzwilliam Darcy's relatives, especially Lady Catherine de Burgh, in *Pride and Prejudice*. Burney's Eliza, however, lacks the spunk of her Austenian counterpart; she frets over the class differences, but does not offer any social criticism on her own part. Indeed, Eliza Watts resembles Cecilia Stanley in Burney's first comedy because of her inability to communicate at critical moments and her generally dependent profile, even though she is a very wealthy heiress.

Darby compares Eliza's plight to that of Evelina: "In the novel, Evelina struggles to *tell* her readers of the trials of fitting in; the play [*A Busy Day*] renders the tangible side of emotional and intellectual fears about vulgar behavior and class encroachment, *showing* us some of the prejudices that try to maintain a rigid social structure" (148). On the other hand, Doody sees parallels with Camilla: "The comedy of misconstruction [in *A*

Busy Day] parallels that of *Camilla* though on a lighter level, because both hero and heroine really know what they want, although they are somewhat hampered by fine feeling and obligations” ((A) 294).

While Burney was writing these three comedies around the turn of the new century, she had also started composing her final novel *The Wanderer* (Anderson 643), so it is reasonable to believe that the possibilities of both genres would have been in mind. However, the second major hiatus in her career followed shortly after, her “exile” in France during the reign of Napoleon. Burney, now Madame D’Arblay, with her young son, joined her husband in his native land where he had renewed prospects in government service once the Revolution was over. Shortly after this migration, unfortunately, war broke out again between England and France, so Burney could not return to her homeland until 1812. During this period she had no access to English theatres or publishers; when she did return, she had to smuggle her manuscripts into England (Doody (A) 316). Her status as a relevant contemporary, or even politically or socially acceptable, writer must have been compromised by her absence and the passage of so much time. Perhaps Jane Austen’s depiction of Burney’s public image as reflected in John Thorpe’s assessment of her in *Northanger Abbey* as “that woman they make such a fuss about, she who married the French emigrant” (49) is indicative of the senior novelist’s reputation at the time.¹²² In any case, Burney did not attempt to write any more plays or to have any produced although she did continue to work on the manuscripts of her dramas until near her death.

Nevertheless, Burney did publish *The Wanderer, or, Female Difficulties* in 1814 with some financial but little critical success (Doody (A) 332). The long novel departs from her previous ones in terms of its historical and political themes and in its use of dual heroines, Juliet Granville and Elinor Jodrell, who represent alternative models of womanhood in the era of Mary Wollstonecraft's "feminist" works. On the other hand, *The Wanderer* can be seen as the fruition or fusion of Burney's theatrical and novelistic work as Doody effectively summarizes:

... A number of themes from Burney's earlier works unite in [Juliet Granville's] story. Like *Evelina*, the heroine suffers from a blank last name, her legitimate name and birth denied. Like Cecilia, she is persecuted for her inheritance, and like Cecilia Stanley in *The Wiltings*, she is abused by those who sheltered her and must consider earning her own living... Like Adela in *The Siege of Pevensey*, she is called upon to make a sacrifice of herself in a forced and hateful marriage in order to save a father-figure. Her situation is indeed very close to that of Geraldine in *Hubert de Vere*; Geraldine saved her father's brother by sacrificing herself in marriage, an action originally misunderstood by her lover de Vere, just as Harleigh does not understand the nature of Juliet's union with the "mari" who claims her. ((A) 323)

The Wanderer was written after yet another failure to have one of Burney's plays successfully staged, the comedy *Love and Fashion* (1798) scheduled for production at Covent Garden but withdrawn again at Charles Burney's request because of the death of her sister Susanna. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Burney's last novel reflected the final frustration of her dramatic endeavors, as Anderson concludes: *The Wanderer* "as her culminating creative work, also marks the end of her youthful aspirations....and the novel that marks the failings of Burney's dramatic efforts also documents these failings" (648).

This long-neglected and unacclaimed novel has now garnered a lot of attention for its overtly theatrical quality and themes. It shares, for example, with Austen's *Mansfield Park* and Edgeworth's *Patronage*, all three published in 1814, the depiction of an amateur theatrical (Selih 47) that provokes anxiety about the line between acting and real life. In the case of *The Wanderer*, it is a domestic performance of Vanbrugh and Cibber's *The Provok'd Husband* (1728) in which the main heroine, Juliet Granville, in her guise as "Ellis," plays the role of Lady Townly, which is "out of character" for her as "a jaunty representation of a dissipated woman" (Selih 47).

The discovery of the complexity of Juliet's function in the novel as a player of many roles, some simultaneously, as in the case of the amateur theatrical, has made the work especially intriguing in terms of the novel's relationship to drama. This connection is enhanced by Juliet's counterpart, Elinor, who speaks and acts in explicitly theatrical terms. Sarah Selih comments that "Juliet's myriad disguises draw attention to the fact that drama in *The Wanderer* is not confined to the stage, while Elinor's theatrical appearances and her frequent pronouncements on the subject of acting blur the distinction between stage and 'real life'" (48). Doody adds that "In Elinor, Burney created a character who is strongly and consciously theatrical. Elinor produces, directs, and acts in a play..." ((A) 339). The more retiring Juliet also is to perform publically on another occasion by playing the harp, but in a moment of complex conflation of the multiple meanings of performance represented by these two characters, Juliet's concert is interrupted by Elinor's dramatic suicide attempt.

As noted above, Anderson discusses *The Wanderer* as Burney's most complex display of "staged insensibility" on the part of a female character trying to express socially taboo sentiments or needs. This certainly seems to be the case of Elinor Jodrell whose repeated suicide attempts are intended to demonstrate the romantic intensity of her love for Harleigh in a manner that would have the maximum impact upon her estranged lover and his new love, Juliet.¹²³ While the narrative depicts the reaction of the ponderously philosophical (and typically ineffectual) Harleigh, Elinor's antics are witnessed primarily through another female character, Juliet, who herself must act out a number of roles in order to overcome her "female difficulties." Anderson points out, however, that "While Juliet spends most of the novel hiding her emotions, her name, and her past, Elinor, much like the playwright, struggles to create 'occasion[s] to exhibit character; instead of leaving its display to the jumble of nature and accident'" (645, citing *The Wanderer* 603-4).

Nora Nachumi calls upon Lisa Freeman's concept from her *Character's Theatre* that "the theater provided an alternative model of identity to that found in novels—a model that calls attention to the impenetrability of surfaces" (xxv) to explain Juliet's enigmatic role in *The Wanderer*. She argues that the dramatic and musical performances of "Ellis" in their context of reflecting the whole role-playing function of that novel's heroine, like the professional actor¹²⁴, separates her "persona" from her "person" or identity. This reading is further complicated when distinguishing her "character" from her actual family and rank status as "Juliet Granville" (142). "Like the fictional characters surrounding Ellis, the reader is forced to draw conclusions about her character from her

appearance and behavior, a process which the novel depicts as implicitly theatrical” (138). Nachumi concludes that this novel “points out its own inability to accurately represent the inner life of its heroine” (142).

Nachumi’s thesis addresses a fundamental aspect of the relationship between the drama and the novel—the tension between theater’s representation of character as opaque; that is, not having a distinct knowable internal essence or identity beyond the performed surface, and the tendency of the novel to probe “interiority” as an ultimate identity that may not be reflected in external demeanour or actions. Nachumi seems to be claiming that Burney has written a novel constructed on dramatic principles of characterization that dash reader expectations of interiority. The “centre of consciousness” in *The Wanderer* begins as an “Incognita,” a mysterious woman disguised a dark-skinned foreigner. The reader does not know who she is, but unlike the many fictional foundlings from *Tom Jones* to *Oliver Twist*, including Burney’s own *Evelina*, this heroine does know who she is, but neither she nor the third-person narrator provides any inside information to the reader until her “real” first name is revealed, significantly in a conversation in French with her friend Gabriella, in the middle of the book (*The Wanderer* 387). Instead, the reader penetrates her consciousness only to witness her construction of an identity as “Ellis” (derived from “LS” the direction on a letter to her), a “lady” who is acceptable in class, race, and behavior to the English society she struggles to survive within. Who the central character is remains fragmented, like her various names and roles (foreigner, seamstress, lady, actress, musician, teacher, companion, wife, eligible woman, etc.). The reader can only “watch” her perform these

parts on the stage of the narrative, until they are integrated or sorted out in the predictable but long delayed happy ending when she “becomes” Lady Juliet Granville. Although readers hover within her “centre of consciousness” throughout the novel, they know Juliet’s “character” little better than the overtly performed identity of Elinor Jodrell (who ironically has an established social identity). Both characters are “actresses” whose performances, though very different, are witnessed by the reader as an outsider.

Summing up her analysis of the last two of Burney’s novels (*Camilla* as well as *The Wanderer*), Nachumi argues they both “call attention to the opacity of women’s exteriors and to the impossibility of self-disclosure in a social world” (144). She goes on to conclude that:

...Burney’s novels reveal their debt to the eighteenth-century theater in general and to Garrick in particular. At the same time, they call into question definitions of female nature found in conduct material—especially the assertion that a lady’s appearance and behavior are the spontaneous and unmediated manifestation of her quality of mind. (144)

Selih recapitulates her assessment of these novels in a similar vein but argues for a “conservative” affirmation of intrinsic identity in Burney’s work:

Camilla and *The Wanderer* represent social identity and conduct as impersonation or drama, but they also attempt to maintain the distinction between theatrical surface (called ‘semblance’ in both novels), and the spiritual essence or soul whose existence is insisted upon by the hero of Burney’s last novel. (39)¹²⁵

It is interesting that the narrator of *The Wanderer* describes Juliet, or more accurately Ellis, at the novel’s conclusion as “a being who had been cast upon herself; a female Robinson Crusoe, as unaided and unprotected, though in the midst of the world, as that imaginary hero in his uninhabited island” (*The Wanderer* 873). The paradox of being

“cast upon herself,” not in the sense of “self-independence” Burney probably intended here, but that of the self-construction of an identity from within, captures this character’s unusual role in the narration of this novel.

