

“SISTERS OF THE PEN”: RESTORING WOMEN TO EARLY MODERN THEATRE  
HISTORY PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE

by

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## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: “Sisters of the Pen”: Restoring Women to Early Modern Theatre History Pedagogy and Practice

This dissertation looks at current theatre historiography in terms of pedagogy and performance practices on the topic of early modern (seventeenth century) female dramatists, via select dramatic works of Elizabeth Cary, Viscountess Falkland; Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle; and Aphra Behn. As early modern feminists, Cary, Cavendish, Behn, writing in different eras of the seventeenth century, each impacted theatre historiography by providing their unique perspectives on the roles of women in their times. Each of these women have a substantial history of *literary* study extending back decades; however, current practices in the areas of *theatre* history and *theatre* production minimize or dismiss the dramatic contributions of these women, generally for reasons pertaining to gender, and as such, there has been considerable oversight in the theatrical field as a result. Additionally, this study looks at the social contexts of the seventeenth century and later as a means of addressing issues pertaining to early modern female authorship and why these women have been so neglected as dramatists according to genre. Furthermore, it identifies and examines some of the feminisms evident in their dramatic works, and how said feminisms can contribute to current discourse on theatre history pedagogy and performance. The objective of this study is to reiterate the necessity of revising current theatre pedagogical and performance canons to include these women

as a means of further understanding their individual milieus by recontextualizing their work as *part of*, rather than *separate from*, theatre historiography and practice. In doing so, the hope is to continue advocacy for the importance of a more inclusive feminist theatre historiography and, subsequently the need for revisions to the dramatic canons.

This dissertation includes previously published material.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

*“If I must not, because of my Sex, have this Freedom, but that-you will usurp all to your selves I lay down my Quill, and you shall hear no more of me, no not so much as to make Comparisons, because I will be kinder to my brothers of the Pen, than they have been to a defenseless Woman.” –Aphra Behn*

NB: This dissertation has retained primary document original spelling and grammar.

When I was 19 and an undergraduate at Connecticut College in New London, Connecticut, I took a course called “British Stage Comedy” taught by the late Dr. Gerda Taranow. Of the many plays we read that semester, the one that impacted me the most was *The Rover* (1677) by Aphra Behn. It was the mid-1990s, and Behn, I later learned, was enjoying a resurgence in popularity as the subject of renewed academic interest as a feminist, seventeenth century *female* playwright. My interest in Behn and Restoration comedy persisted for years following that course; she was the focal point of a master’s thesis over a decade after I graduated college in 1999, and of course when I was hired to teach theatre history as an adjunct instructor at a small community college in Iowa, there was no question about assigning *The Rover* to my own students.

As the years progressed and two years of graduate school turned into ten, using Behn as the subject for my research was a foregone conclusion. I learned the shocking truth was not until I was almost 40 and well into a PhD program in theatre: Aphra Behn was *not* the first female playwright. In fact, Behn is simply the most recognized, largely because she was the first *professional* female playwright *publicly* produced. I found

myself considerably chagrined to discover women such as Hrosvitha of Gandersheim (a German nun who predates Behn by *centuries*) and Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz, a Spanish contemporary of Behn's, who wrote plays in New Spain (i.e. Mexico) while doing preliminary work preparing to serve as the graduate assistant for a theatre history class. Needless to say, this was a rather large epiphany.

It simply never occurred to me to question why Behn was the first (and only) woman playwright to appear in my own course of study until recently. Once down that rabbit hole, I began to investigate seventeenth century female authorship in further detail, until I uncovered the work of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, who was writing plays *decades* before Behn. I already had a passing acquaintance with Susanna Centlivre, and the Female Wits (Mary Pix, Delarivier Manly, and Catherine Trotter), but as these women were primarily writing after Behn in the 1700s, they were of less interest to me as they are only occasionally grouped with the Restoration playwrights, although they had never been the subjects of my coursework in Restoration and eighteenth-century dramatic literature.

I began to ruminate on *why* it took me so long to encounter any seventeenth century female playwrights beyond Behn. A few years after recognizing Cavendish, a chance inquiry about Elizabeth Cary, Viscountess Falkland put her on my radar as well, and with it, several questions about current theatre history pedagogy began to solidify: *Why are these women not included as a matter of fact in most theatre history courses? Why is it that the most contact I have ever had with any of these playwrights—including Behn—came via courses in English literature rather than theatre history? Why is there such a stringent division between university English classes where students read plays as*



*literature and not as performance, and theatre courses where students read plays as performance and not as literature? Why is there no such thing as a feminist theatre historiography, in spite of decades worth of advocacy from prominent feminists also working in the theatre?* Ultimately, the questions began to resolve themselves as issues regarding current pedagogical practices that seem to reinforce not only the strict divide between disciplines and literary canons, but also a divide within the canons themselves: one that relegates women playwrights prior to the twentieth century to their own separate academic bubble, only discussed in depth when offered as an advanced class or graduate seminar. Current undergraduates are taught a version of theatre history that seems to rely on (largely) unintentional methods of division and exclusion that do not present the whole picture: namely that women have more or less *always* actively engaged with the theatre (although extant records are spotty at best prior to the seventeenth century), just as feminisms have *always* existed, even if it took centuries to *name*. If this is the case (and it is likely that it is), then trivializing, tokenizing, outright ignoring the contributions of these women is a disservice to the educational process of theatre history.

Additionally, I began to seriously question why it was that these female-written plays were rarely—if ever—produced, let alone in large-scale productions outside of academia. Sue-Ellen Case writes that, “[d]uring the period from 1660 – 1720, over sixty plays by women were produced on the London stage – more than from 1920 – 1980,”<sup>2</sup> the majority of which were written by either Aphra Behn or Susanna Centlivre, and yet the names of Behn and Centlivre still reside in relative obscurity beyond the occasional mention in academia. For most, feminist theatre historiography does not begin until the twentieth century, where Susan Glaspell’s *Trifles* (1916) and *Machinal* (1928) by Sophie

Treadwell, along with the occasional play by Lillian Hellman still see moderate production rotation and are generally covered in most theatre history courses. Given these questions regarding theatre history pedagogy and practice, this study looks at current historiographies with the intent of addressing the lack of inclusion of early modern female playwrights in theatre-specific history courses outside of English departments as well as the scarcity of twenty-first century production of these plays. Furthermore, the focus will narrow from general theatre pedagogy to highlighting three seventeenth century female playwrights: Elizabeth Cary, Margaret Cavendish, and concluding with a more in-depth look at Aphra Behn. I have identified these three women as integral to the study of specifically western theatre historiography largely because of their currently untapped potential to contribute to their individual contexts of *English* theatre during the seventeenth century.

A survey of recent literature (past five years), unfortunately, reveals that minimal work has been conducted on this era of British theatre as a whole, aside from a few scattered pockets here and there. However, a significant amount of work has been conducted on early modern female authorship in the last three and a half decades—as part of *English literature studies*—enough to form a solid foundation of relatively contemporary research on the interplay between women in the public sphere in late seventeenth century England and the perception of gender and identity as they relate to theatre pedagogy and performance. Although there is a distinct danger with transposing twenty-first century gender ideologies onto the seventeenth century, it is my belief that this period, as a time of great flux within the discourse of public gender performance, is able to withstand scrutiny through a contemporary lens.

Pat Gill's work, *Interpreting Ladies: Women, Wit, and Morality in the Restoration Comedy of Manners* (1994), examines the plays and writings of George Etherege, William Wycherley, William Congreve, and Aphra Behn with the objective of studying the intersection of gender and morality on the Restoration stage. In particular, it is the unlikely conflation of the frequently lascivious content of the Restoration comedies with the very gendered expectations of virtue and morality in both the female players and those women in the audience, where "knowledge, especially sexual knowledge, is a gendered acquisition: only men are properly in possession of it."<sup>3</sup> This immediately sets up multiple binaries dividing men from women, public and private, and virgins from whores. Gill adds that her interest lies "in the dramatists' moral defense of their plays or, more precisely, in the social and linguistic discomfort with and outside the plays that makes a moral defense necessary,"<sup>4</sup> where said "defense" is primarily that which sets the English masculine identity—(relatively) conservative and aristocratic—against the satirization of the posturing and pretensions of the rising middle/merchant class and the Continental "foppishness" of France.

Gill examines the newly emerging presence of women in this public sphere against this backdrop as both theatrical protagonists (actress and author) and spectator, linking issues of moral convention with an historical overview of events. She suggests that the language employed by the playwrights in question serves as evidence of a general male discomfort or anxiety with the presence of women in this public arena, focusing on their disquiet toward matters of female honesty, duplicity, and sexuality. This is demonstrated, according to Gill, via the overwhelming preoccupation with the fear of cuckoldry and female hypocrisy, where the "future prospect of a revitalized status quo is

set up in contrast with the debased, satirized status quo of the world of the plays.”<sup>5</sup> She employs Freud’s theories of “obscene wit,” where obscenity and lewd jokes within the play become a way in which to reassert male privilege and dominance over women, whereas women who venture into this masculine sphere of *knowing* are subjected to scathing ridicule and are frequently compared to common whores. Gill explains that “the closer female characters come to behaving like rakes—the more seductive their speech and actions—the more threatening they are to traditional notions of masculine social and rhetorical power,”<sup>6</sup> thus the *female* wit—whether she be actress, author, or spectator—began to pose a unique danger to seventeenth century British society.

Here, I believe, the term “monstrous feminine” is eminently applicable: women were escaping the previously inscribed boundaries of the private sphere of domesticity and began making their entrée into the public, which, as Gill documents, was seemingly fraught with male contradiction: men who were both appalled and enthralled by the emergence of women gaining a kind of sexual agency by proclaiming their own desire. It is this masculine discomfort in the sexually realized woman that engendered the presence of a widening gap between the sexes, and reinscribed the dichotomy between the virgin and whore archetypes, painting all *knowing* women as divergent from the social norm.

Virginia Ogden Birdsall’s older work *Wild Civility: The English Comic Spirit on the Restoration Stage* (1970) is, perhaps, a product of its time, being less concerned with (the now more popular) feminist approach to gender representations in Restoration theatre, and more concerned with the prevailing topic of the masculine identity that Gill suggests as the counterpoint to the discomfort raised by the linguistically facile woman. As such, Birdsall’s attention to the masculine identity of the “Rake-hero” in the works of

Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve is a necessary examination in how the Restoration stage represented the masculine ideal. She asks the question of whether these comedies should be “accepted ... as faithful representations of the life of the times” as a “social [study] in ‘manners’” or if the plays should be viewed as “intellectual studies in cynicism and disillusion,”<sup>7</sup> stating that while these plays “do not fit comfortably” with those of the previous era (namely those of Shakespeare), they should not be considered “mavericks” within the English theatre tradition.<sup>8</sup> It is within this seemingly dissonant view of English theatre that Birdsall proposes her analysis, that the English Restoration comedy, beneath its veneer of manners and polite society, continues the *English* theme of a “lord of misrule,” where “social or moral authority is gleefully and triumphantly challenged” via the creation of the “rake-hero.”<sup>9</sup>

What ensues is virtually a character study where Birdsall superimposes her iterations of the rake-hero—player, vice, and libertine—on to various plays by Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve, and places them in contrast with various French plays to highlight the differences between seventeenth century English and French comedic ideologies.<sup>10</sup> The question then becomes *Why/how is this relevant?* to my own proposed line of research. Birdsall essentially creates a template, as it were, of one way in which the “English comic spirit” manifests in Restoration comedy with regard to the *masculine* identity. By examining and evaluating the role of the *masculine*, it becomes possible to extrapolate the ways in which the *feminine* identity emerged as both counterpoint and subversive to the social expectations of the time. However, it is important to keep in mind that Birdsall was writing at the cusp of the second wave feminist movement in the United States, prior to feminism as a generally accepted critical theory, conceivably suggestive

of why her work focuses on the *masculine* comic spirit, and less inclusive of representations and manifestations of the same spirit within the female characters. This is not to say that Birdsall is dismissive of the female contribution to comedy; rather that her text is specifically situated toward the masculine within the constructed gender binary.

When discussing gender representations on the Restoration stage, it would be extremely remiss to ignore the development of *private* versus *public* with regard to their impacts on theatrical performance as well as personal identity. This conflation of public and private identity is paired with other performed selves in Cynthia Lowenthal's book *Performing Identities in the Restoration Stage* (2003), paying particular attention to the shifting roles of women on and off the Restoration stage. She writes that "In these moments, the double-bind of female identity, in particular, exceed the theatrical space, for women's sexuality was never authorized to be a public spectacle,"<sup>11</sup> and yet so many Restoration plays do just that, where the "degree to which the 'natural' and the 'performative' were intermingled."<sup>12</sup> She describes how identity at this time, while largely centered on the "traditional triad" or "race, class, and gender," offers an alternate focus for those in the theatre, where "bodies were valorized when they were aristocratic, male, and Protestant, while the most intensely performative, aggressively veiled, and oft 'discovered' bodies were always those of women."<sup>13</sup>

Lowenthal's book breaks up her discourse on identity by framing it within "four sites ... that seek to support, subvert, or regulate status, national, and gender identities,"<sup>14</sup> cataloging them as Imperial, National, Discursive, and Monstrous, because each "offer up very strong object lessons in the way identity both exceeds and moves within ... normative categories."<sup>15</sup> Each of her sites identifies and problematizes select Restoration

plays through an examination of how the various identities are created via external influence. Her chapter on “Imperial Identities” offers an examination of European aggression through colonization “in both its global and domestic forms” with gender playing an integral part within the conquest narratives.<sup>16</sup> “National Identities” studies the impact of the emergent merchant class with regard to how they are depicted on the stage, with a focus on “external markers of identity,” such as “clothing, gestures, [and] accents,” where these indicators were “deployed” by Restoration playwrights in an effort to “secure a desired Englishness for men [within] the contexts of status and gender.”<sup>17</sup> The fourth chapter, titled “Discursive Identities” looks at the ways female identity was codified on and off the stage by means of the “new print culture that [helped] to form and simultaneously undermine conceptions of the female self.”<sup>18</sup> Lowenthal’s final site, “Monstrous Identities,” is an investigation into the dramatic tensions of excess and sexual assault that are prevalent in many Restoration play. She states that “On the surface ... the [monster] figure would seem to present an attempt to contain the male identity ... A deeper examination ... reveals the way the monster serves and an attempt to contain female identity through the use of excessive violence and aggression.”<sup>19</sup> While the chapters on Imperial and National identity are certainly applicable to my own line of inquiry, they are tangential and less relevant than the two that focus on Discursive and Monstrous identity, as both are more closely related to the notions of public versus private, and alienable versus inalienable commodities with a focus on performed identity.

Annette Kreis-Schinck’s text, *Women, Writing, and the Theatre in the Early Modern Period: The Plays of Aphra Behn and Suzanne Centlivre* (2001) asks the question “Why does a knowledge of traditional history of drama always exclude and

repress a knowledge of women dramatists,” and positions her response using the works of Aphra Behn and Susanna Centlivre within the framework of their male contemporary writers.<sup>20</sup> She is careful to acknowledge that neither Behn nor Centlivre were the first women to venture in the world of public writing, justifying her focus by examining the “conditions that rendered possible Behn’s and Centlivre’s large oeuvres,”<sup>21</sup> making the claim that they “personify the high-water mark of women’s early contributions to the history of drama,”<sup>22</sup> and as such, though “their names may be familiar, their work is not”<sup>23</sup> further addressing this shocking gap in the study of theatre history. Behn, the more familiar of the two, is usually identified (when she is at all) via her play *The Rover* (1677), while the remainder of her work is still largely ignored. Still, Behn tends to generally (at least within the past three decades) garner a mention as a prolific writer of her time, second only to John Dryden, while Centlivre, who was at least as prolific in her writing some years after Behn, remains mostly anonymous. Kreis-Schinck identifies these oversights as a primary reason why she chose to undertake this particular subject.

Similar to a play, Kreis-Schinck has structured her text into five “acts,” each identifying, problematizing, and discoursing on aspects of female sexual behavior and states of being, where Act I regards marriage; Act II: divorce; Act III: widowhood; Act IV: affairs; and Act V: abstinence. She states that her reasoning behind this is because the “focus on the interior of the home is one of the reason for the emergence of women actors and playwrights” and therefore by highlighting the “roles and patterns of behavior available to them” in the home, a correlation emerges between “home” and “theatre,” where these same positions of a women in society was also “reflected in and influenced by [the] theatrical space.”<sup>24</sup> Consequently, using Kreis-Schinck’s reasoning, the gendered



duality of “home” (private) and “theatre” (public) where female authorship is concerned becomes abundantly evident.

Each of Kreis-Schinck’s “Acts” contain multiple “scenes,” in which she parses the theme in terms of social constructs of the time before she relates it to the work of Behn and Centlivre. By grounding each Act within the social, political, and economic zeitgeists of the time, Kreis-Schinck provides a complex backdrop against which each of her scenes are enacted. Thus, Act I, which examines how marriage functioned in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, provides the reader with a deeper understanding of the social norms Behn and Centlivre were working within and against within their writing and on a professional level. Given the amount of information about both women that are never covered or touched upon in most curricula, these backdrops are immensely critical to the understanding the conditions surrounding female authorship. Such a thing is now, in the twenty-first century, taken for granted that a woman can write publicly with impunity, so understanding the battle (as it were) is crucial to the understanding of where we come from. Kreis-Schinck’s Acts further limn the roles that women play between house and stage, linking domesticity with performance in a quite original way. She seems to suggest stronger ties between gender and performances, and indeed, references the seminal work of Judith Butler in support of this argument, by asking how the representations of women on the stage—married, divorced, widowed, adulteress, or virgin (abstinent)—are intrinsically tied to the seventeenth century real-life counterparts.