Frances Burney’s innovative final novel represents the culmination of a creative dynamic between her dramatic and novelistic visions and aspirations throughout her career. While other women authors like Elizabeth Inchbald and Joanna Baillie would succeed on the London stage well into the nineteenth century, the creative energy of the arguably more talented Burney was reluctantly channeled into her novel writing, transforming the rising genre and leading the way for future novelists, men as well as women, to follow. Although commentators like Darby and Cox argue for a reevaluation of the quality of the English theatre in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it seems evident that the novel became the more vital and significant literary genre (along with poetry, of course, which retained its superior status and was claimed and dominated still by male authors). Inspired and influenced to some extent by Frances Burney’s work, novelists like Jane Austen, Walter Scott, and their successors continued that “great tradition” that seems to owe so much to the stage.

EPILOGUE

Frances Burney's lack of theatrical success in the latter part of the eighteenth century was accentuated during much of her career by the continuation of the "second wave" pattern of women dramatists who also wrote novels. Contemporary with Burney were the Lee sisters, Sophia and Harriet, who both wrote in the two genres, the former with greater success. Elizabeth Inchbald's career as "one of the most prolific and successful playwrights of her time" (Donkin 110) spanned Burney's most productive years, and the date of publication of her second novel *Nature and Art* coincided with that of *Camilla*. Hannah Cowley may have dabbled in fiction around the turn of the century after a long series of performed dramas, as did Hannah More (Nachumi 211, 260). Joanna Baillie's career continued into the nineteenth century the significant presence of women playwrights on the London stage although she apparently did not attempt fiction.

Sophia Lee, after some struggles with theatre managers, not unlike those of Lennox, Brooke, and Griffith with David Garrick, managed to get her first literary work, a comedy called *The Chapter of Accidents*, produced by George Colman at Drury Lane in 1780. Donkin describes it as "a runaway success...an odd distinction" that made Lee

“famous” (77). Long after the publication of her novel *The Recess* in 1783, Lee also had a tragedy *Almeyda, Queen of Granada* performed in 1796. Lee’s shift from comedy to tragedy may reflect the somber tone of her historical novel, but perhaps also indicates her confidence as an author near the century’s end.¹²⁶

As was common in the anti-feminist critiques of women dramatists of the period, Lee was accused by Thomas Harris¹²⁷, manager of Covent Garden, of plagiarizing her first comedy, in this case from Diderot’s *Pere de Famille* (Donkin 78, 85)¹²⁸. In her Preface to *The Chapter of Accidents*, Lee defends herself against this charge while also arguing for the kind of comedy she had written: “Sentiment was now exploded, and I therefore sought to diversify it with humour” (cited in Donkin 81). In her Prologue (read by Colman himself), Lee describes her play as “a mixt intent—Passion and Humour—low and sentiment—smiling in tears—a serio-comic play” (4). “Low” seems to mean the extensive, satirical scenes involving country characters with thick accents (tediously reproduced) revolving around Brigid, the presumptuous maid of Cecilia, the heroine, and Vane the valet, who imagine themselves marrying into a higher class, resembling the uppity servants of Griffith’s comedies¹²⁹.

The complex plot of *The Chapter of Accidents* involves two sentimental heroes, Woodville, Lord Glenmore’s son and nephew of “the Governor”, and Captain Harcourt, also the Governor’s nephew, at cross purposes in courting two women: Miss Mortimer, Lord Glenmore’s ward (whom Captain Harcourt loves though she has been betrothed to the rival Woodville), and Cecilia, the country girl whom Woodville has robbed of her

virtue, but “honorably” because he intends to marry her! As a sentimental hero, Woodville feels a strong obligation to obey his father (i.e. marry Miss Mortimer) and so is conflicted. Harcourt is less scrupulous in his designs to supplant Woodville in Miss Mortimer’s and Lord Glenmore’s favour. The serendipitous ‘accident’ that resolves the conflict is that Cecilia is actually the Governor’s daughter, thus Lord Glenmore’s niece, and thereby eligible to marry Woodville. The two older men are blocking figures also working at cross purposes; for some reason, the Governor has an aversion to Miss Mortimer without knowing her because he thinks she has been corrupted by City ways, while Lord Glenmore assumes (without having met her) Cecilia is a conniving loose woman. The intrigues of the four men are further complicated by the actions of the scheming servants, especially Vane and Brigid. The plot has some echoes of Steele’s *The Conscious Lovers* although the resolution of this play by a sentimentally fortuitous “lost child/parent found” is anticipated relatively early in the play and is not a final act surprise. In fact much of the “suspense” is about whether this information will be revealed in a timely manner. The “low” parts and the folly of the two older brothers with their harsh judgements of city vs. country life, and especially of women, could be classed as “laughing” comedy or “social drama” as Laura Brown would define it, while the interactions of the young genteel characters are clearly sentimental or “moral drama” in Brown’s terms. Lee’s comedy seems to reflect the conflict between these forms Brown describes as “transitional” (140) in her analysis of comedies written nearly 100 years earlier. Lee’s comedy eschews the entirely moral style of drama successfully developed by Elizabeth Griffith, but clings instead to an older form that attempts to encompass

competing dramatic agendas as Brown claims happened in the previous phase of dramatic development.

In spite of her trials in getting this play performed and its somewhat antiquated approach, Lee apparently recognized and exploited contemporary taste in her comedy as she notes in her Preface and Prologue and did so successfully. The economic realities for professional women writers of the period are also evident in the history of this play, for it was written in debtor's prison while Lee accompanied her destitute father there. On the other hand, the proceeds of *The Chapter of Accidents* funded her successful boarding school venture with her sister. Nevertheless, Lee's later attempt at tragedy, *Almeyda*, shared the same fate as Burney's first tragedy *Edwy and Elgiva*, both being unsuccessfully produced by John Kemble (Donkin 169). With the possible exception of Frances Brooke, it seems that a female writer of comedies and/or novels could not necessarily or easily translate her literary success into the realm of tragedy.

Like Burney's tragedies, *Almeyda* can be described as "she-tragedy," for the play centers around an innocent, virtuous but somewhat pro-active heroine, Almeyda, who does die at the end in part as a result of her own actions. The Christian Alonso, whom Almeyda loves, and the Moorish Orasmyn (son of Abdallah) vie for Almeyda's hand. The plot involves the Spanish returning Almeyda, their long-time hostage, to the Moors as part of a peace treaty. Almeyda is the legitimate successor to the throne, but Abdallah wants to marry her to his son and continue his rule. While sometimes the timid maiden in distress, Almeyda does attempt to assert herself as queen, especially at the end

when Abdallah tries to get her to abdicate. Perhaps symptomatically of sentimental “hysteria,” Almeyda goes mad for a while during the climax (when she thinks Alonso has been killed by Abdallah) but conveniently recovers her senses to scotch the villain’s plans. Lee’s tragic heroine shares the ambivalent characteristics of female assertiveness and passive vulnerability with Brooke’s Thamyris in *The Siege of Sinope*, or some of Burney’s women in distress, such as Adela in a somewhat similar context in *The Siege of Pevensey*, or Elberta in Burney’s final, incomplete tragedy.

As in her earlier comedy, Lee’s *Almeyda* tries to capitalize on contemporary fashion in drama with some “gothic” features, particularly the Jacobean flavor of this tragedy, which is, of course, also an “oriental” tale. However, these elements in *Almeyda* seem perfunctory and conventional unlike the innovative Gothicism of her most memorable novel *The Recess*. She seemed unable to transfer the originality of her fiction to the stage, possibly because the intense interiority of the novel’s narration could not be reproduced there. Nevertheless, while focusing mostly on her fiction writing in her later career (five novels, plus several other fiction projects with her sister), Sophia Lee did return to dramatic comedy in 1807, with the unpublished *The Assignment*, performed at least once at Drury Lane (Nachumi 249).

Like many of the other women authors in this study, Sophia Lee proved versatile and comfortable in several genres and apparently expected to succeed in them all. Yet, her most significant literary achievement, her novel *The Recess*, seems somewhat anomalous relative to the rest of her work in its originality. Lee arguably developed the

concept of the historical novel long before Scott and established a feminine version of the gothic novel, with its claustrophobic interiority, in advance of her boarding school pupil, Anne Radcliffe¹³⁰. It is surprising that Lee did not make a more active attempt to replicate these innovations on the stage, perhaps by attempting an English history play, for example, as Burney did, or a full-fledged gothic drama, based on a novel as Monk Lewis did. As noted above, however, the psychological orientation of Lee's novel may have precluded significant dramatic action or "special effects" on stage. The spooky confinement of the protagonists in the subterranean "recess" could have been put to good theatrical effect though.

Nora Nachumi's study of women dramatists/novelists in the late eighteenth century *Acting Like a Lady* begins its in-depth survey of these writers with Elizabeth Inchbald, the prolific dramatist who also wrote two short but significant novels, *A Simple Story* (1791) and *Nature and Art* (1796). Nachumi implies an artistic motive for Inchbald's foray into the other genre, commenting on how "Financial necessity...is not a sufficient explanation for Inchbald's determination to write novels, a practice that she initially regarded as quite unrewarding" (86).

Nachumi pursues a drama-novel link in Inchbald's work in terms of theatrical gestures, which had become a recognized set of physical manifestations of emotion in Eighteenth-Century culture. Visually depicted postures and gestures could substitute for words or even be presented in counterpoint to the words being spoken: "Inchbald repeatedly demonstrates that bodies express emotions more authentically and more

persuasively than words do alone”(80)¹³¹. Noting how the London theatres had become much larger in the late eighteenth century, Nachumi cites Mrs. Inchbald’s theatrical experience as an actress and playwright to show how “the increasing size of the stages, an emphasis on elaborate scenery and spectacle, and the use of a proscenium arch to frame the actors all challenged the performers’ ability to connect with the audience” (89). She quotes Inchbald’s comment in *The Dramatist* (in *British Theatre* Vol. 20): “Plays of former times were written to be read. Now, plays are written to be seen”(90). Applying this development to the novel, Nachumi notes that “Conduct-book writers drew on this shared knowledge [of theatrical gesture] when they discussed how young ladies ought to appear and novelists did so when they wrote fiction”(94). Nachumi adds “The general belief that Inchbald used [the actor] Kemble as a model for Dorriforth [the central character in *A Simple Story*] reinforces the sense that her novels and plays are closely intertwined” (97). This observation is supported by Gary Kelly’s observation in *The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805* that Inchbald “translated the naturalistic style of acting introduced by the Kembles into the techniques of fiction” (79).

Nachumi also relates the cult of sensibility to this analysis (102), noting how “actors like Sarah Siddons and John Phillip Kemble popularized a slower, more fluid style of acting that was punctuated with impassioned crescendos designed to illuminate the body’s capacity to experience varying degrees of emotion” that also affected the sensibility of the audience (94). Inchbald’s two novels are examined in terms of her use of expression and gesture to depict inner emotion, a skill highly developed by contemporary actors. Nachumi suggests that the earlier *A Simple Story* (1791) relied on

the correspondence of physical behavior to actual inner emotion, specifically Dorriforth's desire for Miss Milner that he cannot express verbally as her guardian and a priest, or Miss Milner's own bodily responses to his actions (99). However, in the later *Nature and Art*, Inchbald's more political Jacobin novel, this reliable correlation breaks down as the reactionary characters (both Williams) can control their physical reactions to their emotions, or even feign the socially acceptable responses (106-112).

As noted in Chapter Five of this study, Nachumi applies these theatrical observations to female performativity—"acting like a lady"—in Burney's work, *The Wanderer* in particular. Juliet's need to perform, however reluctantly, different roles under different circumstances as well as judge the performance of others anticipates the more modest but similar dilemma of Fanny Price in Austen's *Mansfield Park*. Nachumi examines the link between Inchbald's *Lovers' Vows* and the home theatricals in *Mansfield Park*, as the basis for her discussion of Jane Austen, whom she includes as a dramatist/novelist in the Appendix of her book (189). Nachumi's application of her thesis to Jane Austen dwells almost exclusively on *Mansfield Park* and its famous private theatrical episode (172). She develops the concept of "seeing double" or "divided perspective" (167) that entails a distinction between a rational and emotional response to a performance—by a character, a narrator, a spectator or a reader. Nachumi suggests that Austen challenges Inchbald's defense of drama as a means of moral instruction. Inchbald had argued that an audience's sympathetic engagement with a theatrical performance could encourage moral behaviour as a counter to the prevalent anti-theatre critique that such identification only led to vice or immorality, particularly in women, as defined by

conduct books. Nachumi claims that Austen instead promotes maintaining a critical detachment from performed emotion as exemplified in her own behavior recorded in her letters, and by Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* (165).

Fanny declines participating in the Bertrams' play, but nonetheless judges the "acting" of the other characters. A crucial reason for Fanny's critical detachment is that the other characters dangerously blur the distinction between the roles they play and their own motives and feelings. Nevertheless, according to Nachumi, Fanny, although she is "the only character in the novel incapable of acting" (165), does perform roles in "real life" when disguising her real feelings and attitudes from Sir Thomas, Edmund, et al. (165). These distinctions between kinds and qualities of social acting remind us of the similar complexity of performance in Burney's *The Wanderer*.¹³²

Nachumi employs the concept of "free indirect discourse" to describe Austen's innovative narrative technique that creates reader identification with Fanny's feelings and the illusion of the disappearance of the third-person narrator (166). Nachumi describes the reader's experience of this as a kind of "theatre of the mind," for the focus shifts from the observation of characters and events to Fanny's reaction to them (167-8) and claims her thoughts are "heard" rather than "read" (168). However, she insists Austen encourages the reader to maintain his/her critical detachment at such moments by providing a wider perspective than Fanny's that might include alternative or conflicting conclusions to the heroine's more limited assumptions or evaluations of events (particularly about herself) (169). This major development of narrative technique in the

novel, which Nachumi also detects in some of Burney's novels (see Chapter Five above), may represent a transformative fusion of theater and fiction that sets the stage, as it were, for the novel's literary dominance in the nineteenth century as well as the theatre's "generic decline" as argued by Laura Brown (208).

This study has focused upon female writers of drama and fiction in the Long Eighteenth Century because their aspirations and struggles to write for the stage seem to have also inspired many of them to transfer their theatrical insights and skills in various ways to the emerging and perhaps more female-friendly genre of the novel. However, a few male writers of the period also tried their hand at both genres. Most notably, Henry Fielding played a pivotal role in this history of genres first as a prolific (though not altogether successful) dramatist and then as one of the traditional "fathers" of the novel (Brown 207-8). Fielding's artistic-political struggles with the Walpole government in the 1730s, culminating in the Licensing Act of 1737, resemble in some ways the travails of the women dramatists documented here with critics and theatre managers. In keeping with Laura Brown's analysis in *English Dramatic Form* of the evolution of comedy from satirical to sentimental, Fielding's gravitation away from mainpiece comedies toward farce and satirical afterpieces may indicate a kind of resistance to this literary trend of the time that he later transfers to fiction by recasting the novel as "comic epic in prose." Brown notes that "surprisingly, and significantly, [Fielding's] dramatic moral actions were unsuccessful in precisely the respect in which his novelistic moral actions excel" (148)¹³³. This transfer of dramatic features to fiction seems not unlike the pattern of the mid-century women writers, like Haywood, Lennox or Brooke, who often adopted the

“theatrical” narrative approach of Fielding in their fiction, rather than the more subjective, “feminine” style popularized by Richardson and earlier writers of epistolary or amatory fiction. Besides following Fielding’s example, we have seen that the women writers also drew upon their own theatrical experience to achieve this effect in their novels.

On a more particular level, Fielding’s amusing role as Eliza Haywood’s mentor-antagonist is noteworthy as it occurs at the very time both are contributing to the “birth of the novel”—or at least its further development—as John Richetti documents in a recent article ((C) 240). Although Haywood is memorialized as “Mrs. Novel” in Fielding’s dramatic works while “F—g’s scandal shop,” his short-lived Little Haymarket theatre company, is scornfully recalled in *Betsy Thoughtless*, there appears to have been some creative synergy between them. However, Richetti suggests that Fielding would have dismissed the strength of Haywood’s best novel, its realism, as “literal-minded and vulgar” ((C) 258). Richetti grudgingly (it seems) acknowledges that “*Betsy Thoughtless* is thus crudely, sometimes powerfully, effective in isolating moments of intensity and subversively clear-eyed examinations of female fate” though “its virtues in this regard are inseparable from its limitations as a history in Fielding’s sense”((C) 258). Nevertheless, both Haywood’s late novel and Fielding’s own works of fiction seem to have inspired many women novelists from Lennox to Austen to adopt a less subjective, more theatrical perspective in the narration of their novels.

Nearly forty years prior to Fielding's embrace of prose fiction, the late Restoration dramatist, William Congreve, dabbled in the romance-amatory genre. His *Incognita, or, Love and Duty Reconciled* (1692) is one of several short pieces of fiction he wrote. This is a short romance, much in the vein of Behn's shorter works of amatory intrigue, but with a more Fielding-like narrator who chats and even jokes with the reader. Set in Italy (Florence), the plot involves two friends, Aurelian and Hippolito, from Siena, who meet and fall in love with two women, the Incognita and Leonora, at a masquerade. Aurelian needs to be under cover because he has been betrothed by his father to Juliana, a lady of Florence, as part of an effort to end a feud between two families there. Hippolito also needs to conceal himself because he is mistaken for Lorenzo who has committed the murder that triggered the feud above. As part of the concealment, the two friends swap names to the confusion of many, including their would-be lovers. After several misadventures, close calls, and lucky coincidences, the lovers are united with parental approval, especially since Incognita is revealed to be Juliana. Love and duty are thus not reconciled through character development or moral insight, but by means of the formulaic intrigue of early Restoration drama as described Laura Brown (29-31). The lovers are all seriously devoted and sincere; there is no Restoration witty cynicism here. While late Restoration drama may have evolved into more sophisticated forms as Brown suggests, Congreve seems to have considered the romance/amatory fiction of the period less developed and may have been attempting to gently satirize it in this short fiction. In any case, this important dramatist's contribution to the development of the novel seems insignificant (Brown 187), unlike the modest innovation of the single novella *The*

Adventures of a Young Lady (Olinda) by the female playwright Congreve mentored, Catherine Trotter (see Chapter Two).

Although he didn't write stage plays himself, Samuel Richardson, the other traditional "father of the novel," clearly modeled his first two novels on dramatic forms, *Pamela* following the comic formula, and *Clarissa*, the tragic, as Laura Brown and others have observed (191-193). Brown also suggests a strong relationship between *Clarissa* and Charles Johnson's failed play *Caelia* (1732), once again underlining the close relationship between the two genres in the eighteenth century (195).

The "second wave" of women dramatists/novelists throughout the rest of the eighteenth century was not replicated by the male writers of the period. Tobias Smollett did write one tragedy *The Regicide* (1749) that was not performed while Horace Walpole published his controversial "closet drama" *The Mysterious Mother* in 1768. Oliver Goldsmith, of course, stands out as a successful writer in both genres (as well as in poetry) with his popular comedy *She Stoops to Conquer* (17) and his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (17). Goldsmith also collaborated with Elizabeth Griffith on a collection of short stories. Although Richard Sheridan's mother Frances was a novelist, he did not attempt to publish fiction. At the close of the century, Monk Lewis transferred his notoriety as a Gothic novelist to the London stage with some success, *The Castle Spectre* (1797) in particular. The Gothic phenomenon inspired a number of female dramatists, such as Hannah Cowley, Joanna Baillie, and even Frances Burney, to incorporate its features into their plays. This relatively short list of male authors and works in such a

long century suggests that men were more likely to specialize in one genre or the other while women felt comfortable or ambitious enough to work in several forms. Later in the century, there is some suggestion that poetry came to be regarded as the last masculine literary bastion, with the novel, and even the drama being ceded to women.