From here, this study, in addressing the concerning lack of attention given to women dramatists writing pre-1900 in general, and during the seventeenth century in

particular, Chapter II focuses on the current state of (theatre) history pedagogy and performance practices in the United States as well as addresses the enormity of the subject. Where it is frequently a customary practice to offer history courses in general as broad, survey-style lectures, most other disciplines offer additional coursework that pares down the subject matter to specific people, places, or events. And while many theatre departments in the US offer upper-level classes in specific performance techniques, dramatic themes and genres, or even language-based plays, most do not go beyond the preliminary history classes when it comes to course offerings based on material prior to 1900. While I recognize that much of this has largely to do with individual faculty interest, it still seems strange that a student must actively seek coursework in other departments to fill the gaps that could be filled through more rigorous cross-listing. Theatre history, I have learned, is a tricky area of specialization to navigate as an undergraduate or graduate student.

Additionally, this chapter seeks to address the matter of general ignorance surrounding female participation in theatre. Women were writing as far back as the tenth century CE, with Hrosvitha of Gandersheim and Hildegard von Bingen penning translations and plays of the ancient Greeks and Romans from their cloisters in medieval Germany. In this case, however, Hrosvitha and Abbess Hildegard are two of the few women playwrights from this time whose works still remain. Case notes that, “The fact that there was no significant number of extant texts written by women for the stage until the seventeenth century produced a rather astounding sense of absence in the classical traditions of the theatre,”<sup>25</sup> thus reinforcing the illusion that women simply were not writing for the stage until the 1600s. Nevertheless, that does not explain why, when such

plays after 1600 are readily available, they are still ignored, with only one or two women from this time used as token examples of female dramatic authorship.

This chapter also addresses issues and concerns surrounding current dominant theatre historiography that exists in a state of exclusion at worst and tokenism at best when it comes to the inclusion of female contributions to the western theatre and playwriting literary canon. I look at several obstacles the historian faces as a way to help identify possible reasons for these exclusions, including the expansive theatre history timeframe, past ideologies, and availability of information, with the intention of addressing the need for canonical revisions at the pedagogical level. Given the established precedent of how theatre history has been (and is still) taught in numerous colleges and universities in the “west,” this chapter also strives to deconstruct current pedagogy to show the necessity of creating a feminist historiography—that is to say the creation of a theatre historiography that is more fluid in the inclusion of canonical works that may have been previously excluded on the basis sex by prior academic circles. However, the argument is not solely for the recognition of female early modern theatre participation, as it is not enough to create a feminist theatre history parallel to current pedagogy and practice; rather it is a call to acknowledge the absence of women as early modern theatre makers and amend how the current canon is taught and produced to include more works by these female playwrights. Thus, the primary focus of this dissertation chapter is on the necessity of in-depth inclusion of women in acknowledged theatre history curricula with the recognized bias toward seventeenth century British female playwrights in general, and the work of Aphra Behn in particular.

Chapter III narrows the focus onto the seventeenth century and the periods before and during the Interregnum (1649 – 1660 CE). It has been well-established that *female* playwrights began gaining attention during this century, with histories generally starting with Aphra Behn as the first acknowledged English professional female playwright. Behn, however, did not produce her first play, *The Forc'd Marriage* (1670), until the 1600s were nearly three-quarters over, leaving a significant portion of the seventeenth century unaccounted for. This chapter looks at some of the obstacles women in the seventeenth century faced when it came to not just writing, but specifically *publishing*, as well as continuing the conversation on early modern feminism from the previous chapter. The Restoration, combined with the emergence of the professional actress and (female) playwright provoked an interesting public response, with implications as far-reaching as the twenty-first century; however, a more robust inclusion of these women would help explain why those implications are rarely addressed.

In this case, the appearance of the female playwright initiates the discussion of the public self as opposed to the private self in terms of what was being “sold” on stage (or off as was frequently the case). It is here that the nineteenth century Marxist concepts of alienable versus inalienable property truly begin to take shape. The early modern period saw the initiation and rise of a middle class as most of Europe began to transition from the medieval feudal system to one based on early forms of capitalism and commodification of salable “things.” A larger middle class meant that more people outside the ruling class had access to both leisure time and “disposable” income, thereby creating a market for such activities. This also created more specifically definable parallels, however, between what was actually “salable.” Margaret Radin defines the

terms “alienable” and “inalienable” saying, “[a]lienable property is understood as a commodity,”<sup>26</sup> meaning “[alienable] commodities are socially constructed as objects separate from the self and social relations.”<sup>27</sup> As such, these commodities “can be exchanged for any ... kind of fungible, or saleable, property without loss or damage to the owner.”<sup>28</sup> Radin explains that inversely, inalienable property is defined as an “attribute property,” meaning that it is something that “cannot be commodified or alienated without affecting an individual’s sense of self.”<sup>29</sup> With the commodity in question during the seventeenth century being female chastity (or lack thereof), the dilemma surrounding the playwright becomes how to sell yourself without actually selling your *self*.

Once the female playwright made the jump from private amateur to public professional after the Interregnum, this kind of commodification of the public self was inevitable. Unlike the male playwright, the female playwright still (supposedly) fell under the jurisdiction of her father or husband: The female playwright was in essence selling that which did not belong to her by making her work public. Furthermore, this “self-sale” of the female mind became virtually indistinguishable from the sale of the body, thereby promoting the unfavorable allusions to prostitution. Jaqueline Pearson continues to support the analogy of writer and whore in her text aptly titled *The Prostituted Muse*. Pearson makes the claim that by appropriating the title of whore, the female writers effectively took ownership of themselves, thus creating a form of self-sale over which they had control.

The final portions of this chapter look at two early seventeenth century female dramatists who were writing with some recognition and critical acclaim several decades

before Behn: Elizabeth Cary, Viscountess Falkland (1585 – 1639) and Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle (1623 – 1673). The work of these women introduces an examination of female agency during the seventeenth century and suggest a continuation of feminist inquiry into the status quo. Specifically, I look at why these two are so overlooked, holding up two of their plays, *The Tragedy of Miriam, the Fair Queen of Jewry* (1613) by Cary and *Bell in Campo* (1662) by Cavendish, as entrants for inclusion in more theatre history curricula and production repertoires on the basis that the exclusion of these plays as ‘closet dramas’ from theatre history pedagogy fails to adequately acknowledge their contributions to their respective literary and dramatic contexts while also trivializing the ‘closest drama’ as a “legitimate” form of theatre.

Cary’s play stands as a credible model of the Senecan tragedy, a popular theatrical form during the Jacobean era, and most recognized in plays such as *Hamlet* (1602) and *Othello* (1604) by William Shakespeare, and John Webster’s 1614 play, *The Duchess of Malfi*. Cary herself, was also “the first English woman writer to be memorialized in a biography, *The Lady Falkland: Her Life*, written by one of her daughters (probably between 1643 and 1650).”<sup>30</sup> Her play provides additional context to the Jacobean theatre world by providing a distinctly feminist lens, and yet she is overlooked because of the assumed “primacy” of public performance.

Similarly, Cavendish was a highly prolific writer who insisted on the publication of her numerous works as a means of gaining fame. Her known eccentricities were enough to garner her the epithet of “Mad Madge,” a persona Cavendish seems to have created solely for the purpose of public consumption. Her play, *Bell in Campo*, is one of twenty that were published as collections in 1662 and 1668, and like Cary’s *Miriam*, has

strong feminist overtones that suggest Cavendish was also interested in interrogating female agency and gender roles.

Neither Cary and Cavendish, however, ostensibly wrote plays intended for publication—a fact that lands both playwrights in the realm of ‘closet drama,’ and therefore frequently regarded as “unperformable.”<sup>31</sup> However, I argue that a play written without the supposed intention of being performed is not adequate reason in the twenty-first century to continue the “tradition” of non-performance, nor is it reason to exclude these works from academic study in theatre history classes. Cary and Cavendish have been the subjects of academic inquiry from an English *literary* angle for decades, and so I question their continued absence from theatre history and dramaturgy and urge that their inclusion is necessary in both pedagogy and practice. Indeed, recent years have seen a rare production of Cary’s play and one or more of Cavendish’s, although none have generated the kind of historiographical or dramaturgical resonance that would ensure a place in the canon. Regardless, Cary and Cavendish are playwrights that certainly deserve inclusion in theatre history pedagogy at the very least.

Chapter IV begins my primary discussion on Aphra Behn. As the most “well-known” of the seventeenth century female dramatists, Behn is still shockingly undertaught and underproduced. This chapter examines Behn’s value to theatre history from a pedagogy standpoint and discusses why treating her as the anomalous token female playwright does a disservice to not only her work, but also theatre historiography as a discipline. The emphasis of this chapter is on the feminist overtones of *The Rover* (1677) through her satirized depictions of the mock-heroics of her male characters and her critiques on forced marriages as well as marriages contracted for financial gain.

*The Rover*, as a Restoration comedy of intrigue, is frequently seen as a “problem” play, with a large cast, complicated plot, and objectional “hero.” Undergraduate students studying *The Rover* in a class frequently have difficulty approaching it in a way that makes sense to them: the numerous sexual assaults on Florinda are often viewed as a potential “trigger,” while sexual violence can also be a difficult subject for instructors and directors to navigate. However, my contention is that *The Rover* is no more violent or topically problematic than *the Taming of the Shrew* (1593), where Petruchio is abusive toward Katherine (2.1), Othello’s strangulation and murder of Desdemona (*Othello*, 1604), or the anti-Semitic overtones in *The Merchant of Venice* (1605), and considerably less violent than contemporary television programming. As discussed in this chapter, staged sexual violations were extremely popular in Restoration plays, largely as the result of the access to the English stage, and are more or less a common element in this particular genre. This in no way is meant to condone patriarchal “rape culture,” nor excuse the actions of Willmore or Blunt in Behn’s play in any way; rather twenty-first century productions of *The Rover* can be utilized to initiate dialogue by providing a necessary lens that illustrates the endemic nature of sexual violence through the distance of several centuries.

In my closing chapter, I bring the discussion on Behn toward her second most popular play, *The Emperor of the Moon* (1687). However, for all its popularity during the seventeenth century, *Emperor* is woefully unknown to the contemporary audience, and as such, *Emperor* is a little more challenging to produce, *because* it struggles against anonymity more so than even *The Rover*. Plot wise, there is nothing as objectionable as sexual assault. Instead the argument becomes for highlighting the parallels between the



explosion of scientific discovery and subsequent information overload of the seventeenth century with the current sheer accessibility and overabundance of data of the Digital Information Age. Doctor Baliardo's gullibility and credulity of everything he reads, going so far as believing the moon inhabited, provides a mirror for the twenty-first century, where the same populace who believe everything on the internet is "true" also denigrate higher learning.

This chapter also examines the migration of the Italian *commedia dell'arte* and the influence it had over Behn's play as it traveled from Italy to France to (eventually) England. Furthermore, Behn's adoption of *commedia*'s use of improvisation and stock characters enhances her objectives to satirize the male institutions of education and learning and public gullibility. As a feminist approach, Behn's farce ridicules as it interrogates the seventeenth century practice of excluding women from higher learning.

Finally, this chapter introduces the topic of "Performance as Research" (PaR) as a valid and extremely useful method of research when it comes to looking at plays in performance in general, and early modern (i.e. "classical") works in particular. In this case, the objective is to use play performance as a means of inquiry into not only older performance models, but also as a means of assessing a play's performance "viability" outside of its original milieu. With play such as *Emperor*, where so much of the comedy is heavily predicated in *commedia* traditions of improvisation and stock characters/situation, much of which is based, in turn, on seventeenth century popular culture, questions of transposition—meaning is it possible to perform the play in such a way as to make all of Behn's allusions to comprehensible to a twenty-first century audience—is a necessary concern. Where *The Rover* is less specific in its cultural

references, particularly as Carnevale is still an ongoing event, the numerous references in *Emperor* present and interesting challenge for productions to address.

As such, this chapter concludes with my directorial approach to *Emperor* as part of my PhD coursework at the University of Oregon in Eugene, Oregon. My inclusion of this project is by no means meant to be a definitive model for directing *Emperor*; rather it is meant to offer suggestions and examples of how I approached Behn's use of *commedia* and popular culture loosely using Performance as Research (PaR) methodology as the primary template for the conclusions I have drawn about this specific play. In this case, I chose to create a deliberately anachronistic tone for my production, substituting several twentieth and twenty-first century references for some of Behn's more obscure or irrelevant nods. These substitutions, however, were part of my own aesthetic for the play, and not meant to imply that *Emperor* is incapable of production without the updating or use of anachronisms. However, as a play that has relatively sporadic contemporary production in spite of being extremely performable, it is my belief that offering my production as a means of introduction to its performability is necessary to this study.

While by no means exhaustive, my overall all objective to this study is to continue to bring attention to the necessity of incorporating the presence of early modern female dramatists into current theatre history pedagogy and practice. History has sadly developed a bit of reputation of being dry and inaccessible, while "language-based" plays are notorious for being difficult to understand, particularly without a familiar point of reference (e.g. Shakespearean England) for many contemporary audiences. Furthermore, since *theatre* history is generally only taught as a broad survey-style class, students rarely have the opportunity to explore a given era beyond what is presented in class, nor is there

much opportunity to view productions of some of the more unfamiliar plays.<sup>32</sup>

Ultimately, there are no easy answers to this, or the other questions surrounding pedagogical practices, although the hope is that prolonged attention to the ways in which female dramatic authorship prior to the twentieth century have been neglected will be a contributing factor of change, just as continued advocacy for the production of these infrequently produced plays can only help advance recognition of early modern female playwrights as significant contributors to theatre historiography, pedagogy, and production.

Research for and chapter elements of this dissertation have been adapted and developed from Rogers, J.K. *Bodies for Sale: Prostitution and Marriage in Restoration Comedy*. Master's thesis, University of Nebraska Omaha, 2011., previously published by ProQuest.

### *Notes to Introduction*

<sup>1</sup> Aphra Behn, Preface to *The Lucky Chance* (London: R.H. for W. Canning, 1686), n.p. See Appendix A.2

<sup>2</sup> Sue-Ellen Case, *Feminism & Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 38 – 39.

<sup>3</sup> Pat Gill, *Interpreting Ladies: Women, Wit, and Morality in the Restoration Comedy of Manners* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>7</sup> Birdsall Virginia Ogden, *Wild Civility: The English Comic Spirit on the Restoration Stage* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Cynthia Lowenthal, *Performing Identities in the Restoration Stage* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003), 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Annette Kreis-Schinck, *Women, Writing, and the Theatre in the Early Modern Period: The Plays of Aphra Behn and Suzanne Centlivre* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 2001), 12.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>25</sup> Case, *Feminism & Theatre*, 5.

<sup>26</sup> Margaret Jane Radin, *Reinterpreting Property* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 192.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Barry Weller and Margaret W. Ferguson, Introduction to *The Tragedy of Miriam the Fair Queen of Jewry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 1.

<sup>31</sup> Ramona Wray, "Performing *The Tragedy of Miriam* and Constructing Stage History." *Early Theatre* 18, no. 2 (2015), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44122669>, 149.

<sup>32</sup> The Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Oregon is notable not only because of their attention to new works, but also because they have a history of staging some of the more obscure plays. Most recently, they have produced and staged the Sanskrit play attributed to Shudraka, *The Little Clay Cart* (called *The Clay Cart*), in 2008, and the classical Chinese drama *Snow in Midsummer* in 2018. See <https://www.osfashland.org/en/company/our-history/production-history.aspx> for OSF full production history. To my knowledge, OSF has never produced a play by Aphra Behn.

## CHAPTER II

### THE OTHER 51%: RESTORING WOMEN TO THEATRE

#### HISTORIOGRAPHY AND PEDAGOGY

*“Many [theatres] think they are “off the hook”—that gender parity is a non-issue when dealing with pre-modern material. Is this due to a lack of knowledge, a lack of estimation, or a lack of interest?” –Susan Jonas<sup>1</sup>*

NB: Parts of this chapter have been adapted from Rogers, J.K. *Bodies for Sale: Prostitution and Marriage in Restoration Comedy*. Master’s thesis, University of Nebraska Omaha, 2011., previously published by ProQuest.

Brander Matthews’s 1916 text, *A Book About the Theater*, makes the attempt to address the significant and ongoing problem within current theatre historiography: the general absence of female playwrights across the acknowledged canon, in classrooms, and in production rotations outside of academia:

Why is it that there are so few women playwrights? And why is it that the infrequent plays produced by women playwrights rarely attain high rank? The explanation is to be found in two facts: first, the fact that women are likely to have only a definitely limited knowledge of life, and, second, the fact that they are likely also to be more or less deficient in the faculty of construction. The first of these disabilities may tend to disappear if ever the feminist movement shall achieve its ultimate victory; and the second may depart also whenever women submit themselves to the severe discipline which has compelled men to be more or less logical.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, Matthews’s perspective on these issues stems from a pre-nineteenth Amendment United States, and as such, his ideologies concerning women dramatists examined retrospectively actually illuminate the substantial reason so many female playwrights have historically been ignored or dismissed: it is not that there are so few women playwrights, it is that those who were writing have all but been labeled “inferior”

due to their “inevitable ignorance of life and of the experiences of existence from which [they are] debarred,”<sup>3</sup> and thus continue to remain largely invisible out of habit.

In this case, although when creating a “coherent narrative, any type of history must necessarily be selective and it’s choice of materials and in its presentation,”<sup>4</sup> Margaret Ezell asks “what are the *principles of selection and exclusions* in the current women’s literary history and to what extent are the manifestations of unquestioned assumptions about women’s texts, about historical periods, and about the nature of authorship?”<sup>6</sup> where Ezell interrogates the inevitably exclusionary nature of history that has resulted in the overwhelming absence of female literacy presence in pre-1700 academic study. While from a purely literary standpoint, these omissions have been significantly redressed since Ezell’s 1993 publication, dramatic study still seems to be mired in Matthews’s past. Susan Jonas’s 2017 *American Theatre* article “The Other Canon: 10 Centuries of Plays by Women,”<sup>7</sup> coming nearly a century after Matthews’s book and nearly twenty-five years after Ezell’s question of selection, continues the inquiry into the apparent erasure of what should be half of the dramatic literary “canon.”

Jonas writes:

In three years of classes in theatre history and dramatic literature, we studied the work of few living female playwrights and read only two plays by dead ones. Scan the index of a theatre history textbook published more than 10 years ago, you might find Lillian Hellman. Perhaps Lorraine Hansberry. If it’s a serious textbook, possibly Aphra Behn and Hrosvitha. Surely any worthy plays by women would have endured ...<sup>8</sup>

She makes the additional claim that, “When we are trained to read through the filter of a canonic imprimatur, it is a self-fulfilling prophecy”<sup>9</sup> suggesting that the answer to Matthews’s query regarding the infrequency of “plays produced by women playwrights” is cyclical: plays by women—particularly those prior to the twentieth century—remain

largely untaught; because they are untaught, they are largely unknown; because they are unknown, they rarely (if ever) get produced; and finally, because they are unproduced, they remain untaught and unknown.

This chapter will look at issues and concerns surrounding current dominant theatre historiography that exists in a state of exclusion at best and tokenism at worst when it comes to the inclusion of female contributions to the western theatre and playwriting literary canon. I examine current challenges to historiography as a whole, including scope, past ideologies, and lack of extant material as a possible means of identifying reasons for these exclusions, with the objective of calling attention to necessary pedagogical revisions to the canon. Given the established precedent of how theatre history has been and is still taught in numerous colleges and universities in the “west,” this chapter will attempt to deconstruct current pedagogy with the intent to show the necessity of creating a feminist historiography—that is to say the creation of a theatre historiography that is more fluid in the inclusion of canonical works that may have been previously excluded on the basis sex by prior academic circles. However, the argument is not solely for the recognition of female early modern theatre participation, as it is not enough to create a feminist theatre history parallel to current pedagogy and practice; rather it is a call to acknowledge the absence of women as early modern theatre makers and expand and amend how the current dramatic canon is taught and produced to include more works by these female playwrights. Furthermore, this chapter also addresses the institutional divide between university English departments, where a significant number of early modern female dramatists (including Aphra Behn) have been the topic of academic study for decades from the literary perspective, theatre departments frequently

overlook this era in its entirety. Thus, the primary focus of this dissertation chapter will be on the necessity of in-depth inclusion of women in acknowledged theatre history curricula, with a recognized bias toward seventeenth century British female playwrights in general, and the work of Aphra Behn in particular.

## The Historian's Conundrum

*"If history were past, history wouldn't matter. History is the present ... You and I are history. We carry our history. We act our history."* –James Baldwin<sup>10</sup>

In his seminal work *The Historian's Craft* (1953), Marc Bloch asks the question: "What is the use of history?"<sup>11</sup> What is the use of history indeed? The word itself, with its Greek origins in *istoria*, simply means "inquiry,"<sup>12</sup> but while this is true, it also fails to encompass the sheer enormity of the seemingly simple task of inquiry: Into *what* is being "inquired?" *Who* is doing the asking? And perhaps most tellingly, *who* is doing the recording, the archiving, the documenting of events for future historians to even inquire about?

History, and subsequently historiography, are ultimately acts of both preservation and erasure: some events, documents, perspectives—people—are preserved while others are, more often than not, irrevocably lost to the passage of time and the fallibility of human memory. Bloch writes:

We are told that the historian is, by definition, absolutely incapable of observing the facts which he examines. No Egyptologist has ever seen Ramses. No expert on the Napoleonic Wars has ever heard the sound of the cannon at Austerlitz. We can speak of earlier ages only the accounts of eye-witnesses. According to this view, we are in the predicament of a police magistrate who strives to reconstruct a crime he has not seen; of a physicist who, confined to his bed with grippe<sup>13</sup>, hears the results of his experiments only through the reports of his laboratory technician. In short, in contrast to the knowledge of the present, that of the past is necessarily "indirect."<sup>14</sup>



Perhaps a more apt analogy would be the comparison of any given “historical” person, place, thing, or event to a jigsaw puzzle with infinite pieces, only a few of which are present to give the puzzler an idea of what the picture contains. Add to that the fact that the more distant the event, the available puzzle pieces are fewer in number and the picture increasingly vague, damaged, or otherwise obscured.

And then there is the erasure mentioned previously. Bloch notes:

Let us imagine that all the officers and men of the hypothetical regiment at Austerlitz have perished, or more simply, that among the survivors there are no longer to be found witnesses whose memory and powers of attention are trustworthy. Napoleon would then be no better off than we are. ... We must add that not all “tracks” lend themselves equally well to this evocation of the past for the edification of the future.<sup>15</sup>

Here Bloch’s hypothetical erasure is predicated on the fallibility of memory—where events, even those lived by a multitude are misremembered, undocumented, and in extreme cases, forgotten in their entirety. While this kind of historical deletion is still erasure, it is arguably the unintentional kind: the participants for whatever reason, fail to remember or otherwise document the event, and so it becomes as inconsequential as any mundane activity performed with little thought to potential historical ramifications in the future. For the sake of argument, we can include those pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that have simply been lost due to imperfect methods of preservation or even acts of war. The fabled Library of Alexandria is rumored to have been the greatest repository of knowledge in the ancient world, but much of what we know about it or its contents have been lost through a series of events including fire and the ultimate decline of the Roman empire. Thus, the image we have of the library is incomplete: we know it existed through surviving documentation, but a catalogue of its contents and even the concrete reason for

its decline and dissolution remain unknown, and unless future archeological discovery about the library is made that can illuminate more of the picture, it will stay unknown.

In the theatre world, the story of Aristotle's *Poetics* is another prime example of the challenges the (theatre) historian faces when it comes to the inquiry and reconstruction of history. Sue-Ellen Case reaffirms the significance of Aristotle's works, indicating that the "text is still taught in theatre classes as the definitive source on the nature of classical tragedy,"<sup>16</sup> yet the accepted acknowledgement of this body of work is that the extant version that has survived the millennia are, as the story goes, the somewhat questionable notes taken by a student of Aristotle from (presumably) a lecture, rather than something written by Aristotle himself.<sup>17</sup> As such, western understanding of how the ancient Greeks viewed theatre is irrevocably skewed: How accurate were these notes? Did the student in question have his own bias that inadvertently supersedes the given information? What if Aristotle's much debated and dissected discussions on the nature of tragedy and the meaning of catharsis are incomplete because the note-taker was actually daydreaming at that moment?

Furthermore, *Poetics* famously comes to an abrupt end, leaving all future historians to wonder if there was more—on the nature of comedy, perhaps—that did not survive because that part was in the section of the great library that burned; because the student was absent that day; because Aristotle actually hated comedy and thus had nothing to say on the subject. In this instance, an entire western discipline has evolved from an imperfect version of the children's game "Whisper Down the Lane." Bloch furthers this analogy through the comparison to a military maneuver, where the historian is effectively at the rear of a column, and the last to receive orders from the front. He uses

a personal anecdote as a way to illustrate this: “I saw the word passed down the length of column in this manner: ‘Look out! Shell holes to the left!’ The last man received it in the form, ‘To the left!’ took a step in that direction, and fell in.”<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, when used as an analogy to the study of history, it can be a frustrating endeavor because no historian was there, so *how can we know?* And yet, as Bloch points out, “[i]t is always disagreeable to say: ‘I do not know. I cannot know.’ ... But there are times when [it] ... is to resign himself to his ignorance and to admit it honestly.”<sup>19</sup> Still, admission of ignorance is not necessarily equal to the cessation of all inquiry; the puzzle image under investigation may instead be put aside to be worked on at a later date in the hopes that, with time, more and more image-pieces may be discovered and fit together.

As if instances of “Whisper Down the Lane” and imperfect student notes were not enough to obscure our historical jigsaw puzzle, we as historians must also take into account personal bias—both our own, and those contained within the documents, artifacts, and ephemera left to be studied. Bloch notes that while it is certainly the purview of the historian to “collect ... read ... [and attempt] to weigh [the] authenticity” of such primary documents and artifacts, “those texts or archaeological documents which see the clearest and the most accommodating will speak only when they are properly questioned,”<sup>20</sup> where the questions asked must also take into consideration issues such as authorship and context. Bloch’s text itself is easily construed as an historical documentation: *The Historian’s Craft* was posthumously published in 1953 following Bloch’s own execution as part of the World War II French Resistance at the hands of the Germans in 1942, and so it is left to other historians and scholars over three-quarters of a century later to dissect and parse Bloch’s meaning and intention—and in this case—via

translation to adequately question Bloch's text as an historical document and historical roadmap of early twentieth century historiography practices.

While the Bloch text is arguably benign, it is evident that not all historical accounts are. What would a view of World War II look like to the historian if the only extant piece of the puzzle was Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*? Similarly, how would the current (2019) US presidential administration appear to the future historian who only had access to Donald Trump's Twitter history? In a sense, this kind of unilateral documentation is very much analogous to what remains of Aristotle's *Poetics*—we are only left with imperfect translations of a solo account of a singular event upon which an enormous amount of theory and practice have been based.<sup>21</sup> What would happen if additional lecture notes from other students were to surface about Aristotle's discourse on theatre that radically challenged the current surviving text? Not only would that puzzle suddenly have a clearer focus, but any bias the original note-taker may have held for or against Aristotle and the subject matter would also become more apparent, thus enabling historians a more concrete view of the context surrounding *Poetics*, while also throwing several disciplines into complete uproar.

And then there is the issue of language. Without going into too much about semiotics and linguistics, each of which carry their own obstacles when it comes to meaning, it is frequently challenging to decipher written artifacts, especially when looking at a "dead" language or an archaic dialect. Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics were a baffling mystery to historians and scholars until 1799, when the Rosetta Stone was uncovered by a French soldier during Napoleon Bonaparte's Egyptian campaign.<sup>22</sup> The stone fragment was inscribed with three languages: Egyptian hieroglyphics, Egyptian

demotic, and ancient Greek—a language that *was* known to scholars at the time—where the “Greek passage announced that the three scripts were all of identical meaning.”<sup>23</sup> The discovery was literally the key to unlocking ancient Egyptian language and culture, although the information on the stone itself was not decoded until 1822 – 1824.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, the issues around translation then come to the fore. Returning to *Poetics*, Case lists the Gerald Else 1957 translation and the Leon Golden 1968 translation as specific examples where translator bias is possibly in effect, with explicit attention on the “patriarchal prejudice against women to the nature of the dramatic experience.”<sup>25</sup> She specifies, using Aristotle’s discussion on “goodness” and “appropriate action”:

The Else translation reads ‘for it is possible for the character to be brave (manly) but not fitting to a woman (not by virtue of being brave and clever’ (lines 54a24 – 6). In the Golden translation: ‘for it is possible for a person to be manly in terms of character, but it is not appropriate for a woman to exhibit either this quality or the intellectual cleverness that is associated with men’ (lines 54a9 – 12).<sup>26</sup> Else translates ‘brave’ and ‘manly’ as interchangeable terms, indicating that the male gender and bravery are one and the same. ... the Golden translation does not explicitly mention bravery, but does mention ‘intellectual cleverness.’<sup>27</sup>

Putting aside Case’s point with regard to gender, the two translations, while similar, offer different interpretations of the Greek text. The difficulty, then, resides in the specific ways translators have when it comes to negotiating texts from one language to another (in this case, ancient Greek to English).

Of specific note are the differences within Aristotle’s use of *catharsis*. Else notes that the most prevalent use defines it as a “purgation” or “cleansing,” and yet this definition seems to be based on other Aristotelian and ancient Greek usages rather than what is found in *Poetics*;<sup>28</sup> however, D.W. Lucas’s translation introduces the idea that there is a “chance that catharsis may have some aspect of meanings like ‘purgation,’ ‘intellectual clarification,’ and ‘purification,’”<sup>29</sup> and finally, the Samuel Butcher 1895

translation states that “tragedy, then, does more than effect the homeopathic cure of certain passions. Its function on this view is not merely to provide an outlet for pity and fear, but to provide for them a distinctively aesthetic satisfaction, to purify and clarify them by passing them through the medium of art”<sup>30</sup> to identify a few. These subtle differences in translations have resulted in debates and confusion with regard to Aristotle’s intended meaning for *catharsis* and provides a clear example of how each translator’s unintentional bias or interpretation can alter history and understanding.

In the decade or so when I have taught college-level courses this issue of bias is one that I have actively acknowledged and investigated with students. Not only do I specifically state my personal biases when relevant (as well as adamantly reiterating that student agreement with my views is never compulsory), but I have found it necessary to also discuss historical bias as well, using the (now defunct) website: [www.martinlutherking.org](http://www.martinlutherking.org). For any student of history, and indeed of critical thought, considering the authorship and context of any kind of documentation should be a natural as breathing, and yet, when it comes to bias, I have found that it is all too easy for the inexperienced to assume that because something is “historical” it is also impartial. Superficially, the website seems to be a solid archival repository for documents and information about the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; however, closer inspection reveals that the authorship behind this site is none other than Stormfront, a known white supremacy group currently still active in the United States. As such, any information contained on the [martinlutherking.org](http://martinlutherking.org) website immediately should be suspect and treated as an unreliable source, especially when it comes to the work of Dr. King and the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

It is this kind of rigorous inquiry that Bloch is alluding to when he wrote of questioning documents and artifacts. The act of historical inquiry must be a deliberate act that seeks to engage the past in a kind of dialogue. He reminds the reader that “[a]n experience almost as old as mankind has taught us that more than one manuscript has falsified its date or origin, that all the accounts are not true,”<sup>31</sup> and yet when it comes to the “cross-examination” of historical evidence in search of bias, “skepticism on principle is neither a more estimable nor a more productive intellectual attitude than ... credulity ...”<sup>32</sup> Bias, then, should be acknowledged, and incorporated into the puzzle-narrative as a whole, rather than being summarily dismissed or completely embraced by the historian. By acknowledging that people write and compile history, each of whom have their own agendas, it is possible to begin to at least construct a rough sketch of past events. Indeed, the more accounts that remain, the clearer the image, although when speaking of the distant past there will always be a significant margin of error.

### History, Pedagogy, and Performance

*“... a historical phenomenon can never be understood apart from its moment in time.” –*

*Marc Bloch*<sup>33</sup>

So, what is the point of studying history? Why theatre? How is it possible to create a historiography about a discipline that is so shrouded in uncertainty and full of transitory moments? Current historians agree that theatre has its origins somewhere in the ritual and myth of pre-history, where a discipline based in ephemera was even more ephemeral due to the lack of a written language. Herbert Blau navigates this paradox, writing:

... theatre historians ... are and always have been ... in a somewhat anomalous position; for what in the world of theatre—the *strangeness* of its emergence (derived from ritual, *really?* ask the anthropologists, and anyhow, *why theatre?*), doubling up on appearance, making a fetish of it, or disavowing a fetish—are we to make of the other world? ... With the insubstantial pageant fading, onstage, offstage, or any stage between ... there [is] always an identity crisis ...<sup>34</sup>

Of course, *history* itself is ephemeral: it is virtually impossible to capture and encapsulate any given moment for future scrutiny, regardless of the numerous and now ubiquitous video recording devices. The camera can only record what is physically there and readily apparent; they are (as yet) still unable to capture fully the full range of emotion of those present, nor can it preserve smells, textures, and tastes, leaving only a rough approximation of 40%<sup>35</sup> of any given experience left for future scholars to decipher. A current production of Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton* (2015) may be video recorded, but it cannot capture the full range of audience response; nor the heat generated from the conflagration of performers and audience, sets and lights; nor the overall *atmosphere* of the theatre. Still, as incomplete as video may be as an historical source, our current ability to influence future historical accounts of theatre productions exists in the sheer quantity of personal accounts via blogs, social media, bootleg recordings, and other potential primary source materials.

Joseph Roach identifies the necessary symbiosis of theory and practice:

[p]erformance ... provides a place where theory and practice enter into a potentially troubled yet deeply symbiotic relationship ... [where] Without the study of history ... performance surrenders at least half of its content. ... without the stimulus of performance, we lose touch with the new methods of staging that disclose previously unimagined possibilities about the stagecraft of the past.<sup>36</sup>

Oscar Brockett's seminal theatre history text, *History of the Theatre*, first published in 1967, is quoted by Roach as follows, "In this book," Brockett begins the preface to the first edition of the *History*, "I have *attempted*<sup>37</sup> to trace the development of the theatre



from primitive times until 1967' (v)"<sup>38</sup> and Roach goes on to describe snippets of Brockett's text. No theatre student would deny the significance of the Brockett text; it still remains a staple of countless theatre history curricula in colleges and universities across the United States and is now in its eleventh edition, yet, theatre history, as Brockett admits, is only an *attempt*<sup>39</sup> at tracing theatre history, not a concrete certainty. Even now, a significant problem within current theatre history curricula is the sheer *volume* of material that needs to be addressed over the course of a year.