CONCLUSION

My research reveals that in late seventeenth-century England, women achieved their initial success as professional writers in the theater, unlike in France where female literary careers were first established in fiction, by romance writers such as Madame de Scudery. Aphra Behn created this precedent in Britain by becoming a prolific and successful dramatist during the Restoration period. She was immediately followed by the “Female Wits”—Pix, Trotter, and Manley—in the 1690s, but the succession of women writers who began their careers as dramatists, or wrote for the theatre soon after attempting other genres, continued more or less unbroken throughout the entire eighteenth century. The historical statistics for this period, produced by Nora Nachumi, Ellen Donkin, and others, reveal that writing plays was a common and lucrative literary activity for women. Changes in dramatic taste and styles during this era—from Royalist to bourgeois, heroic to affective, satiric to sentimental, manners to realist—do not seem to have affected this level of female participation. Even the mid-century literary confinement of women to the domestic realm documented by Jane Spencer, Janet Todd, and many others did not diminish or deter their involvement in playwriting, as the “second wave” of such writers noted in Chapter Four attests.

Nevertheless, during this same period, the production of prose fiction increased exponentially and was largely written by and for women. Many of the writers of amatory fiction and “novels” were also the same female dramatists, sixteen in all, referred to in this study. In a revised “feminist” version of the “rise of the novel” narrative, some of

these writers figure prominently in the development of the new genre, alongside their iconic male counterparts, Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding.

My project then may be the first to survey key works in both genres by eighteenth-century English female dramatists/novelists, starting at the beginning of this literary phenomenon in the late seventeenth century and following its development to the stage addressed by Nachumi, whose recent book starts with *Inchbald*. Its goal has been to discover evidence of a creative relationship between writing for the stage and composing prose fiction, with particular attention directed to the playwrights' contribution to the "rise of the novel" in their own fiction.

The scope of this study has been limited, however, most conspicuously, by gender. While a few male writers, Fielding in particular, adapted their stagecraft to composing their works in the new genre of fiction, the unique context and circumstances of the advent of women dramatists (along with actresses, with whom they were conflated in the male-dominated public perceptions of the period) raised issues that became intrinsically relevant to the emerging novel. Most fundamental is the effect of women becoming a "spectacle" under the scrutiny of the public and male gaze, whether on the London stage, as Kristina Straub discusses in *Sexual Suspects* (1992), or as a presence in the literary world of publication. The bodies of actresses, sometimes directed by the words of women dramatists, were exposed figuratively and literally in the theatres while the "characters" of female playwrights were similarly exposed, not only by the actions and spoken words of their plays, but also in the texts of the plays that were published and

read. The latter often included direct communication between these authors and their audiences in the prologues, epilogues, and prefaces often attached to these works. As a result, women writers, especially Behn, Manley, and Haywood, often constructed defensive public personae through such communications, as Todd suggests in her *The Sign of Angellica*. In addition, Straub points out that the “specularization of players did not end when the player left the stage” (12) for they were subject to unauthorized biographies and “secret histories” of their private lives, which were still regarded as in the “public domain” (3). Female dramatists shared such scrutiny outside the theatrical venue as evidenced by Delariviere Manley’s need to publish her own autobiography to counter Charles Gildon’s unflattering portrait, or Eliza Haywood having to “disappear” as the author of her own works during the final conduct-writer phase of her career and adopt a persona while dispensing advice through her *Female Spectator*. Straub, citing Nancy Armstrong’s *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987), argues that “the trope of the ‘gaze’” extended beyond the theatre to the novel and that “specular relations in the emergence and development of the English domestic novel [reveal] an economy of ‘the gaze’ in which class and gender interact in complex ways to construct a power relationship between spectator and spectacle” (5). It is not surprising, then, that the fictitious women who are the protagonists in eighteenth-century novels written by women are similarly exposed to the “public” gaze of the reader. They are also carefully constructed subjects, perhaps designed to deflect attention from questions of “real” identity, especially one that might be associated with the author.¹³⁴

Female roles in plays, written by women and performed by actresses, challenged the established practice of male dramatists to speak on women's behalf. It is maybe not coincidental that the traditional "birth of the novel" is triggered by the co-option of female voice and identity by a man—Samuel Richardson in *Pamela* and *Clarissa*—but this literary act was preceded and followed by women fiction writers who had assumed and later perhaps attempted to reclaim this function on behalf of their sex. Many of these women could do so with some confidence because they had already established the precedent in their dramatic works in the much more demanding public forum of the theatre.

For this reason, then, I have focused my attention on women writers whose theatrical experience, in the broadest sense, appears to have informed their novel writing and consequently helped shape the new genre. This study has therefore paid attention to the question of "subject formation" and "interiority" in the female roles of the plays written by these women. These roles were certainly more numerous and are developed in more depth than they generally were in plays written by men of the period although certain male Restoration dramatists, such as Congreve, did create some interesting female characters that possibly provided models for their women counterparts to expand upon.

A second narrowing of the scope in this study has been the favoring of comedy, particularly domestic comedy, over tragedy as the most interesting bridge between drama and the novel. Some of the writers reviewed here, such as Pix, Manley, and Brooke, actually specialized in tragedy with some success, so their tragic works have merited

some attention. Nevertheless, the orientation and style of these plays that conform to contemporary conventions of affective tragedy and “she-tragedy” provided less transformable material for adaptation to the novel. There seems to have been a close relationship between this kind of tragedy and “romance” in the minds of the writers of the period, male and female, so the “heroic” and “affective” elements that held some appeal on the stage became targets of “anti-romance discourse” and satire in contemporary fiction (even “romantic” amatory fiction). Yet, most of the women writers documented in this study did attempt early and/or late in their careers to write a viable stage tragedy, often very conservative in form and content. Perhaps they imagined achieving success and recognition in this dramatic genre would validate in some way the rest of their literary endeavours and place them decisively in the literary mainstream.

Ironically, Richardson may have “scooped” his female competition in this regard as well, by “inventing” the tragic feminine psychological novel. *Clarissa* certainly captures (and indefinitely prolongs) the affective power of “she-tragedy” in the form of his novel. It is interesting that none of the female novelists, in this study, at least, chose to emulate Richardson’s tragic novel. Instead, they gravitated to the more cheerful “masculine” novel offered by Fielding, or if they remained in the more psychological, epistolary vein, they adopted the “reformed coquet” model pioneered by Trotter and Davys, which offered the more positive outcome of a salvaged heroine. Sophia Lee, late in the century, does approximate the grueling tragic decline of the female protagonist in *The Recess* as her two heroines are extinguished from history after a long struggle to

resist this fate. Lee's novel is somewhat anomalous, however, though it does anticipate, perhaps, the darker Gothic and later Romantic novels to come.

Nevertheless, it was comedy that most often followed the cultural relegation of women into more realistically depicted, bourgeois, domestic space that would become the realm of the majority of novels, especially so-called conduct-book fiction. As many commentators have pointed out, women were granted, at least in literature, some measure of stature and empowerment in the domestic context while men were likely to be more subdued and judged by their "inner moral worth" as part of the sentimental fashion. Rakes are reformed or chastened, fathers become more considerate of their sons and daughters' needs, and lovers grow more attentive to "what women want"—or, as a carry-over from Restoration intrigue comedy, foolish men are duped by clever women within the household. These gender-modifying characteristics of contemporary "mixed" comedy were transferred to some extent to the novel, although not on a large scale until the mid-century sentimental fiction of Griffith and Brooke. Instead, the amatory fiction of Behn, Manley, and Haywood, with its predatory rakes and scheming seductresses, largely resisted this trend that was being established in the theatre, and as playwrights, they wrote very few comedies in the domestic vein. This resistance might account for their subsequent falling out of critical favour, though not to the same extent that their scandalous reputations contributed to their literary demise.

Yet, the modest contribution of these authors to this emerging form of comedy was significant, particularly in their creation of enigmatic or complex female characters

with some degree of “interiority.” Behn’s *The Lucky Chance*, Pix’s *The Innocent Mistress*, Trotter’s *Love at a Loss*, Manley’s *The Lost Lover*, and Haywood’s *A Wife to Lett* all provide such characters: Julia (Lady Fulbank), Mrs. Beauclair (the “independent woman”), Lesbia and Lucilia, Belira and Olivia, and Mrs. Graspall, respectively. Of course, Behn’s undomesticated Angellica in *The Rover* had already established in that intrigue comedy the precedent of a female character with some agency and internal complexity, who can also invoke pathos without being a feminine “paragon.” Such characters were allowed to reveal a distinctively feminine interiority through frequent asides and brief soliloquies that accounted for their actions. However, in keeping with Laura Brown’s argument that the demands of Restoration dramatic form prevailed over “moral” action in the “mixed” plays of the period, the exploration of the consciousness of female subjects was usually reined in or curtailed abruptly, causing most of these plays to “fail” on London stages. Lisa Freeman, on the other hand, would describe this practice as dramatic “resistance” to a novelistic drift into subject formation, with emphasis instead on the “surfaces” of performed character on stage. Nevertheless, the experimental, or perhaps instinctive, but often tentative, delving into the minds of female characters by female dramatists of the period corresponds to equivalent forays into consciousness attempted quite early by Behn and Trotter in their fiction.