A casual Google search for theatre history course syllabi in conjunction with my own experiences teaching history over several years yielded the expected results: theatre history courses are still predominantly taught as survey-style courses spanning several terms or semesters, due to the enormity of "necessary" information to be disseminated. As I tell my own students taking my courses,<sup>40</sup> the scope (in this case) of the three courses of theatre history seek to cover approximately 5,000 years of human history in the 30 or so weeks of the academic year.<sup>41</sup> The material, then, is also significantly skewed, with Theatre History I attempting to cover (by my calculations) around 4,500 years of global theatre/performance—origins through 1640— in ten weeks; Theatre History II, addressing the next 250 years, from about 1640 – 1900; before Theatre History III looks at theatre history from 1900 though (roughly) the present, rapidly approaching 150 years-worth of material. Even spread out over three terms, curating plays and reading material for this course sequence is nearly overwhelming.

On the one hand, since a significant portion of this information is rooted in educated supposition at best—at least through the middle ages—there is a fair amount of guesswork involved. My students constantly surprised me with information that they

wanted to know: ancient Greek costumes occasionally had stripes, so they adamantly wanted to know what *kind* of stripes—what *color* were they? Were they vertical or horizontal? Thick stripes or thin? Straight or wavy? Or perhaps were they zigzags? The Great Stripe Inquisition (as I refer to it) got so intense, that I offered extra credit to anyone who researched and wrote a mini-paper on the subject, with the caveat that not a whole lot of fabric or images of said stripes have survived the millennia. Unsurprisingly, no one opted to do this project. The issue of ancient Greek use of stripes was a terrific way to segue into the historical problem: a considerable amount of information from antiquity no longer is extant, perhaps surviving in name only or as a passing detail, making the puzzle full of missing pieces and gaps. As such, I found that my material frequently made huge leaps through time, simply because of the limited available information.

Unlike my own experience with theatre history as an undergraduate in the 1990s, the expectations have also evolved from starting with the Greeks and effectively progressing through a thoroughly *western* account of theatre history to a more globally inclusive curriculum that includes the performance practices in Asia, Africa, Middle East, .and indigenous peoples of the Americas—any one of which could potentially be its own ten to sixteen week-long course. The more recent editions of Brockett’s text<sup>42</sup> that begin to look at theatre history beyond *western male* civilization. My own experiences as a student with this text in the 1990s echoes the disciplinary norm to start with the ancient Greeks and work through the Romans, medieval liturgical drama, Shakespeare and the Renaissance, and melodramas before more or less concluding with Ibsen, Chekhov, and the advent of Realism/Naturalism before launching into the twentieth century theatre of

Albee, Miller, and Wilson with only cursory forays into nonwestern theatre practices, so the necessity of becoming familiar enough with ancient non-western theatre traditions to teach undergraduates was doubly overwhelming. Furthermore, there is often (but not always) no requisite that these history courses be taken in order, so while the department offers these courses chronologically, students may take these classes in any order they choose, which carries the greater potential for creating a skewed image of theatre history.

The problem of lacking extant historical material in Theatre History I, is one that is quickly resolved by the end of that course; the advent of the printing press and movable type in the mid-fifteenth century meant that more and more texts could potentially survive the centuries as the product of mass-production. As a result, theatre histories suddenly face the inverse problem going from not enough extant information to an information overload due to the sheer volume of material that has survived.

Additionally, given the Eurocentric focus of theatre history courses, I am careful to be as inclusive as I can, stating, “Theatre is happening outside of the Greco-Roman empire, and here’s what it looked like in India, China, the Americas.” On the positive side, Theatre History II predominantly covers the portion of history with which I’m most familiar, namely seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British comedy. However, I also found myself slipping into the habit of only covering western theatre. I hoped to mitigate this a little through full disclosure by acknowledging that theatre was still happening outside of Europe, but that the primary focus would be European and American theatre traditions.

Harry Elam, Jr. writes with regard to studying theatre history that “we must interrogate the past in order to inform the present, remaining cognizant of the material

conditions that not only shape theatrical production but the historical interpretations of production. It implies a need to work against the conventional historical narratives and the ways in which history has been told in the past.”<sup>43</sup> My own deep-seated belief that theatre does not happen in a vacuum means that I pay a significant amount of attention to cultural context in addition to the plays themselves, obliquely returning to Bloch’s question of *what is the use of [theatre] history*, while using additional examples of what popular culture and political circumstances about a given time as a way to frame theatre—and vice versa: using the plays themselves as primary evidence for the popular culture and political environment in which they were written. Elam continues, clarifying;

One task for the contemporary theatre historian ... must be to understand the definitions of theatre in operation for the time periods under investigation. ... that the meaning of theatre was and is always in negotiation, with playwrights and practitioners always working with and against tacit and shifting conventions of what theatre can or should be. And thus the definition of theatre has been invented and reinvented from tradition. ... the theatre historian needs to explore these transactions and actively interrogate how the theatre has been culturally, aesthetically, socially, even spiritually constituted and why.<sup>44</sup>

The rest of Elam’s article is specific to the erasures to and invisibility of African American theatre, but the methodologies suggested remain the same: How can a course solely designed to introduce students to theatre history exist in isolation from history itself? The answer is it can’t, and yet so many of these undergraduate survey courses seem to present theatre history in almost complete seclusion from the rest of history, while the theatre departments in which they are rooted tend toward *either* performance *or* theory with minimal overlap between the two. The probability that most theatre history courses study Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* is likely a safe assumption, but then understanding ancient Greek performance traditions in conjunction with the text is not a given. Too many theatre history students find Tyrone Guthrie’s 1957 film adaptation of *Oedipus*

*Re*<sup>45</sup> that makes the attempt at an “authentic” reproduction of the ancient Greek theatre practices via the use of masks and grand, declamatory gestures hilarious rather than pathetic as Sophocles intended because they fail to remember that as pervasive as the Stanislavsky acting techniques are *now*, they are the direct result of the advent of realism around the turn of the twentieth century, and most likely *did not exist* in ancient Greece. Elam reminds the reader that “the concepts of theatre during the Renaissance—the language, the settings, and the styles—are very different from the notions of theatre at play during the Classic period or the Romantic. ... [not to imply] that theatre meant one thing and one thing only during the Renaissance: for the definitions of theatre are far from static.”<sup>46</sup> So, then, the conclusion drawn from this total “interrogation of the past” that Elam advocates for so adamantly is that is that if theatre is constantly changing and evolving, then the canon should also change and evolve in a similar fashion and at the same rate.

### The “Other” Canon

*“Observe that lady dressed in the loose robe de chambre with her neck and breasts bare: how much fire in her eyes! ... Observe what an indignant look she bestows on the President<sup>47</sup>, who is telling her, that none of her sex has any right to a seat there. That extraordinary woman is Aphra Behn.” –Anonymous<sup>48</sup>*

If each theatre history instructor has *x* amount of latitude when it comes to curating her/his course within the given framework of “myth/ritual through 1640 BCE,” the material is *simultaneously* massive in terms of the given time frame *and* extremely finite in the amount of available material. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of the instructor to essentially curate the course material most likely on accepted canon and

personal bias. The same Google search mentioned previously indicated that, at least in the US, the collegiate level still teaches theatre history as a course in predominantly *western male* dramatic literature from the Greeks through the advent of realism at the end of the nineteenth century. This is to say that the majority of the focus of these courses is on the expected plays and playwrights: Sophocles, Euripides, Terrence, Shakespeare, and Marlowe. And while several of these syllabi did make the attempt to go beyond the acknowledged canon to include kabuki, Islamic theatre, and Spanish Golden Age dramas, the content is still overwhelmingly predicated on the history of white, European, masculinity. To be fair, most of these syllabi contained only the bare outline of the material covered, so it is impossible to say with any certainty whether the majority of these courses were deliberate in this exclusion, if the instructors are even aware of the female presence as historical theatre makers, or if the instructors were overwhelmed with the enormity of the scope and chose instead to fall back on the familiar. This being said, it is also important to note that the current stress placed on *western* theatre history is done with the intent that *that* is the material most familiar to, and the primary basis of, the current theatre education in the United States. Dr. Michael Malek Najjar comments with regard to this, that it “is necessary to recognize that we are training the next generation of theatre artists to work in the current American Theatre. Because of this, it is (unfortunately) necessary to tilt the canon toward the Greeks, Romans, and Elizabethans so that [the students] know about these histories since they inform the vast majority of the plays that are both valued by [American] culture and produced by the majority of theatres.”<sup>49</sup> While this Eurocentric view may be a source of aggravation for some theatre educators in the United States, change is slow, and to arbitrarily explore non-western

theatre histories at the expense of current trends only serves as a *disservice* to those entering the field with the intention of making theatre into their profession post-college in the US.

The issue, then, lies with the current literary canon. Arnold Kettle defines it in terms of the English novel, which can then be extrapolated out to include dramatic literature:

It is impossible to evaluate literature in the abstract; a book is neither produced nor read in a vacuum and the very word 'value' involves right away criteria which are not just 'literary.' Literature is part of life and can be judged only in its relevance to life. Life is not static but moving and changing.<sup>50</sup>

The argument is not that life is changing, but rather the use of the word “value,” which instantly applies a form of quantification to the literature in a way that harkens back to Matthew Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy* definition of “culture” that also directs an internalized hierarchy to literature (and the arts), where he defines culture as “... being a pursuit of a total perfection by means of getting to know, on all matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world ...”<sup>51</sup> which, in turn, places a certain emphasis and pastiche on “high” culture verses “low” culture. Arnold’s definition is problematic, as it immediately and effectively establishes an “us” and “them” dichotomy within culture that segregates a population into those who “get” art and those who “don’t,” as it divides “culture” into what amounts to “good” culture—meaning presumably those works that are deemed “relevant to life” and those that are not.

Of course, neither Arnold nor Kettle’s attempt takes into consideration *who* is doing the judging and applying value to the material in question. Terry Eagleton presents this very argument with regard to the “accepted” literary canon:

The reason why it follows from the definition of literature as highly valued writing that it is not a stable entity is that value-judgements are notoriously variable ... the so-called 'literary canon,' the unquestioned 'great tradition' of the 'national literature,' has to be recognized as a *construct*, fashioned by particular people for particular reasons at a certain time. There is no such thing as a literary work or tradition which is valuable *in itself*, regardless of what anyone might have said or come to say about it. 'Value' is a transitive term: it means whatever is valued by certain people in specific situations, according to particular criteria and in the light of given purposes.<sup>52</sup>

What is it that identifies a work of dramatic literature as something of value, and thus worthy of inclusion or induction in the canon? Brander Matthews remarked that "Women have most satisfactorily displayed their special endowment for fiction not in what must be called the dramatic novel like the *Scarlet Letter* and *Anna Kerénine* [sic], but rather in less solidly supported inquiries into the inter-relation of character and social convention, as in *Pride and Prejudice* ..." <sup>53</sup> where in Matthews's value system the "best" clearly includes Hawthorne and Tolstoy, while Jane Austen is described as "laboring with exquisite art to life into temporary importance the eternally unimportant," and women novelists are dismissed with "no [sic] one of them has yet been able to handle a large theme powerfully and to interpret life with the unhasting and unresting strength which is the distinguishing mark of the mightier masters of fiction." <sup>54</sup> In saying such things about female authorship, Matthews has also effectively preserved and perpetuated the argument that men are simply inherently "better" at writing than women as they are better at experiencing and interpreting life, and what is more, that men are then better at conveying those complexities in the written word—a spurious argument that nevertheless unfortunately still persists: the debate over Austen's inclusion into the literary canon is *still* ongoing within certain circles, although her novels are still widely read over 200 years after publication, arguably a stout indicator of her continued "relevance to life" as



well as evidence toward Eagleton's assertion (as well as my own) in the transitory nature of *value* where the canon is concerned.

While Matthews's archaic chapter on women dramatists is definitively misogynist, the objective in revisiting the current dramatic canon is not to invert the current gender binary to create a misandrist utopia; unlike Susan Jonas's "Other Canon," which includes a remarkable template for a theatre history syllabus comprised of a millennia of female-only playwrights<sup>55</sup> and whose title seems to advocate for a separate canon solely about women playwrights, the objective here is to address the necessity of expanding the current canon to reflect the impact of the "other"—namely women, queer, racial/ethnic voices, and all the intersections in between—on the twenty-first century dramatic historiography. Whereas notions of race and gender/queer intersectionality are relatively new, the argument for more aggressively including women playwrights in curricula and in production rotations is not: women undoubtedly were writing plays along with their male counterparts most likely as far back as theatre origins in myth and ritual. That the poems of Sappho (c. 630 – c. 570 BCE), the plays and translations of Hrosvitha (c. 900 CE) cloistered in her abbey in Gandersheim,<sup>56</sup> and Sei Shōnagon's *Pillow Book* (c. 900 CE) Japan have survived tell us that women could and did write prior to the early modern era, so it seems disingenuous to make the assumption that female playwrights were entirely absent prior to Aphra Behn's emergence in 1670, and yet that's precisely the image being created within the majority of current theatre history pedagogy and performance.

Indeed, it is this absence that has served as a rallying point for feminist scholars since the 1970s. Sue-Ellen Case writes:

Since traditional scholarship has focused on evidence related to written texts, the absence of women playwrights became central to early feminist investigation. The fact that there [are] no significant number of extant texts written by women for the stage until the seventeenth century produced a rather astounding sense of absence in the classical traditions of the theatre.<sup>57</sup>

Case then proceeds to outline her reasoning behind the apparent historical negation of women in theatre before calling for the necessity of a “new poetics,” especially given the way “feminist theory has risen to prominence both within the feminist movement and within the context of dominant theoretical practices”<sup>58</sup> from the late twentieth century on. She identifies that “raising the consciousness” of these female absences was (and still is) critical to feminism as a “social movement”<sup>59</sup> via the use of “cultural encoding ... the imprint of ideology upon the sign,”<sup>60</sup> the application of which to this study simply means increasing the visibility of early female playwrights through their inclusion in theatre history pedagogy and performance on a greater scale than is presently enacted.

When it comes to the canon, both textual and performative, Lizbeth Goodman challenges its very necessity, claiming that “... what is ‘classic’ may become classic in part because it appeals to the popular imagination,” where the “idea of the canon is just that—an idea ...”<sup>61</sup> So while Goodman’s chapter (and indeed the book in its entirety) is fairly remedial in its design, most likely targeted for use as a high school-level introduction to dramatic literary analysis, her challenge to the very necessity of a literary canon is one that resides at the heart of current theatre historiography and production. However, in this instance, the difficulty in doing away with the accepted literary body is bucking a thousand years of academic tradition, a Herculean task at best analogous to reinventing the wheel. While there are certainly arguments against standardizing education, at a basic level the existence of the canon, right or wrong, for good or ill,

provides a (very) general common ground for teachers and students within a given educational system. On the other hand, the sheer level of subjectivity with regard to *value* is overwhelming; my own general pedagogical guidelines, are to present as many variations and examples of authorship to the students to let them make up their own minds, and then to provide additional guidance into additional information and/or related playwrights in the event that they are overcome with a sudden case of interest.

Nevertheless, what I like and what I find interesting still informs my curation of initial source material, in addition to making the attempt at covering “what they should know” about theatre history and the plays and playwrights.

I was able to introduce Hrosvitha of Gandersheim (in translation) as the first known female playwright in Theatre History I, thus (hopefully) setting the stage for the introduction of Aphra Behn, Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz, and Anna Cora Mowatt in Theatre History II. Even with these inclusions, however, I still felt that I should have done more to encourage the study of more early modern women playwrights, perhaps even concluding Theatre History I with Elizabeth Cary, Lady Falkland’s *Tragedy of Miriam* (1613) as an example of both Jacobean neo-Senecan tragedy and as yet another unknown early modern female playwright. The same Google search of online theatre history course syllabi indicates that while several of the perused classes covered Aphra Behn, fewer assigned Hrosvitha and Sor Juana, and then it was as an “either/or” scenario. Anna Cora Mowatt’s *Fashion* (1845) was almost never included<sup>62</sup> or even acknowledged; and the early modern female playwrights of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century from Cary through Centlivre (again, with Behn frequently the “token” example of women dramatists from this time) are almost completely undiscussed at the undergraduate level.

The predicament I found was how to ensure some semblance—however weak—of gender parity was present in my own syllabus, while still acknowledging the “expected” dramatic texts like the ancient Greeks, Shakespeare, and Moliere.

I was lucky in that, as with most college-level courses, there was a considerable degree of latitude and instructor discretion involved with regard to what to teach; the argument, however, lies in the phrase *what I think is important* as this is where acts of historical erasure happen. In the event I were to teach these courses again, I would include Elizabeth Cary as the example of Jacobean Senecan tragedy (especially since I never liked *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612-13)) and use Margaret Cavendish’s funny and clever *Bell in Campo* (1662) as an example of the kind of plays that were being written during the Interregnum, when play *performing* and attending was censored to the point of elimination, but *playwriting* and *reading* had virtually no restrictions at all.<sup>63</sup> I would also introduce one of Susanna Centlivre’s plays instead of Congreve’s *The Way of the World* (1700) as an example of early eighteenth century plays, as they are equally able to convey the ways in which the turn of the eighteenth century was a transitional time between the bawdy Restoration comedies to the more cerebral comedies of manners. Whether these plays are “important” or “good” according to the canon is debatable and irrelevant to the point of this study; the inclusion of multiple contributions from early modern female playwrights exists as an example that women were engaging in theatre history well before what is common knowledge, is thus important in its own right, and their inclusion in more theatre history courses can only help fill the negative spaces surround the lack of early/early modern female playwright in theatre history curricula.