What is most surprising, however, is that there is not a consistent pattern of developing character interiority in the plays of the early women dramatists—nor is there such a pattern in their fiction either. Indeed, on the basis of the early fiction reviewed in this study, one might conclude there is a pattern of *resistance* to subject formation,

equivalent to the trend Freeman observes in the drama of the period. Most of Behn's novellas, as well as her epic *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister*, for example, eschew centre-of-consciousness narrative techniques and in-depth characterization in favour of the conventional flat characterization and intrigue plotting of romances and Restoration drama. Even the anomalous works, like *Oroonoko* and *The Fair Jilt* that feature a self-conscious narrative persona, revert to heroic or amatory norms much of the time. Pix, Manley, and Haywood preferred to narrate from detached perspectives and rely upon stock characters derived from romances and the theatre. Even the "reformed coquet" and equivalent narratives of Trotter and Davys that ostensibly construct a female subject as a vantage point, and use epistolary devices, really do not probe very deeply into the interiority of the protagonist. These writers still populate their fictions with conventional flat characters and romance/intrigue situations.

Traditional commentators on pre-novel amatory fiction like Brown, Richetti, or McKeon might contend that these writers simply did not discover how to construct psychologically realistic narratives as Richardson and later novelists would. However, the experiments of these women in their plays, as well as in some of their fiction, would suggest otherwise. My sense from this study is that at least some of the time they *chose* alternative narrative strategies to first-person subjectivity. Manley's oddly narrated "memoir," *The Adventures of Rivella*, and Haywood's take on *Pamela* in her *Anti-Pamela* are particular cases in point.

I would argue that the “first wave” of women dramatist/novelists, as a result of beginning their literary careers in the theatre, derived their narrative perspective from that source and sought to retain the theatrical form of “character” defined by Lisa Freeman as “interpretable surfaces” (27) in their fiction. The stereotypes and stock figures they inherited from Continental romances and amatory fiction provided versions of such characters that these writers could manipulate with the same ease as they did their dramatic characters. The reason for doing so may have been merely familiarity, working with material that was comfortable in either genre. On the other hand, Freeman does suggest that the resistance to subject formation in dramatic characterization may also have been directed against “ideological conformity enforced through identity formation” (1).

Numerous commentators have observed that as the eighteenth century progressed, women were subjected to “enforced identity formation” as part of the cultural shifts resulting from the rise of the middle class in England. The women writers of this study attempted to form new identities by writing for, and sometimes appearing on, the public stage, contrary to social expectations of their time—they resisted conforming to the ideological feminine identity that had existed, and perhaps more importantly, the emerging identity of the domesticated lady/ female paragon that would come to dominate the culture by the end of the century. By working in the theatre, these women had constructed and projected a literary identity for themselves in a traditional, patriarchal public arena. It would be understandable that they would retain similar “attitude” in their fiction writing, but they did so, not so much by innovating in the new genre, as by

maintaining traditional literary “standards” derived from the theatre. These standards, I suggest, upheld the conventional notion of “character,” as described by Freeman, in opposition to the emerging sentimental concept of “inner moral worth” with its resulting formation of identity in terms of “emanations of stable interiority” (27).

Perhaps out of necessity as much as conviction, the first wave of women dramatists/novelists allied itself with conservative literary standards and values, such as were being articulated by Swift, Pope, and the other self-appointed cultural guardians of the period. Ironically, the medium of “popular entertainment” (described by William Warner in *Licensing Entertainment*) in which these women sought to apply such values was perceived as the source of the worthless products of Grub-Street hacks or of degenerate “effeminate” theatre decried by these critics. Plays written by women fared little better than the amatory fiction loathed by Pope and his allies.¹³⁵ Thus, Behn and her successors perhaps were inhibited by considerations of literary self-defense from greater innovation in drama or fiction, including the exploration of interiority, and asserted their conformity to existing norms instead. However, this inhibition and resulting embrace of established conventions may have also encouraged the transfer of more traditional dramatic features to the developing novel, leading women fiction writers to follow the more “classical” model adopted by Fielding¹³⁶, instead of the more “realistic” subjective approach of Richardson.

In any case, Aphra Behn and the women dramatists/novelists who followed her in the early eighteenth century seem to have made less of a distinction between genres in

their writing than we now tend to do in compartmentalizing the study of the drama and the novel of the period. Furthermore, the practice of genre versatility continued among women writers for the rest of the century. Although many styles and values had changed, the “second wave” of these writers also shifted between genres and often succeeded in both, at least in popular, commercial terms. Elizabeth Griffith and Frances Brooke are prime examples of this phenomenon, perhaps abetted by the fashion of sentiment and sensibility that dominated both genres in mid-century. Brooke’s literary protagonist, Maria Villiers, in *The Excursion*, who carries drafts of a play, a novel, and an epic poem in her portmanteau, expecting popular and financial rewards from all of them, may best represent the attitude of young female authors of the period. Her choice of offering her tragedy for stage production as her first step not only parallels Brooke’s own experience, but that of many of the authors discussed in this study.

There appears to be no evidence, at least among the examples here, of the difficulties getting their plays staged, as documented by Donkin and others, permanently deterring these dramatists from their theatrical endeavours or consigning them to careers as novelists. The lone exception, though, is a significant one—Frances Burney.

Burney’s case could be dismissed as anomalous and idiosyncratic because her failure to achieve the success she craved in drama can be directly attributed to the destructive role her father seemed to play in her literary career, with her second “daddy,” Samuel Crisp, also a negative factor. Burney’s social rank and circle¹³⁷ was also a little higher than those of many of her female predecessors and contemporaries; unlike them,

she did not have to write to earn a living, at least until she married Alexandre D'Arblay. These factors, combined with the usual obstacles to female theatrical production, may have been enough to deter this insecure, fastidious author from the stage. Nevertheless, she was preoccupied with the theatre throughout her long life.

What we may have in the work of Frances Burney is a case of the relationship between the two genres that differs from the pattern for most of the women in this study. While writers from Behn to Brooke were able shift with some confidence between drama and fiction, transferring features of one to the other, Burney's experience was mostly one-way: she knew how to write successful novels, but received little validation of her playwriting skills. Although she too alternated between composing novels and plays, Burney may have felt compelled to sublimate her dramatic impulse into her fiction writing as Margaret Doody and Emily Anderson suggest (over the objections of Barbara Darby). As a result, Burney's novels, especially the later ones, manifest a distinctive theatrical motif that infuses the narrative in an innovative way as discussed in Chapter Five.

Nora Nachumi suggests that the key innovation found in Burney's later novels derives from a heightened sense of theatricality, the correlation between the "performance" of social and especially gender roles in "real life" with acting upon the stage. This reduction of all behavior to kinds of performance challenges the bourgeois notions of a fixed inner identity or moral worth that can be explored, at least in fiction, by depicting the "interiority" of characters. Laura Brown argues that eighteenth-century

drama tried unsuccessfully to achieve this effect while the novel became the more appropriate and effective genre for such psychological depictions. While Lisa Freeman contests this striving for interiority as the agenda of the period's theatre, she concurs with Brown's conception of the novel's development. Burney's late-century novels would seem to confirm this analysis as she explores the interiority of her main characters to an extent and depth greater than her female predecessors. The narratives by or through Evelina, Cecilia, Camilla, and Juliet create the illusion of our access to their inner consciousness, though in a number of different ways, including "free indirect discourse," as Burney experiments with her narrative technique in each succeeding novel.

Yet, Burney always maintains some measure of narrative detachment, never allowing her reader full immersion in or identification with her protagonists¹³⁸ and always reminding the reader of the social context in which her characters function. She does this in a variety of ways, the most notable being her adoption of a Fielding-like, or perhaps more accurately a Johnsonian, third-person narrative stance in her last three novels that anticipates the narrative technique of Jane Austen as Jane Spencer suggests (36). However, in her uncelebrated last novel, *The Wanderer*, Burney achieves this narrative distance in an original way—by pitting the novelistic convention of interiority against the theatrical practice of presenting "the opacity of women's exteriors" (Nachumi 144) that Freeman regards as intrinsic to the drama of the period. As discussed in Chapter Five, the reader's perception of the interiority of Juliet in *The Wanderer* consists of sharing the experience of her construction of her public identity (or identities) without knowing who she actually is for much of the novel. We watch her perform her role as

“Ellis” and other parts she must play to survive; in effect, we witness the identity formation of an actress.

While remarkably innovative in its complexity and subtlety, Burney’s approach in this novel is not without precedent. The century’s preoccupation with masquerade, documented by Terry Castle, and others cited here, inspired many narratives that dwelled upon the relationship between identity and disguise, performance and sincere behavior. In this study, we have seen its early appearance in the fictions of Behn (Sylvia’s seductive guises) or Manley (Rivella’s evasive persona), but the fuller manifestation of chronicling female performativity was found in Defoe’s *Roxanna* and Haywood’s *Fantomina* (as well as in her *Anti-Pamela*). The big difference between these models provided by Burney’s predecessors and the protagonist of *The Wanderer*, of course, is that the designs of the former characters were socially deviant (seduction, exploitation) while Juliet’s motive is to conform to social expectations, “to act like a lady” as Nachumi puts it.¹³⁹ The other well documented precedent for viewing the social performance of ladies was the prevalent subgenres of conduct books, ladies magazines (published by several authors in this study), and the resulting fiction, which preached social conformity by teaching women how to act as ladies. Burney captures both in *The Wanderer*. The novel is a dramatization of conflicting modes of female performance acted out by Juliet and Elinor Jodrell, perceived in part from the vantage point of one of the actresses, Juliet, and in part from the detached perspective of Burney’s narrator—at once a novelistic and a theatrical experience for the reader. This remarkable fusion of genres within a narrative framework can be attributed to Burney’s obsession with the theatre, and perhaps her

frustration with her lack of success in it. The cause of her theatrical failure could be reduced to the simple issue of “acting like a lady”: can a proper lady expose herself publically by writing for the stage? Her “daddies” thought not, but she was never completely convinced. A number of Burney’s commentators claim she dramatized this dilemma in her plays. I would argue she also did so in her novels, especially in *The Wanderer*.

In more general terms, Frances Burney’s work represents the culmination of the pattern of relationship between play writing and novel writing among the women authors discussed in this study. It is a pattern of conformity and resistance on the part of these writers. On the one hand, they sought to achieve literary acceptance in the paternalistic public forum of the theatre by espousing traditional literary standards and conventions, and by extending those standards into the evolving realm of prose fiction. On the other hand, they tended to resist, in their fiction, at least, feminizing trends that were developing as a result of the bourgeois fashions of sentiment and domestication—at first by the persistence of some, like Manley and Haywood, in writing political and scandalous amatory fiction. Others like Trotter and Davys generated new forms that at once conformed to new social and moral standards while still, perhaps subversively, empowering their female protagonists to some extent in “reformed coquet” and similar narratives. In the face of the literary challenge presented by Richardson’s novels, which proclaimed a male-sanctioned model for fiction appropriate for women, most of the women writers in this study responded by adopting Fielding’s contrary, more “masculine” approach to the novel, with its theatrical omniscient narrator and its

orientation to the external social world. Fielding's own roots in the contemporary theatre corresponded to the experience of many of these female writers who could more readily adapt to a novel form that reflected dramatic principles of character and plot. The entwined careers of Elizabeth Haywood and Henry Fielding (however reluctant the latter would have been to acknowledge this) are an historical manifestation of this relationship.

This pattern of resistance to social and literary expectations on the part of women writers continued throughout the century. The "second wave," especially Lennox, Brooke, and Burney, continued to write for the stage and produce novels, often in the style of Fielding, which reflected features of the theatre. Even as they conformed to conduct-book standards of lady-like behavior, they subverted them, as feminist critics have suggested, by providing alternative perspectives upon the moral action through ironic or satiric social contexts and/or detached narrative commentary. Even more subversive, however, was the theatrical implication in some of these novels that ideal feminine conduct was or could be merely performed and might not reflect the intrinsic identity of a female character. Thus, in spite of a century allegedly dedicated to subject formation through the exploration of interiority in the novel, some of the characters in the later fiction discussed in this study, particularly those of Frances Burney, remain as opaque as the glittering surfaces of the wits and coquets of Restoration drama.

ENDNOTES

¹ A similar statement at the beginning of *Oroonoko* suggests some disdain for the conventions of romance fiction, but as she opens these two late prose works of her career, Behn implies that she is moving beyond them into a more realistic narrative mode: “there being enough Reality to support it, and to render it diverting, without the addition of Invention” (*Oroonoko* 1).

² History was kinder to Behn the poet and dramatist though her plays were considered too improper to be performed in their original form in the later 18th and in the 19th Centuries (Spencer, *Behn’s Afterlife*, Todd, *The Critical Fortunes of Aphra Behn*).

³ Behn as a literary figure came to be characterized as “Astrea,” the paradigm-challenging, perhaps scandalously immoral, woman writer, successor to Sappho. In contrast, “Orinda,” Katherine Philips, also a dramatist and poet, writing prior to Behn, was idealized by authors in the late Seventeenth Century, as the modestly appropriate form of female literary activity (Spencer, *Behn’s Afterlife* 49, Todd, *The Critical Fortunes of Aphra Behn* 12). The chaste female writer tradition was carried on into the Eighteenth Century by Penelope Aubin and Jane Barker.

⁴ In fact, these writers seem to have eschewed the first-person narrative technique with its confinement to the consciousness of the usually female subject. For example, Manley’s “autobiographical” novel *The Adventures of Rivella* is not a first-person narrative but a dialogue between two men! This might be construed as a kind of resistance by these early women fiction writers to the tendency or expectation for their form of literary expression to be “exclusively conceived for private and solitary reading,” as Visconti puts it, that would correspond to the “private and solitary” experiences depicted in epistolary novels or fictional memoirs that would become the standard after Richardson’s novels.

⁵ Congreve dabbled in prose fiction with his “novel” *Incognita; or, Love and Duty Reconciled*.

⁶ Millamant in *The Way of the World*, however, seems to transcend the boundaries that ultimately contain the agency of the other Restoration heroines, even Behn’s. Unlike Hellena who surrenders her agency upon the offer of matrimony, Millamant negotiates the terms of her marriage with Mirabel in the famous “proviso scene” although as Annette Kreis-Schink points out her sphere of influence is limited to particular domestic spaces (30-31).

⁷ In Haywood’s late *Betsy Thoughtless*, for example, the love-wounded Angellica reappears as Flora Mellasin and even as late 1814 in Burney’s *The Wanderer* as the tormented alter-ego of the Ellis, Elinor Jodrell.

⁸ Bacon may also share the flawed characteristics of a “heroic malcontent”(181) with Cesario, Behn’s depiction of Monmouth in Behn’s other major novel *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister*, who also is distracted from his political purpose by love.

⁹ She immediately contradicts herself when she confronts Bacon with her proposal:

I hope you will not think it fear in me, tho’ tim’rous as a Dove by nature fram’d...that makes me seek a Reconciliation on any honourable terms of Peace. (II, i, 41)

¹⁰ The tragic-comedy *The Widdow Ranter*, being set in a New World colony doesn’t conform to this pattern but domestic space does play a role within this play. For example, the female domain of the Widow

Ranter's house is juxtaposed to the male-controlled council chamber, each with its punch bowl (Hughes 183).

¹¹ This assertion might also be ironically undercut by an alternate reading of Behn's dramatic accomplishment by Nancy Copeland, citing Misty Anderson, that Behn and her early successors created "exemplary 'women's comedies' ... linking female playwrights and intrigue comedy" (9). If Behn is responsible for creating a female category of drama, she may have, in spite of herself, set the precedent for the eventual establishment of the novel as the women's genre.

¹² It is also notable that by the end of the century, men who considered themselves serious writers had largely ceded both the stage and the novel to their female counterparts, and devoted their efforts to poetry (Todd, *The Sign of Angellica* 228).

¹³ *The Female Wits: The Triumvirate of Poets at Rehearsal* by "E.M." performed at Drury Lane in 1696.

¹⁴ This legacy was continued largely by Susanna Centlivre, but also by Eliza Haywood and Mary Davys, well into the century until the 1737 Licensing Act.

¹⁵ Powell claimed authorship of *The Imposture Defeated* performed by the rival theatre company at Drury Lane.

¹⁶ Three of her plays were dedicated to women (Kelley B xxiii) and two of them "open with women-only scenes and allow women to speak first" (Pearson 188).

¹⁷ Jacqueline Pearson describes it as a "melodramatic novel" (172).

¹⁸ Intended as a variant spelling of "inhuman."

¹⁹ *The Different Widows* (1703) being another exception.

²⁰ Lee's *Chapter of Accidents* or Burney's *A Busy Day*, for example.

²¹ Pearson does acknowledge that there are several of Pix's plays that are "unconventional" in depicting women more frequently in terms of numbers of female characters or lines spoken by them (172).

²² At one point, they imprison Arabella in a windowless room to prevent her escape. This maneuver backfires when Arabella is released by a faithful servant Eugenia and her fellow servant Gentil who create the appearance of a bloody murder in the room and suggest Cheatall might be accused of the gory crime. This intimidates him enough to neutralize his role as the villain.

²³ Cf. Burney's Miss Joyce Wilmot in *The Woman Hater* or Lydia Bennett in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

²⁴ Mrs. Flywife is an outcast from this comic resolution shouting "The devil take you all" (325) as she departs, like Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, and Cheatall opts out of the marriage game "I shall live a jolly bachelor and laugh at your indifference" (328).

²⁵ It is interesting to speculate whether Charlotte Lennox had this character and play on her mind, as well as Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, when she named Arabella in *The Female Quixote*.

²⁶ Congreve critiqued a draft of Trotter's *The Revolution of Sweden* and corresponded with her (Bakscheider 449, Kelley A 82).

²⁷ Anne Kelley regards this concern about contractual obligations as an indication of the influence of John Locke and Whig ideology in Trotter's work (A 10). Trotter's interest in legal obligations also anticipates Eliza Haywood's preoccupation with the law in her some of her fiction.

²⁸ It may have been performed only once on the London stage.

²⁹ She implies this comparison throughout her article, referring at one point to the later perceptions of "a novelized generation" represented by Mrs. Inchbald who find plays like Trotter's "more effective when read than when performed" (B) 457).

³⁰ Perhaps the "other failures" referred to in her subtitle?

³¹ Also known as *Olinda's Adventures*.

³² These may have been added to Trotter's work by someone else (Kelley A 56).

³³ Kelley cites Derek Hughes' discussion in *English Drama 1660-1700* of the 'inexpressibility of the self' and the practice in Carolingian drama of 'splitting characters in two' as "perhaps the most obvious symptom of difficulties in self-representation." (62).

³⁴ Manley wrote a dedication to her first play *Agnes de Castro*.

³⁵ In her *The Female Wits*, Fidelis Morgan sees fit to reproduce in its entirety, but without commentary, the confrontation between Wilmore and Belira in the final acts of the play, in which the confused rake vacillates indecisively between carrying out his latest amorous scheme and his lingering affections for and guilt about Belira to the point of offering his sword to her "to satisfy thy womanish revenge" (37).

³⁶ To which could be added Haywood's Mrs. Graspall in *A Wife to be Lett*.

³⁷ Trotter's *The Revolution of Sweden* (1706) and Manley's *Lucius, the First Christian King* (1717) as well as Pix's *Queen Catherine, or The Ruins of Love* (1698).

³⁸ She did not entirely abandon the theatre, however, producing *Lucius, the First Christian King* quite late in her career and life.

³⁹ Critics have pointed out how Delia and Rivella, as well as Almyra in her eponymous play, are variations on Manley's own name(s). (Pearson 190, Spencer 54)

⁴⁰ Also described as one of Rivella's adventures (107-111).

⁴¹ Rubik, however, dismisses this play as not only showing "Manley's dramatic powers to be burnt out but also her will to take a feminist stand" (66) while Pearson more generously describes it as an attempt "to follow the new modes of reformed drama in rather a Trotterian tragedy of moral indecision" (192).