## Toward a Feminist Theatre Historiography

*“Women's history has a dual goal: to restore women to history and to restore our history to women.” – Joan Kelly-Gadol<sup>64</sup>*

Again, the question of *what is the use of history?* comes to the foreground. How can we consider theatre history pedagogy and production complete if the contributions of one half of the world's population have historically been ignored within curricula dealing with theatre history prior to the twentieth century? The answer is that it can't. It is no longer enough to mention Behn or her contemporaries as a footnote, when the fact remains that Behn and women like her were making significant contributions to the theatre of their time. Katherine Kelly notes that both “[feminist] writers of history and writers of drama ... feel an urgency to reform the pasts assigned to women”<sup>65</sup> whether via historiographical theory or through performance as embodiment and research. Kelly goes on to suggest that this drive to “re-imagine women's past lives [is] a first step toward living a more just present and future”<sup>66</sup> where again the objective is a more wholistic view of theatre history through a more equitable representation of plays presented in the classroom and on the stage.

Kelly's article is foregrounded by the work of Joan Kelly-Gadol, whose 1976 article “The Social Relation of the Sexes: Methodological Implications of Women's History” is one of the first instances of the argument for the need for a feminist historiography, where “... feminist historiography has ... disabused us of the notion that the history of women is the same as the history of men.”<sup>67</sup> She presents the case that, “Throughout historical time, women have been largely excluded from making war, wealth, laws, governments, art, and science, and that when mentioned at all, they “figured

chiefly as exceptions” largely due to some perceived masculine traits that recorded them as “ruthless as, or wrote like, or had the brains of men.”<sup>68</sup> To add insult to injury, Kelly-Gadol’s “exceptional women” have then been trivialized, in spite of “having the brains of men”:

Historians could not lay claim to special knowledge about the "natural" roles and relation of the sexes, but they knew what that order was, or ought to be. History simply tended to confirm it. *Bryan's Dictionary of Painters and Engravers* of 1904 says of the Renaissance artist, Propertia Rossi: “a lady of Bologna, best known as a sculptor and carver, but who also engraved upon copper, and learnt drawing and design from Marc Antonio. She is said to have been remarkable for her beauty, virtues, and talents, and to have died at an early age in 1530, in consequence of unrequited love. Her last work was a bas-relief of Joseph and Potiphar's wife!” An exclamation mark ends the entry like a poke in the ribs, signifying that the “lady” (which is not a class designation here), who was beautiful and unhappy in love, was naturally absorbed by just that. Historians really knew why there were no great women artists.<sup>69</sup>

Kelly-Gadol’s commentary neatly echoes what Brander Matthews had to say in 1916 when he wrote in his history about Behn and several of her female successors:

In England at one time or another plays of an immediate popularity were produced by Mrs. Aphra Behn, Mrs. [Susanna] Centlivre, and Mrs. [Elizabeth] Inchbald ... These examples of woman’s competence to compose plays with vitality enough to withstand the ordeal by fire before footlights are evidence that if there exists any prejudice against the female dramatist it can be overcome.<sup>70</sup>

Matthews credits Behn as a popular playwright, for all that she was a woman, although he is nonspecific with regard to the time in which she was producing. However, in spite of this apparent nod to Behn’s (et al.) dramatic ability, Matthews is also quick to quantify his meaning—Kelly-Gadol’s “poke in the ribs”—writing:

But to grant equality of opportunity is *not to confer equality of ability*, and when we call the roll of the dramatists who have given luster to ... English [literature], we discover that this list is not enriched by the name of any woman. ... the contributions of Mrs. Behn, Mrs. Centlivre, and Mrs. Inchbald ... entitle them to rank only among the minor playwrights of their own generations; and to say this is to say that their plays are now familiar only to devoted specialists in the annals

of the stage, and that the general reader could not give the name of a single piece from the pen of any one of these enterprising ladies.<sup>71</sup>

Here the accusation is less about sexuality and physical appearance, but more about perceived ability, where perhaps Matthews's opinion is a "kinder" variation on the "indelible stain" left on women who write: what was once viewed as a dangerous and transgressive act that bordered on the pornographic by earlier generations of scholars has, by the turn of the twentieth century, been transmuted into the equally damaging perspective more akin to giving Behn and company a proverbial pat on the head the way one would to a clever pet. This continuous negation of female ability as dramatists is as insidious as it is pervasive, and yet his assertion that only "devoted specialists" have even heard the names, let alone read, of any of these playwrights is still unfortunately accurate.

Even removing overt gender-bias wholesale by way of commentary on physical attributes (beauty) or ability (inferior), the accomplishments of women—specifically the contributions of Behn and company to early modern theatre—are still implicitly trivialized. For all Behn's popularity as a playwright during the Restoration, she merited only a single sentence in Brockett's original edition of *The History of Theatre* (1968), of which later editions continue to be used as one of the most prominent text books in use in theatre history courses in the US, stating only:

Perhaps because of the influence of Corneille and the Spanish dramatists, the comedy of intrigue was also popular in [the Restoration]. The best example of this genre was Mrs. Aphra Behn (1640—1680) with such plays as *The Rover*, parts 1 and 2 (1677—1680).<sup>72</sup>

By the time the sixth edition of Brockett's text was published in 1991, Behn's entry was amended with the addition of the parenthetical, "(Mrs. Behn is also the first woman to have made her living as a playwright.)"<sup>73</sup> thus effectively continuing to relegate her work

as more or less an historical footnote. Behn fares marginally better in the ninth edition in 2003, where her entry was expanded to read:

The best exemplar of [comedy of intrigue] was Aphra Behn (1640—1680), the first woman known to have made her living as a playwright. She wrote at least 17 plays along with a comic opera and a novel, and is best know [sic] for *The Rover*, parts 1 and 2 (1677—1680),<sup>74</sup>

thus, bringing her entry up to two full sentences. Very little mention is made of her female contemporaries, although Brockett's segment on early eighteenth-century drama acknowledges the popularity of the female playwrights that succeeded Behn such as Mary Pix, Delarivier Manley, and Susanna Centlivre with a full paragraph.<sup>75</sup>

Even more astonishing, *Theatre Histories: An Introduction* (2006) by Phillip B. Zarrilli, Bruce McConachie, Gary Jay Williams, and Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei, the text currently in use at the University of Oregon, contains absolutely no mention of Aphra Behn (or Elizabeth Cary, or Susanna Centlivre, etc.) *in its entirety* and only a brief mention of Hrosvitha, where her extant work as a translator and playwright is effectively dismissed with the speculative “[Her] plays may well have been intended for reading, reflection, and semi-dramatic recitation, rather than performance.”<sup>76</sup> McConachie's chapter on “Theatre and the State, 1600 – 1900” that *should* at least reference the advent of the female playwright during the seventeenth century, only pays mind to actresses Nell Gywnn (noting that she was the mistress of Charles II) and Elizabeth Barry (mentioned without distinction).<sup>77</sup> While *Theatre Histories* admittedly provides excellent perspectives on non-western theatre traditions, the lack of early modern female playwrights is a perpetuation of the fallacy that there were no women playwrights during this time.



The Edwin Wilson and Alvin Goldfarb text, *Living Theatre* (2018), is one that stands out when it comes to representation of early modern women dramatists.<sup>78</sup> It references Hrosvitha of Gandersheim as well as Hildegard von Bingen, with Hrosvitha used as the subject of one of the chapter “Debates in Theatre History.” In this example, the question “Why was Hrosvitha ignored for so long?” is posed to readers, with a possible explanation coming from Sue-Ellen Case explaining that Hrosvitha was “too often depicted as a poor imitator of the Roman playwright Terrence ...”<sup>79</sup> This kind of inclusion and discussion is exciting, because although *Living Theatre* is heavily weighted toward western theatre traditions,<sup>80</sup> it is also openly interrogating theatre history in a way that is more inclusive of women than the Brockett or Zarrilli texts.

Perhaps more exciting to this study is the chapter subsection devoted to Aphra Behn.<sup>81</sup> Unlike Brockett’s meager paragraph and the Zarrilli total omission, Wilson and Goldfarb take time to not only discuss Behn as a playwright, but also provide valuable background information, including the fact that prior to playwriting, Behn worked as a spy against the Dutch during the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665 – 1667).<sup>82</sup> Her reputation for bawdiness is also referenced, with Wilson and Goldfarb noting that “... there was some prejudice against her because of her gender ...”<sup>83</sup> referring to the reaction of her contemporaries, rather than as the reason for her persistent exclusion from theatre histories.

In addition to the extensive (for a textbook) look at Behn, the Wilson and Goldfarb also includes subsections on the Female Wits (Catharine Trotter, Mary Pix, and Delarivier Manley) and Susanna Centlivre, all of whom were writing after Behn.<sup>84</sup> The Female Wits were a group of late seventeenth- early eighteenth century female

playwrights that are almost never mentioned, let alone covered, in any theatre history text or course; I did not discover their existence until doing research for my master's thesis in 2011. Wilson and Goldfarb indicate that they were originally dubbed "The Female Wits" as a derogatory and satirical term, but that eventually "*female wits* was used in a more positive light."<sup>85</sup> Susanna Centlivre, is another frequently overlooked playwright of this general era, and her inclusion as one of the "transitional"<sup>86</sup> playwrights as theatre moved from Restoration theatre into the eighteenth century and the Comedy of Manners more or less caps Wilson and Goldfarb's rather significant inclusion of early modern women dramatists.

Unfortunately, *Living Theatre* seems to be rather unique as a textbook intended for undergraduate use in theatre history courses, at least where early female dramatists are concerned. More texts seem to follow in the footsteps of Zarrilli (at worst) or Brockett (at most) than in the example set by Wilson and Goldfarb, where the contributions of women in theatre prior to the nineteenth century are either severely abbreviated or missing entirely. This is not to say that the Brockett or Zarrilli texts are poor or otherwise inadequate books for undergraduate use; while their handling of female dramatic representation certainly leaves them both vulnerable to feminist critique, the Brockett is still very much acknowledged as a significant contribution to theatre history undergraduate work, and the Zarrilli treatment of multicultural, intercultural, and global theatre practices throughout history is by far its most valuable asset. However, the absence of women in these texts raises the issue of *tokenism*, where the brief mention of Hrosvitha in *Theatre Histories*, a member of a recognized minority, is perhaps the *token* example representative of a given group.

This use of tokenism creates what Kelly-Gadol refers to as “compensatory history” that focuses only on the “history of exceptional women, although they too need to be restored to their rightful places” or as a “subgroup of historical thought, a history of women to place alongside the list of diplomatic history, economic history, and so forth,”<sup>87</sup> rightly indicating that history is already compartmentalizing between *history* and *women’s history*, as if the two were separate but equal events. This kind of gendering is not only extremely pervasive in western patriarchal cultures—consider the NBA versus the WNBA, the terms *actor* as opposed to *actress*, the and my own repeated usage of the phrase “female playwrights,” although here the intent is not to gender the profession, but rather highlight the historical absence of their inclusion—it is arguably extremely detrimental to the feminist cause in that it reinforces the gender binary through the tacit perpetuation of the woman as *other*. Kelly-Gadol pronounced that “the moment one assumes that women are a part of humanity in the fullest sense—the period or set of events with which we deal takes on a wholly different character or meaning from the normally accepted one.”<sup>88</sup> When we make the assumption that women were contributing to the creation of theatre well before the twentieth century, the landscape of the current historiography completely changes—both with regard to theatre and with respect to the feminist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Suddenly, it becomes significant to history that women were writing and advocating for agency centuries before Susan B. Anthony picketed for the rights of women.

Katherine Kelly creates the summation that for Kelly-Gadol, the feminist historiography “extended to remaking the entire enterprise of writing history”<sup>89</sup> that seems to indicate Kelly-Gadol’s argument is predicated on her identity as a woman

coming out of the second wave feminism tradition of the 1960s and 70s. Furthermore, Kelly also seems to believe that Kelly-Gadot was presenting the case that history exists *either* through the (current) male-dominated version that excludes women, *or* as a proposed female-centric historiography. Instead, Kelly-Gadot's essay, while it certainly addresses the absence of women in history in no uncertain terms, seems to support a more holistic approach to history than it is a call to invert the patriarchy as an exercise in a Derridean deconstruction of the gender binary that presents historical events where men are the token minority.

Charlotte Canning presents the reminder that during the twentieth century, "U.S. feminism has had a complexly antagonistic relationship with history,"<sup>90</sup> that these feminists:

... wanted to create everything anew but they also wanted to demonstrate that these creations had legitimacy by justifying them through appeals to the past. As feminism had grown and changed since those heady days of the late 1960s into the 1970s, it has retained this vexed relationship with history—embracing it with simultaneously troubling it.<sup>91</sup>

As such, this argument is not for the need to completely recreate theatre and performance historiography, or to "'prove' something positive about [early modern] women,"<sup>92</sup> or, like Susan Jonas, to encourage an "other" canon of comprised of female dramatists, but rather to serve as a necessary reminder that the current view of history needs to be expanded to the point where the thought of a separate but equal version of history and the canon becomes the oddity and women are folded into the narrative as a matter of course rather than as an afterthought or token example.

This is an uphill battle. Canning baldly states that "women have had to fight for their subjects to be recognized as legitimate—and to fight for the authority to conduct

their work at all. History as both a discipline and a practice has not particularly encouraged women to be seen and to see themselves as full-fledged practitioners,”<sup>93</sup> a trend that means the explanation that the quest to legitimize the plays of one such as Aphra Behn in both theory and practice does *not* mean the delegitimization of Shakespeare, Congreve, or Sheridan. Erica Abbitt suggests Sue-Ellen Case’s *Feminism and Theatre* (1988) presents itself as a potential intersection, stating that Case’s text “proposes making use of [tension, contradiction, and dissonance] to engage actively with different threads within performance theory and practice... [that] not only foregrounds ‘forgotten’ practitioners and marginalized practices ... [it] also establishes an engaged, articulate model of the teaching of theatre history.”<sup>94</sup> Abbitt continues, cautioning that although Case’s model of “mixed poetics, proposed twenty years ago, might no longer be a controversial methodology in theatre history, its implementation within undergraduate courses is not necessarily widespread.”<sup>95</sup> The 1990s saw a resurgence in academic interest in Aphra Behn as a literary figure—an event that coincided with my own undergraduate experience and one that I credit with sparking my own interest—and yet my introduction to Behn’s work came via an English course on seventeenth and eighteenth century British stage comedy and not via my theatre history classes. Indeed, outside of Susan Jonas’s essay that describes her creation of a theatre history survey course at New York University that specifically examines female playwrights and their plays ranging from Hrosvitha in the tenth century through María Irene Fornés in the twentieth century,<sup>96</sup> I have not encountered any other similar courses outside of the occasional seminar offered on a specific playwright.<sup>97</sup>

Canning also remarks on the general absence of performance as a *legitimate* part of theatre historiography, commenting that the “performance of history is not usually held up as a legitimate mode of historiography,”<sup>98</sup> which has almost exclusively been designated the domain of written history. However, by reducing the impact of feminist performance by omitting production history in favor of textual analysis, both historically and in the present, the image created is still limited to the scope of historians like Matthews and Brockett. According to Canning, “performance can demonstrate aspects of and ideas about history that are less possible in print”<sup>99</sup> that have the capacity to “encourage considerations of the gestural, the emotional, the aural, the visual, and the physical in ways beyond print’s ability to evoke or understand them,”<sup>100</sup> all of which is pursuant to the presence of the dramaturge. Jonas’s essay goes so far as to offer snippets of production history in her proposed syllabus and commentary for select plays—useful information with regard to a statistical analysis regarding production frequency and/or company familiarity with the plays in her “other” canon—information which only supports the overall invisibility of these early modern plays with its sparsity.

Of course, not all “historical” plays by women (or men, for that matter) could—or should—be produced for a contemporary audience, and especially not *solely because* it was written by a woman. *The Group* (1775) by Mercy Otis Warren comes to mind as an eighteenth-century satire that is nearly unreadable, and certainly unproducibile, although she is significant as the first female *American* playwright, writing about the American Revolution. While Warren’s play certainly has value as an historic document, particularly given the quasi-predictive nature of her work in recognizing that the colonies were on the cusp of revolution, her language and plot action are difficult to follow, dealing as it does

as a satire on a hypothetical circumstance of the Massachusetts charter of rights being abrogated by England's King George III.

Similarly, an April 2018 review in the *Minnesota Playlist* for Susanna Centlivre's *The Basset Table* (1705) by the Persistent Theatre Production states that "Though Persistent Theatre Productions (choosing plays to highlight women who 'have been overlooked for far too long not only in theatre but our world') does a decent job tackling the genre, I'm not convinced this play needs more stage time than has already been allotted"<sup>101</sup> implying that Centlivre's play is not one that translates well in the twenty-first century. However, this does not negate the need to include Centlivre's plays (or Warren's) in current curricula, nor should the reviewer's impression of the play exclude the potential for future productions as the perceived flaws could have been the result of any number of factors outside the scope of the actual text.

### Everyone's a Critic

*"Such Masculine Strokes in me, must not be allow'd"* –Aphra Behn<sup>102</sup>

On 18 August 1660, noted diarist Samuel Pepys wrote "Captain Ferrers took me and Creed to the Cockpit play, ... *The Loyall Subject*, where one Kinaston [sic], a boy, acted the Duke's sister but made the loveliest lady that ever I saw in my life"<sup>103</sup> in reference to notable Restoration actor Edward "Ned" Kynaston. However, at the time of the Restoration, England was alone in holding on to its tradition of barring women from the theatre and in public performance. On the continent, women had been members of various *commedia dell'arte* troupes as performers, managers, and "writers"<sup>104</sup> in Italy since the fifteenth century, a trend that eventually migrated to France.<sup>105</sup>

From a contemporary standpoint, this hazy period between the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy in England and the advent of female theatre makers in the public eye can be construed as being almost entirely about gender and gender representations in Restoration theatre. Prior to the 1970s, scholarship on the role of gender during the Restoration is almost entirely that of *negative spaces*—history was almost entirely about men with the gender default set to *male*. As “not male,” women were left to fill in the gaps, with only the occasional woman<sup>106</sup> emerging into visibility much in the way that the space around the picture of a vase suddenly reveals the hidden image of two faces in profile. However, Judith Butler cautions against what is essentially the continued application of the gender binary via the Derridean model of *différance*:

Women are also a “difference” that cannot be understood as the simple negation or “Other” of the always-already-masculine subject. As discussed earlier they are neither the subjects nor its Other, but a difference from the economy of binary oppositions, itself a ruse for monologic elaboration of the masculine.<sup>107</sup>

Butler refers to Simone de Beauvoir’s seminal 1949 book *The Second Sex* that not only proposed the idea of woman as “other,” she also ushered in what would become the subject of gender studies when she famously wrote that “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman,”<sup>108</sup> where “... the body is not enough to define ... as woman; there is no true living reality except as manifested by the conscious individual through activities and in the bosom of society.”<sup>109</sup> In this case, the idea of gender as a fluid concept is introduced—one that Butler expanded upon in 1990 in *Gender Trouble*—where Butler suggests gender as performative identities:

When we say gender is performed we usually mean that we've taken on a role or we're acting in some way and that our acting or our role playing is crucial to the gender that we are and the gender that we present to the world. To say that gender is performative is a little different because for something to be performative means that it produces a series of effects. We act and walk and speak and talk in



ways that consolidate an impression of being a man or being a woman. We act as if that being of a man or that being of a woman is actually an internal reality or simply something that is true about us, but actually, it's a phenomenon that is being produced all the time and reproduced all the time.<sup>110</sup>

Within this framework, Butler seeks to dismantle the socially ingrained acceptance of a gender binary and dispute Beauvoir's assertion that women are the Other:

In opposition to Beauvoir ... [Luce] Irigaray argues that both the subject and the Other are masculine mainstays of a closed phallogocentric signifying economy that achieves its totalizing goal through the exclusion of the feminine altogether. For Beauvoir, women are the negative of men, the lack against which masculine identity differentiates itself; for Irigaray, that particular dialectic constitutes a system that excludes an entirely different economy of signification. Women are not only represented falsely within the Sartrean frame of signifying-subject and signified-Other, but the falsity of the signification points out the entire structure of representation as inadequate.<sup>111</sup>

However, Beauvoir's concept of "otherness"—social construct or not—is arguably still the lens (as it were) through which history is viewed. While Butler's contention that gender is largely performative, and thus effectively introducing an idea of a 'gender spectrum' and fluidity of identity that is even now gaining traction and recognition, gender and sex are still very much binary issues between 'male' and 'female' where history is concerned with regard to who is present and who is absent.

Sue-Ellen Case writes that "[w]ork on the classical periods became possible by studying the image of woman within plays written by men."<sup>112</sup> By taking Case's comments one step further and extrapolating into the theatre of the late seventeenth century, it is my contention that Restoration scholarship is shaped not only by how 'female' was represented, but also by the ways in which it wasn't.

Case writes, "[In Aristotle's *Poetics*] ... women are the outsiders. They function only to provide the limits of the male subject, which help to complete his outline, or they illustrate differences from him, which highlight his qualities."<sup>113</sup> By looking at the

negative space left by the omissions to the literary canon in conjunction with the more contemporary feminist scholarship, a more complete picture of seventeenth century English theatre and the ways in which gender as a category of analysis has contributed (or detracted) from this area of study becomes stunningly apparent along with the ways in which the *absence* of female playwrights in theatre literary canon have impacted theatre history pedagogy and performance.

Issues of sex and gender have always been a significant point of contention within the theatre. This “concern” regarding the presence of women resulted in a double-edged sword: Where, as Case states, the prohibition of women on the English stage was “ameliorated” by having those roles played by boys and young men, on the opposite end on the spectrum was the Puritan complaint:

There were no playhouses in the provinces, and even in London the City authorities frowned on dramatic performances. The Puritans among them regarded playhouses, in which boys impersonated women on stage, and where serious matters might be lightly treated and comedy often lewd, as hotbeds of sin.<sup>114</sup>

Not only was theatre (and everything else except religious studies), according to the Puritan sect of Presbyterianism, a violation of God’s will, and deemed detrimental to morals and recreation of man, the actors were perceived as being little better than beggars and disease-spreaders, “the theatre, like syphilis, was considered a foreign import, an Italian disease which ... would be the death of English vigor.”<sup>115</sup> Stanley Wells writes, “Puritan opponents of theatre and other polemicists liked to suggest that the yard, at least, teemed with prostitutes and pickpockets, and that playgoing was an inevitable prelude to whoring.”<sup>116</sup> This Puritan complaint equating theatre with prostitution continued to enforce the conflation between the two, the impact of which eventually overflowed to

color the view of early modern women emerging into the public sphere as also analogous to prostitutes—an obstacle against which these women found themselves time and again.

To compound matters further, David Grote writes that although much attention has been paid to the “sexual, social, and political implications”<sup>117</sup> of the Chamberlain’s boys portraying women—who then over the course of the play disguise themselves as young men—the obvious was missed: that the actors “were not pretending to be boys—they *were* boys. The pretense came when they put on the dress, not when they took it off.”<sup>118</sup> The (recent) attention paid to homoerotic overtones was not missed by the Puritans.

Edward Morgan follows:

When Gosson and Prynne<sup>119</sup> suggested that the theatre tended to effeminacy, they meant more than a simple taste for wallowing in ladies' laps. ... The Puritans denounced this practice on the basis of the explicit Biblical injunction against men putting on women's clothing, and then went on to berate the inducement to sodomy.<sup>120</sup>

Issues of possible homosexuality and homoeroticism aside, it is clear that the issue of gender on the Elizabethan stage was not without its pitfalls.

Cross-dressing notwithstanding, the theatre has by and large been the province of men. From the middle ages through 1660 England, British theatre has been effectively shaped and directed by men. This does not mean that women were not equally involved; the negative space is the result of women ignored, forgotten, or otherwise omitted from the annals of history. How is such a thing possible? When approaching any historical event, it is vitally important to keep in mind that history itself has been curated and edited, sanitized and censored, with the surviving fragments left to tell the story.

By the time Pepys was writing in the 1600s, the practice of boys playing women’s roles was thoroughly ingrained in English culture, so much so that Pepys felt free to

remark on Kynaston's attractiveness as a "woman." Case implies that in the pre-Restoration prohibition of women on the stage, "the sexual danger inherent in the female gender was alleviated by the male assimilation of female roles."<sup>121</sup> Dympna Callaghan proposes that this lack of a female presence on the English stage is suggestive of the marginalization of women within Puritan society during those times, specifically the Renaissance. She also poses the paradox that "while the premise of all-male performance is misogynist ... in its execution the performance of femininity might even champion women."<sup>122</sup> She goes on to point out that the inclusion of women on the stage did not lead to more feminist plays by the predominantly male playwrights of the time: the negative space created by the absence of women is only partially filled by the men and boys who assumed those roles. As such, the idea of *female* is filtered through the male persona, becoming at best, a mimesis of female as opposed to actual representation, and at worst, a caricature that mocks women. However, I would disagree with her proposal that masculine performance of femininity "champion[s] women": rather I view it as a negation of women themselves, predicated on ideas that suggest that not only are men more apt at being women than women themselves, but that men are significantly less susceptible than women to the perceived sexual threat posed by the theatres, and thereby in some way morally superior. What might have superficially been seen as championing a cause nevertheless invalidates that same cause through the very absence of those for whom it would advocate.

With regard to the gender lens, it is virtually impossible to discuss Restoration scholarship without examining female sexuality. Since women were already viewed as "provocative" – "The predominantly Christian culture [of Elizabethan theatre] had

revised the classical fiction of the female gender by locating it within the context of sexuality” so that by “the late Middle Ages, the Church had secured the notion that such immoral sexual conduct [as the theatre] was the province of women: that is, that prostitutes caused prostitution.”<sup>123</sup> This syllogism, however false, effectively gendered theatre by creating a sexual binary – the virgin and the whore – within the theatre. Case writes:

The female gender had become the custodian of male sexual behaviour, which it instigated and elicited. The female body had become the site for sexuality. If women performed in the public arena, the sexuality inscribed upon their bodies would elicit immoral sexual responses from the men, bringing disorder to the social body. ... when female actors appeared on the stage, bawdy comedies and narratives of lust began to dominate the theatres. The fiction of the female gender had been securely inscribed on real women.<sup>124</sup>

Gail Pheterson suggests that “In general, histories of Restoration theatre assume that actresses embarked on stage careers primarily to entice audience members into liaisons and even marriage, ignoring their theatrical skills and professional status as well as the economic conditions that might drive some women to seek paid labor of all kinds.”<sup>125</sup> This assumption conflating actresses, female sexuality, and prostitutes commodifies the female body while creating a gendered landscape where “... the loss of innocence which devalues girls is apt to raise the status of boys. Sex and violence dishonor women and honor men. Women are stigmatized with *The Scarlet Letter*; men are rewarded with *The Red Badge of Courage*. Her shame is his honor.”<sup>126</sup> Again, this double standard of sexuality alludes to Case’s contestation that women are the “custodian[s] of male sexual behaviour,”<sup>127</sup> where as said custodians, female exclusion from history is justifiable.<sup>128</sup>

In her book titled *Rival Queens*, Felicity Nussbaum discusses the concept of *virtue* as it relates to the Restoration actress, noting how then (like today) they were

constantly in the public eye as the subject of speculation, conjecture, and gossip with regard to their sexual activities. Nussbaum is less clear on the issue of the male actor, saying only that they were “mocked for their lower-class origins.”<sup>129</sup> Once again gender plays a significant part in the double standard regarding the public behavior of men versus women—the male actors are merely low-class for being in trade, while the women are viewed as morally reprehensible for publicly displaying their bodies. When it comes to virtue, Nussbaum recounts that the first biographies of the female actresses of the Restoration “were not simply moral warnings that chastised ... for loose behavior” but also “entertaining accounts of female adventurers who managed to exhibit some semblance of ‘virtue’ in spite of transgressive mores and humble family origins.”<sup>130</sup> This suggestion that these “female adventurers” were inherently incapable of being virtuous is once again indicative of the ways in which early modern and modern theatre scholarship has been grossly gendered, particularly when taken in context with Pepys’s favorable response to seeing Kynaston at work.

This “stain” of sexuality levied against female theatre practitioners from the Restoration onward is one that has most certainly shaped Restoration scholarship through the years: women were the targets of the critic’s wrath, not the men. Aphra Behn, the *second most produced playwright* of the Restoration (after John Dryden who outlived Behn by over a decade), was not unaware of this double standard regarding her plays. She writes in her preface to *The Lucky Chance* (1686):

But I make a Challenge to any Person of common Sense and Reason—that is not wilfully bent on ill Nature, and will in spight [sic] of Sense wrest a double Entendre from everything, lying upon the Catch for a Jest or a Quibble, like a Rook for a Cully; but any unprejudic'd Person that knows not the Author, to read any of my Comedys and compare 'em with others of this Age, and if they find one Word that can offend the chastest Ear, I will submit to all their peevisish Cavills;

but Right or Wrong they must be Criminal because a Woman's; condemning them without having the Christian Charity ...<sup>131</sup>

Behn laments the general critical response to her plays, stating that her plays are no more scandalous than her contemporaries, and yet because she is a woman who dared to write, she is lambasted for having the audacity to enter the public sphere. The Preface continues, claiming that the same “obscenities” with which she is charged are “past with such Silence by; because written by Men,” and that such “Masculine Strokes in me, must not be allow'd”<sup>132</sup> solely on the basis of her sex, and thoroughly recognizing the act of playwriting as a *masculine* pastime.

Additionally, she makes the argument (at least in the case of *The Lucky Chance*), that her play found a positive reception among “Ladys of very great Quality” when it was (presumably) previewed:

Ladies, for its further Justification to you, be pleas'd to know, that the first Copy of this Play was read by several Ladys of very great Quality, and unquestioned Fame, and received their most favourable Opinion, not one charging it with the Crime, that some have been pleas'd to find in the Acting. Other Ladys who saw it more than once, whose Quality and Vertue can sufficiently justifie anything they design to favour, were pleas'd to say, they found an Entertainment in it very far from scandalous ...<sup>133</sup>

Whether Behn's account of her play's preview is truth or a convenient fabrication as an effort to placate her critics is irrelevant. By indicating that not only has her play met with approval from other women, where some of these women are hinted at being aristocracy, who then, is the bourgeois housewife to disapprove? Furthermore, the cultural climate of the time seemed to have less issue with men continuing to portray women than it did with the women themselves, although Charles II effectively outlawed men playing women's roles in 1662 in the theatre patents granted to both Thomas Killigrew and William Davenant,<sup>134</sup> thereby presenting a continuation of a wholly gendered double-standard

within the theatre: actresses were demanded by edict of the king, and yet those women that did participate, whether via performing or playwriting, were viewed as having “negotiable” morals. Additionally, Behn not unironically remarks on the popularity of her plays, for all they were written by a woman, and thus offensive, claiming that, “... for the Generality of the Town, I found by my Receipts it was not thought so Criminal”<sup>135</sup> where box office dividends seemed to indicate a difference in popular opinion from those who were most vocal in their condemnation for being a woman writing so publicly.

With women moving into the public sphere at such a rapid pace, there were both advocates and detractors for the appearance of women in theatre, creating a disruption that was largely ignored and forgotten until the latter portion of the twentieth century. The problem of how to approach the idea of gender on the Restoration stage rests in the scholarship done on this era prior to the 1970s, when the (predominantly) male theatre critics coming out of the return to more conservative and Puritanical tradition restarted by William and Mary at the start of the eighteenth century and continued through the Victorian and Edwardian Ages tended to view gender—and by extension sexuality (and later feminism)—as impolite at best and pornographic at worst. Janet Todd, one of the foremost contemporary Behn scholars agrees with the suggestion that gender and sexuality played a negative role in Restoration scholarship:

For centuries after her death, Aphra Behn was simply regarded as a smutty writer, worse for being a woman. ‘Mrs. Behn wrote foully; and this for most of us, and very properly, is an end of the whole discussion,’ said the booklover William Henry Hudson in 1897.<sup>136</sup>

Again, we see the ways in which gender and female sexuality are intrinsically linked with regard to Restoration scholarship. Aphra Behn, although she forged the way for women to write professionally, also “linked the name of a female dramatist with that of a whore



and warned disciples what kind of personal abuse they had to expect if they embarked in ‘unfeminine’ subjects or expressions.”<sup>137</sup> By comparison, Behn’s plays and prose were no smuttier than what was being generated by her male contemporaries, and a good deal less profane than what was being written by some. However, Todd documents that in the years after the Restoration, Behn’s frankness with regard to sex and sexuality was problematic for those “creating” the literary canon:

“The disgrace of Aphra Behn,” declared the nineteenth-century critic Julia Kavanagh, “is that, instead of raising man to woman’s moral standard [she] sank woman to the level of man’s coarseness.” John Doran echoed the view: Behn dragged the Muses down to her level “where the Nine and their unclean votary wallowed together in the mire.”<sup>138</sup>

Todd’s own contribution is one of addressing the oversight of previous scholars who ignored Behn and what she represents with regard to gender in Restoration studies *because* she (Behn) was viewed as “smutty” and because she was a woman. Todd’s research seeks to rectify the glaring absence of Behn in most literature courses by shedding light on the life and work of a remarkable woman. To the contemporary mind, female sexuality—although still a point of some contention—and issues of gender are less of a stumbling block than even fifty years previous.

As a feminist writing on the conflation of writing and sexuality, Jacqueline Pearson contributes to the discourse on gender and authorship, saying that writing was considered to be very much part of the male sphere, so much so that “the pun on ‘pen’ and ‘penis’ was one which the age took seriously: ‘a pen in the hand of a woman is ... an instrument of propagation’.”<sup>139</sup> Like Janet Todd, Pearson’s approach to Restoration studies is an attempt (one which I would argue as successful) to fill the gaps in the scholarship left behind by the scholars and critics that were hidebound by the “morality”

and social codes of their time. Interestingly, these views of morality did not hinder everyone. Todd writes of Anne Finch, Countess Winchelsea, contemporary of Behn and another writer, speculating that “Aphra Behn would probably always have struck the exemplary wife Anne Finch as too frank and bawdy, but Finch may also have feared that the looseness would cause Behn’s great contribution to letters to be forgotten, as it did.”<sup>140</sup> In this case, Finch’s fear was grounded: Behn and her female contemporaries – perhaps tarred by the same “smutty” brush of guilt by association – have effectively been relegated to the footnotes of dramatic history. Given the surprisingly “modern” approach these women had to their role in their society, more work needs to be done to ensure that their contributions to dramatic literature is neither forgotten, nor included as “tokenism,” which in itself can be interpreted as a form of negation. Merely paying lip service to the work of these women is not enough, as their impact on the role and perception of women today is by no means minimal, and as such, should not be marginalized.

Pearson’s book, *The Prostituted Muse*, the issue of the morality of the woman writer is the main focal point of her text. She notes that to the seventeenth century male mind, “writing women were clearly guilty of something” and that the “charges were usually formulated as accusations of unchastity, madness and plagiarism.” Pearson continues saying that of all the accusations that were leveled against the female writer, it was the “constant reiteration of the charge that a woman prepared to make her writing public would be prepared to expose herself in other ways: that a woman writer was almost by definition sexually immoral.”<sup>141</sup> In addition to being denounced as “smutty” Behn was also plagued with accusations of plagiarism for much of her career, as if she was so “unnatural” as to the content of her writing that she was incapable of “original”

work. This and other issues regarding seventeenth century female authorship will be explored more in depth in the next chapter.