⁴² Manley may have written two other plays, a tragedy *The Duke of Somerset* and a comedy *The Double Mistress* both unperformed and the manuscripts lost (Pearson 192).

⁴³ Davys, whose late husband had been a protégé of Swift in Ireland, appealed to the Dean through Esther Johnson, his “Stella” for literary and perhaps financial, support during her economic struggles as a single mother and writer in England, but her requests were largely ignored (Bowden xv). However Congreve, Gay, and later, Johnson, subscribed to her works.

⁴⁴ Mary Anne Schofield suggests Defoe and Haywood collaborated on *The History of the Life and Adventures of Mr. Duncan Campbell* (1720) (32) but this seems to have been subsequently discredited, including even Defoe’s authorship (Ballaster 167, Nussbaum 194)

⁴⁵ It is important to note that the term “novels” in Manley’s title refers to relatively short amatory fictions (or novellas in more contemporary parlance) that succeeded the much longer French “romances” in the English prose fiction of Behn and her followers. Even Haywood’s relatively long *Love in Excess* can be considered as three or more separate though related amatory tales contained in each of the three volumes, much like the format of Behn’s *Love Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister*.

⁴⁶ Blouch dismisses the claim by Jacqueline Pearson that Haywood played the role of Mrs. Novel herself. She does note though that Haywood may have been simultaneously on stage, playing the role of Briseis (the cast-off mistress) in Hatchett’s *The Rival Father* at The Little Haymarket while being depicted as Mrs. Novel at Drury Lane: “one might say she was represented every night on stage, if not in person” (liv).

⁴⁷ According to Catherine Blouch, Hatchett was Haywood’s lover and companion for thirty years, as well as possibly the father of one of her children, Richard Savage being the parent of another (xxxix).

⁴⁸ Not unusual in this period, but particularly in Haywood’s case, attributions of works are sometimes obscure, contradictory and debatable as Blouch points out in her excellent biographical introduction in the *Works of Eliza Haywood* series.

⁴⁹ Blouch contests this belief, suggesting it was promulgated by a vindictive Richard Savage (liv).

⁵⁰ Schofield suggests Haywood offers “a graduated look at love” in this play as in her novels, with Isabella and Alphonso’s relationship at the “pure” end of the spectrum (11).

⁵¹ Even though Isabella is innocent of this charge, Haywood seems to have maintained an interest in female characters who do exhibit such contradictory qualities—as late as in her *Anti-Pamela* (1741), Haywood depicts Syrena in the same terms: “... a Woman, who, had she been as much an *Angel*, as she was really a *Devil*, had not it in her power either to serve him or herself” (211).

⁵² George Whicher, Haywood’s first modern biographer in *The Life and Romances of Eliza Haywood* (1915).

⁵³ However, Richetti seems to have come around to a more favorable view of Haywood’s work in his recent criticism. Cf. “An Emerging New canon of the British Eighteenth-Century Novel: Feminist Criticism, the Means of Production, and the Question of Value” in *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel and Culture* (2005).

⁵⁴ Behn’s play would be resurrected again with much controversy later in the century by Hannah Cowley in her *The Mourning Bride: The School for Greybeards*.

⁵⁵ Haywood played this role herself during the brief run of this comedy “on the Occasion of the Indisposition of one of the Actresses” (cited in Rubik and Mueller-Zettelmann 162).

⁵⁶ In contrast, the compromised maidens in *Love in Excess*, Amena and Violetta/Fidelio, though neither fully yielded to the sexual demands of D'Elmont, are consigned, respectively, to a convent and death. The abandoned Daraxa in *The Fair Captive*, who has yielded her favours to Mustapha, suffers a similar fate.

⁵⁷ Melantha's similar substitution of herself for Melliora in *Love in Excess* nearly backfires though D'Elmont consummates the transaction before discovering the deception.

⁵⁸ The original manifestation of such a cynical ending is in Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675). In Behn's play, the chastened and resigned Sir Cautious Fulbank suggests a dance that would include the impotent "greybeards" and unsuccessful suitors as well as the successful ones.

⁵⁹ This prologue was "spoken by the Author" who also played the leading role (cf. Note 7).

⁶⁰ Both Schofield (13) and Rudolph (xiii) note the Restoration comedy features (combined with sentimental aspects) in this play. There seems to be a particular debt to Congreve's *The Way of the World* in the "contract scene" between Gaylove and Celemena and the duping of the Lady Wishfort-like Widow Stately into marriage by a servant disguised as a nobleman, who takes on the title of "Sir Tristram Shamtown"! Could Sterne have been inspired by this relatively obscure drama?

⁶¹ There are echoes of *The Taming of the Shrew* as well as some Jacobean city comedies here.

⁶² Manley's rakes, according to Warner, use erotic reading as a means to arouse and seduce innocent women as in the case of Charlot in *The New Atalantis*. By making such reference to reading romances or novels, Manley is incorporating into her fiction the very criticism of the deleterious effects of novel reading her own work was publically subjected to (108). In Haywood's case, Warner claims her purpose in such scenes is to "defend the reading and writing of novels" by having characters like Melliora (116) sternly expound upon the merits of not reading fiction about love while becoming all the more charming and attractive as they do it! (116)

⁶³ Hughes notes that "the decorum of the stage prohibits the complex representation of sexual conduct that we find, for example, in Richardson. The comedy [in his anthology] which perhaps deals most with sexual danger is Eliza Haywood's *A Wife to be Lett*. (xxiii)

⁶⁴ In contrast to her very public persona during the 1720s and 1730s, Haywood elected for anonymity in the publication of *Betsy Thoughtless* and *Jemmy and Jenny Bessamy* probably because her scandalous reputation would have undermined her new moralistic stance in these novels ().

⁶⁵ The first collection of her works was published in 1732.

⁶⁶ Sarcastically referred to later as "Mr. F-----'s scandal-shop" in Haywood's *Betsy Thoughtless* (45).

⁶⁷ It has also been noted that Fielding's comedy *The Modern Husband* (1732) is indebted to Haywood's *A Wife to Lett* (and Behn's earlier version) for the wife-renting plot. Fielding's married couple, the Moderns, however, both lack "love or honor," in contrast to the one-sided moral deficiency in Haywood's play (Rudolph xiv).

⁶⁸ Blouch explores the role Savage played as "a Kind of Confederate. . .suspected of supplying [Pope] with private Intelligence and secret Incidents; So that the Ignominy of an Informer was added to the Terror of a Satirist" (Samuel Johnson cited in Blouch xlix). The attack on Haywood in Pope's mock epic may have been in part the result of a lovers' quarrel!

⁶⁹ See Note 3 above.

⁷⁰ Pope apparently also had a more personal reason for his venom, an attack on his friend, Lady Henrietta Howard by Haywood in her *History of the Present Intrigues of the Court of Carimania* (Schofield 82).

⁷¹ Manley's *The Female Tatler* is the competitor for this title (Blouch, Note 134 lxxi, Spedding 195).

⁷² Haywood's use of her favorite punctuation in this excerpt recalls the breathless strings of dashes in her fiction!

⁷³ Of course, only some women writers did so. Others like Penelope Aubin and Jane Barker followed in the more discreet footsteps of Katherine Phillips and remained out of the limelight.

⁷⁴ Fielding's lampoon also includes Colley Cibber and his self-promoting publications as its target, however. (Ingrassia 25)

⁷⁵ Syrena, like Pamela, is attracted to her seducer (and in this case, her intended victim) and surreptitiously continues to meet with Vardine without informing her mother.

⁷⁶ Ingrassia suggests that Haywood's novella might be considered an "anti-conduct book" or even "a conduct book for women interested in transgressing convention" (36), a suitably ironic commentary on the didactic moralism attributed to its satirical target *Pamela*.

⁷⁷ Janet Todd, writing in 1989 (*The Sign of Angellica*) seems unaware of the scale of this second wave: "In drama they had less success than in the earlier period, perhaps because the novel now seemed the obvious route for the impecunious woman and perhaps because the theatre was less in flux than before and so less open to women" (135). She does acknowledge, however, that "they were still a force here and they wrote far more plays than they would in the nineteenth century" (ibid.)

⁷⁸ Of course, the fallacies of traditional romances are more in keeping with Cervantes' original work.

⁷⁹ Arabella's "coquetry" is more like the obsessive character trait of a humours comedy, which is revealed largely through her dialogue with others. The reader's response to her folly is mediated through the reactions of the other characters, especially her persistent suitor, Mr. Glanville. His critical perspective of Arabella's delusions pretty much coincide with that of the reader and narrator, all three a de facto "audience" responding to her (unselfconscious) performance.

⁸⁰ Nachumi claims "the vast majority of women novelists who were actresses/playwrights began their careers in the theatre" (69).

⁸¹ Donkin theorizes that Garrick got the idea of cultivating female playwrights as a result of promoting benefit night performances of company actresses like Mrs. Clive and Susanna Cibber (30).

⁸² A review of Nora Nachumi's extensive Appendix of British Women Novelists and the Theatre 1660-1818 turns up under 50 tragedies (excluding closet dramas) for the whole period, the majority clustered at either end (Pix, Trotter, and Manley around 1700 and Inchbald, Baillie and others after 1800).

⁸³ However, one might argue there is a persistent effort to lean towards the latter, i.e. indulge in some social satire while maintaining the decorous atmosphere of the former in plays by women and men, as in Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, for example.

⁸⁴ Donkin claims he played a similar role with Burney ten years later, page 150.

⁸⁵ This response contrasts with Courteney's more definitive support in response to his sister (Harriet)'s self-doubt ("I was afraid my flight from my Aunt had exposed me to your suspicions") in *The Sister*: "I know your motives; they free you from all blame" (28). (However, he still urges her to return to their Aunt.)