Ultimately, and with regard to early modern female playwrights, by paying specific attention to the ways in which the work of these women has subsequently influenced successive generations of playwrights, we as theatre historians are able to effectively remind scholars and students of the contributions these women have made to theatre. Furthermore, it is not simply a matter of influence; rather, by amending the way theatre history is approached both pedagogically and in production, a more complete image of seventeenth century theatre begins to emerge, and with it, the very noticeable seeds of feminism. We have already established that women in general have been largely excluded from the literary canon because they were considered in some way inferior<sup>142</sup> to their male counterparts by the cadre of previous historians, but by making a concerted effort to include more pre-1900 women playwrights into course offerings, public lectures, and production rotations, the status quo can change.

However, changing the established canon will take a concerted effort by academics and practitioners alike. Richard Bevis offered several assumptions based on theatre canon in 1997, that is remarkably still accurate over twenty years later:

1. Whenever a subject matter is studied, there is a canon. We can investigate how the canon was formed, debate what should be at its center and at its margins, and make changes. While scholars study both center and margins, students in their earlier careers are concerned with the former.
2. In the case of theater, there are two partially overlapping canons: the plays that are read, and the plays that are performed. ...
3. For all practical purposes, the undergraduate student's reading canon is defined by what is printed in the currently available anthologies.
4. Pedagogy is an important part of what academic scholars do, and the question of what students are to read requires a critical consideration of what the standard anthologies make available.

5. Anthologies date because taste, values, and scholarship change. To be useful, an anthology should present texts that will interest students, give a fair representation of authors and styles that were important in the period, and reflect the current state of scholarship in its selections and commentary. ...<sup>143</sup>

Specifically, it is the delineation between what is read and what is performed—pedagogy versus production—and Bevis’s observation that the “undergraduate student's reading canon is defined by what is printed in the currently available anthologies.” The unfortunate truth is that because of their current relative obscurity and tradition of trivialization, many of the plays and playwrights for which I’m advocating are frequently left out of the most popular anthologies. The third edition of the *Norton Anthology of Drama, Vol. 1: Antiquity Through the Eighteenth Century*<sup>144</sup> includes only three plays by women—Hrosvitha, Aphra Behn, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz—although it does a credible job including selections on a global and multicultural scale. Interestingly, the *Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vols. B and C*, that covers the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries are more inclusive when it comes to early modern women writers, going so far as to include selections by Margaret Cavendish, although understandably, the primary focus of these anthologies is on prose and poetry rather than dramatic works. A fast price check on Amazon.com reveals that each volume of the two-volume third edition of the *Norton Anthology of Drama* retail for around \$80.00 USD (new), meaning that students enrolled in a full theatre history course would be expected to spend roughly \$160.00 USD should these texts be required. While certainly not the most expensive, the cost is still prohibitive. Add in additional costs of any supplementary material—that is, plays not included in the anthology can raise the costs of required course materials—thereby making some instructors and faculty reluctant to stray from the *convenience* of the anthology: How *necessary* is it to include Elizabeth Cary (the first English woman to

write and publish a full-length original play<sup>145</sup>) and Margaret Cavendish when doing so would increase student costs? In this case, it comes down to matters of course curation and instructor discretion; however, given the current paucity of early female dramatists in curricula, I would argue that their inclusion is necessary.

Bevis's earlier point regarding the existence of separate, but "overlapping" canons of "the plays that are read, and the plays that are performed,"<sup>146</sup> and his subsequent focus on the former, raises a frustrating aspect with regard to the study of theatre and theatre history. By its very nature, the study of theatre history necessitates reading plays as products of their times, especially since it is not always possible to see either filmed or staged versions of said plays; however, there seems to be some unspoken tensions between departmental jurisdictions over where plays should exist in academia.

In the case of the notable absence of Restoration drama by female playwrights in the current canon of dramatic literature and production reparatory, the division between reading and performance is even more pronounced. The University of Oregon English department employs faculty with research interests in Margaret Cavendish and Aphra Behn,<sup>147</sup> and while their research emphasis certainly encompasses more than Cavendish and Behn's dramatic literature, it came as a minor surprise that the course offerings were in no way cross-listed—at minimum—with the theatre arts course listings; The UO Theatre Arts department currently has no such faculty whose specific area of research interest is as an historian. The current emphasis seems to be more on the new and cutting edge—significant aspects to be sure, as theatre becomes more technologically savvy and globally aware—but there is still nothing beyond the theatre history sequence that

addresses the concerns raised with the canon and the current theatre history pedagogical practices.

And yet, Bevis notes that when it comes to pedagogy, “[t]he issue ... is whether we are teaching dramatic literature or theater.”<sup>148</sup> At the undergraduate level, students frequently do not have the critical thinking skills as of yet to interrogate why there exists such a schism between plays that are read and plays that are performed/produced that engenders such a strict division in disciplines. This divide is one that theatre academics and artists have been struggling with for years, and one that I have also struggled with both as a theatre historian and as a theatre maker. Brian Corman writes:

Even in the golden age of canon making - if ever there were one - the process was more complicated for dramatic texts since they were written to be realized in performance. Joseph Kerman captures the problem for would-be canonizers [sic] of the opera; his point holds equally well for the drama: “We speak of the repertory, or repertories, not of the canon. A canon is an idea; a repertory is a program of action.”

The relationship between reading and performance has never been a clear or easy one ... “Repertories,” Kerman points out, “are determined by performers, canons, by critics. How much effect critics have on actual repertories is a matter of much ill-natured debate.” I would add that the source of the ill-nature is from the difficulty of resolving the debate. And I suspect that performers take almost as much pleasure in influencing the canon as critics in altering the repertory.<sup>149</sup>

Corman’s observation that the contention between pedagogy and performance—Kerman’s canon versus repertory<sup>150</sup>—is still one without a clear resolution. Ostensibly, it might mean greater collaborative efforts between university departments, but for whatever reasons, such things are always easier to propose than to enact. Either way, to understand theatre history and the early modern Restoration era, Behn and company’s literary contributions in any discipline or medium needs to be included as part of the

literary and dramatic status quo, thus expanding our own understanding of seventeenth century theatre practices and preventing them from slipping into complete obscurity.

### *Notes to Chapter II*

<sup>1</sup> Susan Jonas, "The Other Canon: 10 Centuries of Plays by Women," TCG, *American Theatre*, January 6, 2017, Accessed July 8, 2019, <https://www.americantheatre.org/2015/09/21/the-other-canon-10-centuries-of-plays-by-women/>.

<sup>2</sup> Brander Matthews, "Women Dramatists," *A Book About the Theater* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), 124 – 125.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Emphasis mine.

<sup>6</sup> Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History*, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Susan Jonas, "The Other Canon," n.p.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, n.p.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, n.p.

<sup>10</sup> Qtd. in Harry J. Elam, Jr., "Making History," *Theatre Survey* 45, no. 2 (November 2004), doi: 10.1017/S0040557404000171, 219.

<sup>11</sup> Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. Peter Putnam (New York: Vintage, 1953), 3.

<sup>12</sup> Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, 20.

<sup>13</sup> Archaic term for influenza.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>16</sup> Sue-Ellen Case, *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 16.

<sup>17</sup> O.B. Hardison, Jr.'s commentary on *Poetics* (transl. by Leon Golden) states: "There is no definitive Greek text of the *Poetics*. ... The basic facts of the text are simple. It was written by Aristotle (or, perhaps, taken down by a student from his lectures) ..."

O. B. Hardison, Jr. Commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1981), 56.

<sup>18</sup> Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, 51 – 52.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 59 – 60.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>21</sup> Case, *Feminism and Theatre*, 17.

<sup>22</sup> "Rosetta Stone found," *History*, A&E Television Network, November 24, 2009, updated July 22, 2019, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/rosetta-stone-found>, n.p.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, n.p.

<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth Nix, "What is the Rosetta Stone?" *History*, A&E Television Network, April 1, 2015, updated August 22, 2018, <https://www.history.com/news/what-is-the-rosetta-stone>, n.p.

- 25 Case, *Feminism and Theatre*, 16.
- 26 Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Leon Golden (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1981), 26.
- 27 Case, *Feminism and Theatre*, 17.
- 28 “Catharsis,” *Literary Definitions*, 2019, <https://literarydevices.net/catharsis/>; Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Gerald F. Else (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1957).
- 29 Ibid.; Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Donald William Lucas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).
- 30 Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Samuel H. Butcher (London: s.n., 1895), 254 – 255.
- 31 Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft*, 79.
- 32 Ibid., 80.
- 33 Ibid., 35.
- 34 Herbert Blau, “Thinking History, History Thinking,” *Theatre Survey* 45, no. 2 (Nov. 2004), doi: 10.1017/S0040557404000225, 254.
- 35 This figure is based on the two (out of five) primary senses documented on video, namely sight (20%) and sound (20%).
- 36 Joseph Roach, “Reconstructing Theatre/History,” *Theatre Topics* 9, no.1 (March 1999), <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/35206>, 3 - 5.
- 37 Emphasis mine.
- 38 Oscar Brockett, *History of the Theatre* (s.l.: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968); qtd. by Joseph Roach, “Reconstructing Theatre/History,” 4.
- 39 Brockett, *History of the Theatre*.
- 40 I refer to my most recent theatre history teaching assignment: My own Graduate Employee (GE) appointment with the University of Oregon as part of my PhD program within the Theatre Arts Department. However; I also had previous experience teaching theatre history as adjunct faculty with Iowa Western Community College in Council Bluffs, IA prior to attending the University of Oregon.
- 41 The University of Oregon Theatre Arts department generally divides theatre history as follows: Theatre History I: Myth and Ritual – 1640 BCE; Theatre History II: 1640 – 1900; Theatre History III: 1900 – twenty-first century.
- 42 The University of Oregon Theatre Arts department used Phillip B. Zarrilli, Bruce McConachie, Gary Jay Williams, and Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei, *Theatre Histories: An Introduction*. Edited by Gary Jay Williams. 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006, 2016) instead of the Brockett *History of Theatre* text in the history sequence.
- 43 Elam, Jr., “Making History,” 219.
- 44 Ibid., 220 – 21.
- 45 *Oedipus Rex*, directed by Tyrone Guthrie, written by Sophocles, adapted by William Butler Yeats, (Motion Picture Distributors, 1957), 87 min.
- 46 Elam, Jr., “Making History,” 220.
- 47 The use of “president” refers to the head of a society, council, or club. In this case, the narrator experiences a vision where he is transported to a “Spacious hall” filled with notable literary figures, all of whom are gathered to induct Milton into their ranks. This society is presided over by Chaucer, referred to as “the Father of English Poetry.”
- “The Apotheosis of Milton,” *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, vol. VIII (London: s.n., 1738), 233, <https://books.google.com/books>.



48 “The Apotheosis of Milton,” 469; Qtd. in W.R. Owens, “Remaking the Canon: Aphra Behn’s *The Rover*,” In *Shakespeare, Aphra Behn and the Canon*, eds. W.R. Owens and Lisbeth Goodman, (New York: Routledge, 2010), 131. Owen attributes this passage to a 1738 article published in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, compiled by a “Sylvanus Urban.” There is still some question regarding authorship of “Apotheosis”; James Boswell wrote in his *Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*: “It has been erroneously supposed, that an Essay published in that Magazine this year, entitled “The Apotheosis of Milton,” was written by Johnson; and on that supposition it has been improperly inserted in the addition of his works by the Booksellers, after his decease.”

James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, (Chiswick: s.n., 1791), 6, <https://books.google.com/books>.

49 Michael Malek Najjar (dissertation committee chair), email message to author, July 24, 2019.

50 Arnold Kettle, *An Introduction to the English Novel* (London: Hutchinson’s University Library, 1953), 12; Qtd. in Lisbeth Goodman, “The Idea of the Canon,” In Owens and Goodman, *Shakespeare, Aphra Behn and the Canon*, 5.

51 Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 1869; Qtd. in John Storey ed., *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*. 6th ed. (Harlow: Pearson, 2012), 6.

52 Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 11 – 12; Qtd. in Lisbeth Goodman, “The Idea of the Canon,” 7 - 8.

53 Matthews, “Women Dramatists,” 118.

54 *Ibid.*, 119.

55 Susan Jonas, “The Other Canon,” n.p. Jonas’s list omits the early eighteenth-century playwright Susanna Centlivre, which she addresses in the “Comments” section as an error on her part. See Appendix A.1 for Jonas’s full list of playwrights and plays.

56 Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-seventy*, vol. 2. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 26.

57 Case, *Feminism and Theatre*, 5.

58 *Ibid.*, 112.

59 *Ibid.*, 113.

60 *Ibid.*, 116.

61 Goodman, “The Idea of the Canon,” 12.

62 The data here is wholly unverified and based solely on personal observation of approximately six course syllabi selected at random from a Boolean search, and as such should not be assumed necessarily accurate. At present, I am unaware whether there is more detailed and rigorous study of course content in current undergraduate theatre history offerings in US colleges and universities available with regard to the number and which female playwrights are assigned.

63 Marta Straznicky, *Privacy, Playreading, and Women’s Closet Drama, 1550 – 1700*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 15.

64 Joan Kelly-Gadol, “The Social Relation of the Sexes: Methodological Implications of Women’s History.” *Signs* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1976), [www.jstor.org/stable/3173235](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173235), 809.

65 Katherine E. Kelly, “Making the Bones Sing: The Feminist History Play, 1976 – 2010.” *Theatre Journal* 62, no. 4 (December 2010), 645.

66 *Ibid.*

67 Kelly-Gadol, “The Social Relation of the Sexes,” 812.

68 *Ibid.*, 810.

- <sup>69</sup> Ibid., 815.
- <sup>70</sup> Matthews, “Women Dramatists,” 114.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid., 114 – 115; Emphasis mine.
- <sup>72</sup> Oscar Brockett, *History of the Theatre* (s.l.: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968), 259 – 260.
- <sup>73</sup> Oscar Brockett, ed., *History of the Theatre*, 6th ed. (Needham Heights: Allyn and Bacon, 1991), 238.
- <sup>74</sup> Oscar G. Brockett and Franklin J. Hildy, eds., *History of the Theatre*. 9th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2003), 216.
- <sup>75</sup> Brockett, *History of the Theatre*, 6th ed., 240.
- <sup>76</sup> Phillip B. Zarrilli, Bruce McConachie, Gary Jay Williams, and Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei, *Theatre Histories: An Introduction*, ed. Gary Jay Williams. 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 72.
- <sup>77</sup> Bruce McConachie, “Theatre and the State, 1600 – 1900,” in Williams, *Theatre Histories*, 207.
- <sup>78</sup> Edwin Wilson and Alvin Goldfarb, *Living Theatre: A History of Theatre*, 7th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2018). I was unable to track down copies of earlier editions of this textbook for comparison, so all observations are specific to this edition.
- <sup>79</sup> Ibid., 133.
- <sup>80</sup> The text includes a chapter on early Asian theatre as well as a later chapter on multicultural and global theatres after the 1950s. African American theatre is introduced as “multicultural” as well, in the chapter on nineteenth century theatre practices in the US. See Wilson and Goldfarb, *Living Theatre*, 7th ed.
- <sup>81</sup> Wilson and Goldfarb, “Chapter 9: The Theatre of the English Restoration – Aphra Behn,” *Living Theatre*, 279 – 280.
- <sup>82</sup> Ibid., 279.
- <sup>83</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>84</sup> Ibid., 285 – 287.
- <sup>85</sup> Ibid., 285.
- <sup>86</sup> Ibid., 286 – 287.
- <sup>87</sup> Kelly-Gadol, “The Social Relation of the Sexes,” 810.
- <sup>88</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>89</sup> Kelly, “Making the Bones Sing,” 646.
- <sup>90</sup> Charlotte Canning, “Feminist Performance as Feminist Historiography,” *Theatre Survey* 45, no. 2 (Nov. 2004), doi: 10.1017/S0040557404000183, 228.
- <sup>91</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>92</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>93</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>94</sup> Erica Stevens Abbitt, “Theatre History, Undergraduates, and Critical Thought.” *Theatre Topics* 17, no. (March 2007), doi: 10.1353/tt/2007.0000, 69.
- <sup>95</sup> Abbitt, “Theatre History.”
- <sup>96</sup> Susan Jonas, “The Other Canon,” n.p.
- <sup>97</sup> The University of Oregon Department of English offers a seminar on the work of Aphra Behn taught by Dr. Dianne Dugaw; beyond this, I have never encountered another specific to other early modern female playwrights, although I have seen the occasional one focused on contemporary (twentieth and twenty-first

century) female playwrights. Again, this should by no means be considered conclusive; rather a suggestive indicator of the sparsity of this type of course offering in US colleges and universities.

<sup>98</sup> Canning, "Feminist Performance," 230.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Erin Roberts, "The Basset Table: To Play or Not to Play," MinnesotaPlaylist.com, April 17, 2018, Accessed July 12, 2019, <https://minnesotaplaylist.com/magazine/article/2018/the-basset-table>, n.p.

<sup>102</sup> Aphra Behn, Preface to *The Lucky Chance*, (London: s.n., 1686), n.p. See Appendix A.2 for entire Preface.

<sup>103</sup> Samuel Pepys, *The Concise Pepys*, ed. Stuart Sim (London: Wordsworth Classics, 1997), 72.

<sup>104</sup> As the most widely known form of improvisational theatre, *commedia* was rarely—if ever—actually recorded. Noce quotes Carlo Martello:

(1) he [Martello] is incapable of handling the dialects it requires; (2) the *commedia* can be performed with pleasure, but it can only be read with nausea; (3) should one wish to print it, since its effects are mainly dependent on mime, one would have to devise some means to indicate the stage tricks and the curious, facetious, phallic and unbecoming gestures which it employs, an impossibility, as well as contrary to modesty and morals.