⁸⁶ Perry and Carlile claim that Harriet is "wiser, wittier, and more observant and vocal in the play than Henrietta is in the novel" (xxii), perhaps to maintain her role as a "wit" in the comedy of manners.

⁸⁷ Johnson is reported by Boswell to have rated Lennox highest among several female authors he knew, which is somewhat testily noted by Burney in her *Diaries and Journals* (324).

⁸⁸ The year previous she began her publishing career with a periodical *The Old Maid* (Backscheider and Cotton xlvi).

⁸⁹ Riccoboni was an actress as well as a novelist, who is considered a significant influence on the development of the epistolary novel: "her dramatic experience contributed to her novels' energy and movement" (Backscheider and Cotton xvii).

⁹⁰ The recurrence of Pope's model for Belinda in *The Rape of the Lock* in the drama and fiction by women of the mid-eighteenth century may be a study in itself!

⁹¹ This is another recurring name in women's fiction and drama, cf. Burney's *The Woman-Hater*, that seems to be often applied to someone returning from the colonies.

⁹² Rivers rhapsodizes about the important role of the English country gentleman, p.342.

⁹³ Johnson's role in encouraging the "second wave" of female dramatist/novelists from Lennox to Burney seems to have been very significant and worth further study. Oliver Goldsmith was also something of a colleague/mentor to Griffith.

⁹⁴ These characteristics, of course, would apply to the admirable men in Brooke's fiction, especially those in *Emily Montague*, and drama.

⁹⁵ Lady Bridget is the typical "bluestocking" comic figure that Burney would recreate as Lady Smatter in two of her comedies.

⁹⁶ Mrs. Winnifred is another caricature of a woman out of her proper realm, like Lady Bridget, for she has an intense interest in politics and history and discusses domestic events in terms of these matters.

⁹⁷ Curiously, the female characters are more vicious than the male, in particular the Marchioness and Mrs. Beaumont (who repudiates her first set of children) although Lady Straffon .

⁹⁸ Ironically, Woodville experiences a kind of fever, the result of a fall from his horse en route to the Marchioness, which causes him to see the light and remain loyal to his wife (214-5).

⁹⁹ Sabor points out that four of Burney's plays "had a public existence of some kind" (xxi), adding the recently performed *A Busy Day* to the list.

¹⁰⁰ The ludicrous details of this performance have been well documented by Sabor, Doody, Donkin et al. including Burney herself in her *Journals and Letters* although Sabor also notes the reviews weren't all bad (xv). Burney finally achieved some posthumous validation as a dramatist with the highly successful London productions of her comedy *A Busy Day* in 1994 and 2000 (Wallace 56).

¹⁰¹ The history of Burney's posthumous literary reputation is unusual in that she achieved recognition first as a diarist and journal writer, and only much later as a significant novelist. The discovery and reclamation of her dramatic works was initiated by Joyce Hemlow in 1950 but the plays did not receive real critical attention until Margaret Doody's study in 1988 (Wallace 55).

¹⁰² This seems especially true in her effort to salvage the tragedies as performable dramas. Darby does, however, deploy theatrical terminology like "blocking" "movement" and "space" in her analysis of the plays.

¹⁰³ Doody finds many anagramic variants of "elle"—the generic female—in the various pseudonyms adopted by Burney's heroines (40).

¹⁰⁴ Burney comments in her journal how enjoyed playing Huncamunca in a domestic performance of Fielding's farce *Tom Thumb* (*JL*)

¹⁰⁵ She adds that Madame Duval is like the traditional "stage dame" who is still a burlesque presence in contemporary media (50).

¹⁰⁶ The potential conflict here between Doody's notion of "masculine" farce as Burney's model and the perhaps more "feminine" mode of "genteel comedy" may be resolved in the role of her epistolary narrator. The scenes Evelina witnesses are derived from genteel comedy but the tone of her private observations is farcical.

¹⁰⁷ Darby's suggestion that "showing" or "witnessing" (186) female experience on stage is the attraction the theatre has for writers like Burney over narrative representation is echoed by Nachumi (referring to Inchbald) "that bodies express emotions more authentically and more persuasively than words do alone" (80).

¹⁰⁸ Richard Sheridan is reported to have been ready to produce any play Burney wrote "unsight, unseen" (cited in Doody 72).

¹⁰⁹ Cecilia, the most genteel person in the house, abstains from eating, however, and asks for "pen and paper" instead (79).

¹¹⁰ Burney burned all her literary efforts, including a play and the prototype novel of *Evelina* when she was 15 years old ("To Doctor Burney" Dedication in *The Wanderer* 8).

¹¹¹ Burney reports the unease of Samuel Crisp among others about Mrs. Delvile's role, and the ambivalent nature of the outcome of the novel (*JL* 178-9).

¹¹² Both Nora Nachumi, who discusses it in her chapter on Austen (166) and Margaret Doody, who calls it 'style indirect libre' and detects it as an important element in *Camilla* (257), also identify this narrative technique as innovative and significant contribution to the development of the novel. Nachumi's concept of this technique is derived from John Dunsinger's definition—"a hybrid form of direct and indirect discourse"—that creates the illusion of the disappearance of the third-person narrator (166). Nachumi describes the reader's experience of this as a kind of "theatre of the mind" as the focus shifts from the

observation of characters and events to [a character's] reaction to them (167-8), claiming her thoughts are "heard" rather than "read" (168).

¹¹³ Doody seems to echo the notion of showing or witnessing in her use of the term "mimetic" (A 302).

¹¹⁴ Anderson does not include Cecilia's "climactic insensibility" (or Evelina's "swoons") because it is not deliberate or calculated although one might conclude it has the same theatrical effect.

¹¹⁵ This theatrical context of insensibility may be paralleled internally, at least in some of the characters in the novels, by the psychological process of "abjection" as described by Julia Kristeva in her "Powers of Horror" article (1982).

¹¹⁶ The previous chapter is curiously titled "A Spectacle," perhaps referring to the corpse of Bellamy that Camilla uncovers, even though the narration is consistently lodged in Camilla's delusional consciousness throughout, so she is actually the "spectacle" of abjection here.

¹¹⁷ The play was read aloud by Burney who was horrified, professing the work was 'dreadful! A story of so much atrocious and voluntary guilt' (Doody 184).

¹¹⁸ Burney also offered this play to John Philip Kemble who accepted it for performance at Drury Lane in 1793, but she withdrew it in favour of *Edwy and Elgiva* because she thought it was more "dramatic" (Sabor 7).

¹¹⁹ *Edwy and Elgiva* opens in a "Magnificent gothic Chamber" (15), and Elgiva's apartment is accessed through a secret passage from the council chamber.

¹²⁰ Sarah Selih also observes Sir Sedley's "theatrical persona" (43) as a libertine/fop, which she claims he briefly abandons for his "natural courage" when he rescues Camilla from rearing horses (*Camilla* 404).

¹²¹ *The Woman-Hater* and *A Busy Day* were written during the same period, 1800-1802, so which comedy is "the last" is debatable. Sabor favors the latter in his collected edition, but Doody chooses the former.

¹²² *Northanger Abbey* was first published in 1818, but was initially conceived in the late 1790s when *Camilla*, which Thorpe disparages but Catherine Morland is aware of though not read, appeared.

¹²³ Elinor's behavior is yet another re-enactment of the "unconscious" actions of Cerulia, who succeeds in dying dramatically before her ex-lover Hubert and his preferred mate, Geraldine.

¹²⁴ Nachumi alludes to the contemporary debate about whether an actor such as Garrick actually feels what he portrays. She believes that Burney like her father did not believe this to be so, and cites the famous "tear scene" in the Letters and Journals where a young lady is able to cry upon demand (127).

¹²⁵ Selih finds evidence of this in the extended debate between Harleigh and Elinor (witnessed by Juliet) about the existence of the soul (*The Wanderer* 781-794).

¹²⁶ Ironically, the performance dates of Lee's comedy and tragedy roughly coincide with the failed attempts in each genre by Burney.

¹²⁷ Harris sordid relationships with female dramatists include the attempted rape of Mrs. Inchbald according to Donkin (112).

¹²⁸ Donkin also documents the derivation of another contemporary play, *The Heiress*, by the male dramatist, John Burgoyne, who acknowledged the borrowing without public censure. Of especial interest to this study, is Donkin's tracing this play back to Lennox's *Henrietta* (85).

¹²⁹ There is also the presence of "blacks" from the Indies who are the "slaves" of the nabob, Governor Harcourt, much like the unseen 'Mungo' in Burney's *A Busy Day*.

¹³⁰ Radcliffe's attendance at the Lees' school is disputed by her biographer, Rictor Norton.

¹³¹ Lisa Freeman covers this aspect of eighteenth-century acting in her discussion of theatrical "points" (32).

¹³² *The Wanderer* was published just two years before *Mansfield Park*, so a case could be made for the one inspiring the other in this regard. Austen's heroine's name might take on some significance as well!

¹³³ Brown observes the plot and character relationships between Fielding's last novel, *Amelia*, and what she regards as his best full-length comedy, *The Modern Husband* (206).

¹³⁴ Even Behn's narrative personae in *Oroonoko* and *The Fair Jilt* are regarded as distinct from her "real" identity, whatever that was.

¹³⁵ Pope, Gay, and Arbuthnot co-authored the comedy *Three Hours After Marriage* (1716-7) that lampoons, among other things, female playwrights (Freeman 71).

¹³⁶ Fielding, like his female colleagues, was also steeped in dramatic tradition and also transferred aspects of his theatrical experience to his novels.

¹³⁷ However, as noted previously, Dr. Johnson served not only as Burney's literary mentor or supporter, but also in a similar role for a number of the mid-century dramatists/novelists covered in this project.

¹³⁸ Laura Brown considers such identification "between audience and protagonist" typical of the moral drama and fiction at the end of the century (xvi). Burney like many of the authors in this study appears to resist this tendency.

¹³⁹ Elinor Jodrell represents perhaps the kind of unladylike acting found in previous amatory fiction.

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