Hannibal S. Noce, "Aspirations for an Italian National Theatre," *The Science of Buffoonery: Theory and History of the Commedia dell'Arte*, ed. Dominico Pietropaolo (Toronto: Dovehouse Editions, 1989), 80 – 81.

<sup>105</sup> Robert Henke, "Border Crossing in the *Commedia dell'Arte*," In *Transnational Exchange in Early Modern Theater*, eds. Robert Henke and Eric Nicholson (Farnum: Ashgate, 2008), 27.

<sup>106</sup> Kelly-Gadol, "The Social Relation of the Sexes," 810.

<sup>107</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 25.

<sup>108</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. H. M Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 267.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>110</sup> Judith Butler, "Judith Butler: Your Behavior Creates Your Gender," *Big Think*, 6 June 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo7o2LYATDc>.

<sup>111</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 13.

<sup>112</sup> Case, *Feminism and Theatre*, 5.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>114</sup> Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare & Co.* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), 6.

<sup>115</sup> Edmund S. Morgan, "Puritan Hostility to the Theatre," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 110, no. 5 (October 27, 1966), [www.jstor.org/stable/986023](http://www.jstor.org/stable/986023), 341.

<sup>116</sup> Wells, *Shakespeare & Co.*, 10.

<sup>117</sup> David Grote, *The Best Actors in the World*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 50.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Morgan, "Puritan Hostility to the Theatre," 340. Morgan refers to Stephen Gosson and William Prynne, both of whom were Englishmen who wrote tracts denouncing theatre and theatre practices, most notably Gosson in 1579 and 1582, and Prynne in 1633.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 341.

- 121 Case, *Feminism and Theatre*, 21.
- 122 Dymyna Callaghan, *Shakespeare without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage* (London: Routledge, 2000), 52.
- 123 Case, *Feminism and Theatre*, 20.
- 124 *Ibid.*, 20 – 27.
- 125 Gail Pheterson, “The Social Consequences of Unchastity,” in *Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*, ed. Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander, (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1998), 23.
- 126 *Ibid.*, 237.
- 127 Case, *Feminism and Theatre*, 20 – 27.
- 128 *Ibid.*, 20.
- 129 Felicity Nussbaum, *Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 93.
- 130 *Ibid.*, 93 – 94.
- 131 Behn, “Preface,” n.p.
- 132 *Ibid.*, n.p.
- 133 *Ibid.*, n.p.
- 134 *Killigrew Patent, 1662*, London Metropolitan Archives, Record ACC/0446/FP/008.
- 135 Behn, “Preface,” n.p.
- 136 Janet Todd, *The Secret Life of Aphra Behn*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 2.
- 137 Margarete Rubik, *Early Women Dramatists 1550 – 1800* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 56.
- 138 Todd, *The Secret Life of Aphra Behn*, 3.
- 139 Jacqueline Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women and Women Dramatists 1642—1737*, (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988), 10. Fielding qtd. by Pearson. She also notes that for further obscene meanings of ‘pen’ during the seventeenth and eighteenth century to see Eric Partridge’s *Shakespeare’s Bawdy*.
- 140 Todd, *The Secret Life of Aphra Behn*, 13.
- 141 Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse*, 9.
- 142 Matthews, “Women Dramatists,” 114.
- 143 Richard Bevis, “Canon, Pedagogy, Prospectus: Redesigning ‘Restoration and Eighteenth-Century English Drama,’” *Comparative Drama* 31, no.1, *Drama and Opera of the Enlightenment* (Spring 1997), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41153851>, 178.
- 144 J. Ellen Gainor, Stanton B. Garner, Jr., and Partin Puchner, eds. *The Norton Anthology of Drama, Vol. 1: Antiquity Through the Eighteenth Century*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2018).
- 145 Nancy Cotton Pearse, “Elizabeth Cary, Renaissance Playwright.” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 18, no. 4, *An Issue Devoted to the Renaissance and Enlightenment in England* (Winter 1977), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40754464>, 601.
- 146 Bevis, “Canon, Pedagogy, Prospectus,” 178.
- 147 The former is Dr. Brent Dawson, with the latter being Dr. Dianne Dugaw, both with the University of Oregon Department of English.
- 148 Bevis, “Canon, Pedagogy, Prospectus,” 185.

<sup>149</sup> Corman, Brian. "What is the Canon of English Drama, 1660 – 1737?" *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 26, no. 2 (Winter 1992 – 1993), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2739322>, 309; See Joseph Kerman, "A Few Canonic Variations," *Critical Inquiry* 10, no 1. Canons (September 1983), 107 – 125, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343408>.

<sup>150</sup> Joseph Kerman, "A Few Canonic Variations," *Critical Inquiry* 10, no 1. Canons (September 1983), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343408>, 107.

# CHAPTER III

## SHAKESPEARE'S SISTERS: THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY AND THE FEMALE PLAYWRIGHT

NB: Parts of this chapter have been adapted from Rogers, J.K. *Bodies for Sale: Prostitution and Marriage in Restoration Comedy*. Master's thesis, University of Nebraska Omaha, 2011., previously published by ProQuest.

*Why (feminist) history?* As established in the previous chapter, theatre history studies have been habitually remiss when it comes to addressing the existence of female dramatists prior to the twentieth century. Historian and feminist author Gerda Lerner identifies the primary impediments that seventeenth century women writers faced:

Writing women working prior to the recognition that women might be capable of participating as autonomous thinkers in the public discourse—a recognition we can place historically in the seventeenth century—had to remove three obstacles before their voices could be heard at all: 1) that indeed they were the authors of their own work; 2) that they had a right to their own thought; 3) that their thoughts might be rooted in a different experience and a different knowledge from that of their patriarchal mentors and predecessors.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter will examine the ways in which early modern English playwriting and authorship were gendered, as well as some of the women who arguably paved the way for Aphra Behn to emerge as the first *professional* female playwright in England by the time of the Restoration. Annette Kreis-Schink writes with regard to these pioneering women that, “It is essential to see that ... Behn ... was not an isolated figure in her endeavor to enlarge the space tentatively staked out by her predecessors,”<sup>2</sup> serving the reminder that prior to the Renaissance, “convent women all over Europe took to writing plays,”<sup>3</sup> among whose ranks reside Hrosvitha of Gandersheim and Abbess Hildegard von Bingen. These plays, however, coming from the medieval tradition, were religious in nature, and not

performed outside the convents and cloisters, due largely to the general lack of public theatres as well as the unseemliness of women writing for public consumption and monetary gain.<sup>4</sup>

The turn of the seventeenth century saw the emergence of secular women beginning to make contributions to the dramatic genre,<sup>5</sup> although like the plays written by the women in religious orders across Europe, it is commonly accepted that these were for private enjoyment in the form of closet dramas rather than for production in public spaces. Two such women, Elizabeth Cary, Viscountess of Falkland and Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, are notable predecessors of Behn, with Cary writing contemporaneously with Shakespeare in the Jacobean and Carolean eras, and Cavendish writing quite prolifically through the Interregnum and early years of the Restoration. Given their dramatic contributions, it comes as a surprise that neither woman is well-known to students of theatre history, and yet both Cary and Cavendish are somewhat recognizable names in English literary scholarship.

However, it seems that most academic interest in Cary and Cavendish resides in their contributions to *literature* rather than *drama*, once again delineating the disconnect between discipline pedagogies. Furthermore, the propensity to classify them as *closet dramatists* is perhaps short-sighted and has resulted in the historic dismissal of their plays in theatre history pedagogy and production as part of a genre that is already substantially overlooked in dramatic circles. Moreover, both Cary and Cavendish are arguably feminist playwrights within their own contexts, and as such, the ways in which they championed female agency in their works are integral for Behn's emergence as the first *public* female playwright by 1670. As an attempt to address these and other topics regarding the

necessary inclusion of Cary and Cavendish to theatre history, this study will look at the literary contributions of these women using Cary's *The Tragedy of Miriam* (1613) and Cavendish's *Bell in Campo* (1662) as examples of Cary and Cavendish's early feminisms. Furthermore, it is also important to recognize the obstacles seventeenth century women faced when it came to writing publicly, although both Cary and Cavendish had a measure of security against public censure as neither was dependent on her writing as a means of financial support due largely to aristocratic titles that provided measure of financial and social stability.

Annette Kreis-Schinck's book, *Women, Writing, and the Theatre in the Early Modern Period: The Plays of Aphra Behn and Suzanne Centlivre* (2001), asks the question that stands at the very crux of this study, namely "Why does a knowledge of the traditional history of drama always exclude and repress a knowledge of [early modern] women dramatists, as well as knowledge vital for the study of their work?"<sup>6</sup> This, then, segues into my own inquiry that echoes Lerner's statement that seems to imply that the seventeenth century was historically significant with the emergence of so many secular women playwrights, who for all their popularity, have all but faded into obscurity in both theatre theory and practice.

## The "F" Word

*"Bringing these early [female] writers on board as pioneers feeling their way into the conventions of a dramatic mode enhances and completes our knowledge and understanding of the whole history of ... drama ..."* –Pilar Cuder-Domínguez<sup>7</sup>

Given the current argument for a feminist theatre historiography, it is critical to this study to address what Kreis-Schinck refers to as the "problem of articulation,"<sup>8</sup> and



yet, given the ways in which the plays of Cary and Cavendish are overlooked in curricula and performance practice—*because* they tend to be called closet dramas; *because* neither was writing as an “experienced” playwright, and thus their plays were deemed “inferior”; *because* they were also women writing at a time when female authorship was considered suspect—a feminist lens becomes necessary. Furthermore, given the ways in which Cary and Cavendish approach and address ideas regarding female agency and women’s rights within their works, the argument shifts from feminism as a twentieth century “invention” to feminism as historically omnipresent and only *named* in the twentieth century.

Lerner argues that gendered assumptions have been inherent to the establishment of a patriarchal social order since before Aristotle and the ancient Greeks. She presents the case where, according to Aristotle, the “rational mind is superior to passion and so must rule it” and that “the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules and the other is ruled’,”<sup>9</sup> thus the conclusion drawn from Aristotle’s *Politics* is that “the subordination of women is assumed as a given, likened to a natural condition” and that by “ignoring the need to explain the subordination of women ... [Aristotle] had fixed women in a status of being less-than-human.”<sup>10</sup> For Lerner, the shock lays not in the ancient Greek misogyny, but that these “assumptions remained virtually unchallenged and endlessly repeated for nearly two thousand years” as this doctrine was reinforced, first in the Old Testament, and then by the Church with the rise of Christianity.<sup>11</sup>

Rather than attempting to bend the plays to fit a contemporary understanding of feminism, the inverse becomes requisite: namely, looking at the plays in context with how seventeenth century female playwrights represent seventeenth century women. As the first-hand perspective on women’s concerns, seventeenth century female authorship

matters to a feminist theatre historiography because it is a way of addressing the misapprehension in theatre history pedagogy that women dramatists were either completely absent, or that Aphra Behn was the sole exception to the “rule” that asserts that early modern women did not write. And yet, we cannot ignore the ways in which female authorship prior to the eighteenth century seems to actively defend women’s rights to autonomy and entitlement to respect. Once this is taken into consideration, it is evident that Cary and Cavendish were indeed writing from their own feminisms, and so we are compelled to think in terms of what they, as early modern dramatists, used when writing on behalf of other women.

Lerner’s anger toward the patriarchy is overt, as indicated through her multiple usage of the word “misogyny” and her careful recounting of the historical subjugation of women from ancient Greece on, with her argument toward the creation of a “feminist consciousness” most salient to this study being her assertion that this consciousness has existed in some form since the beginning of the patriarchy/patriarchies. However, Lerner, writing in the 1990s, also makes a subtle error with her deliberate separation of “history” and “*women’s history*,” the division of which had its own origins in the radical feminism of the 1960s that resulted in its own “ahistorical narrative of woman-hatred or gynocide and female oppression.”<sup>12</sup> As such, when it comes to looking for a feminist historiography for the twenty-first century via the early modern female dramatists, it is vital to understand that 1) the contemporary understanding of feminism has been irrevocably (and some would argue negatively) colored by the radical feminism of the 1960s and 70s; 2) applying said feminisms to early modern works is not necessarily in the best interest of feminist historiography, but rather it is more important to keep the text

within its original milieu to best identify how its feminisms are representative of the era; and 3) employing the fourth wave definition of feminism, generally defined in terms of female empowerment, intersectionality, and greater representations of marginalized groups as opposed to solely to the women's rights/liberation focus of earlier feminisms,<sup>13</sup> as the necessary angle with which these texts should be approached. Given these suppositions, a feminist historiography for the twenty-first century must then be a *part of* as opposed to *separate from* current pedagogies as a demonstrative means of true intersectionality.

### “If it ain't Baroque...”: Seventeenth Century Female Authorship

*“For a woman, writing must have seemed to provide an easier access to independence than mercantile ventures.” –Sue-Ellen Case<sup>14</sup>*

Just as understanding how these female playwrights fit within a twenty-first century, fourth wave understanding of feminism, seventeenth century female authorship also needs to be unpacked. For those unfamiliar with the genre, it is easy to forget that the act of writing was frequently considered subversive and rebellious in the hands of women, as well as being a controversial act “against” gender.<sup>15</sup> Authors Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in their work *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), address the ways in which the act of writing was gendered:

In patriarchal Western Culture ... the text's author is a father, a progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis. ... If the pen is a metaphorical penis, with what organ can females generate text? <sup>16</sup>

Gilbert and Gubar are writing about the female author in relation to the nineteenth-century, and still many of their arguments and theories are easily transposed to

incorporate the seventeenth century, particularly since the generative “problem” of the woman writer can be traced back to the likes of Cary and Cavendish and farther, whose presence as authors were highly problematic as they transgressed assigned gender roles and forced blurred boundaries between concepts of *public* and *private*. Here the female dramatist begins to occupy a place subversive to the social status quo, as well as one that was viewed with suspicion as potentially morally dangerous not only to herself and other women, but also to the very social fabric of seventeenth century England. Gilbert and Gubar address the matters of *public* versus *private*, where *private* in this instance can be termed synonymously with *domestic*:

A woman writer must examine, assimilate, and transcend the extreme images of “angel” and “monster” which male authors have generated for her. Before we women can write, declared Virginia Woolf, we must “kill” the “angel in the house.” In other words, women must kill the aesthetic idea through which they themselves have been “killed” into art. And similarly, all women writers must kill the angel’s necessary opposite and double, the “monster” in the house ...<sup>17</sup>

This “Woolfian act of killing” assigns a violent, *masculine* act as one that women must overcome prior to embarking on the generative undertaking that was writing, one that would have been considered unnatural at best, and evil at worst, relying as it does on the perceived murder of the domestic self. Female authors, from the seventeenth through the early portions of the twentieth centuries, were then viewed as neither female nor male: too female for any “real” understanding of the world, but too male (or unfeminine) to be any kind of role model or good influence on other women.

Additionally, Jacqueline Pearson writes that “women writing for the theatre were felt to be in particular danger, risking moral pollution from actresses ...”<sup>18</sup> Like the sexual double standard identified by Pheterson (the “Scarlet Letter for women; the Red Badge of Courage for men”<sup>19</sup>), the gender paradigms within the dramatic world were just

as severe: the female playwright was clearly an unruly woman, insubordinate to her male counterparts, and therefore worthy of scrutiny and censure. Pearson observes, regarding this double standard:

Women writers faced an obvious double-bind, ‘Cursed if you fail, and scorned though you succeed.’<sup>20</sup> Most women writers were conscious of prejudice. Aphra Behn ... was one victim, attacked simply because ‘it was a woman’s.’<sup>21</sup> ... Another [woman writer] expects she will be ‘condemned not only as immodest and unfashionable, but as unnatural and unreasonable also ...’<sup>22</sup>

Given this paradox of the lose-lose choices presented to women writers, some like Cary, Cavendish, and, later, Behn, chose to scorn social values by writing and publishing openly. As the result, women like these gained a certain notoriety, recognized for their “immodest” ways in the public sphere, and yet the same notoriety that would condemn them, also furnished a measure of celebrity cachet upon them.

As with any kind of celebrity, however, the introduction of women as playwrights into the professional sphere of the theatre and their subsequent infamy for flouting the acknowledged social order, was both liberating as well as restricting. Roach writes that “[c]elebrities ... have two bodies, the body natural, which decays and dies, and the body cinematic, which does neither,”<sup>23</sup> in reference to the physical body of the celebrity (“the body natural”) in opposition to the constructed *public* body (“the body cinematic”)—semiotic representations of celebrity, regardless of how that “body” is displayed to the public sphere: Consider Marilyn Monroe, who tragically passed in 1962, but the *image* or *idea* of her body has gained level of immortality, preserved forever in celebrity iconography.

Adapting Roach’s insight to suit our own purposes, we might say that the Restoration female playwright also had two bodies: *the body private*, which would be all

that was inalienable about the individual, and *the body public*, where “ownership” is more of a fluid commodity. Clare Carroll notes that the “cultural importance of ... [female] chastity ... can be pieced together from sermons and tracts on marriage from Elizabethan and Jacobean England” where “women were expected not just to be sexually faithful to their husbands, but also not even converse with other men.”<sup>24</sup> Unsurprisingly, it is specifically *female* chastity that is clearly entangled with ideas of ownership and commodification. However, as more and more women began to leave the domestic (private) sphere for a more autonomous public existence as part of the rising middle class, the theatre can be viewed as an element central to this shift as a point of public convergence. Kirsten Pullen comments, “What happens on stage and in print is not merely a reflection of life, but also a site for contesting and legitimating dominant culture”;<sup>25</sup> in other words, the theatre itself was beginning to be used as a forum to both advocate for as well as reflect social change by way of creating a liminal space between the private/domestic and the public spheres, most notably as the emerging zeitgeists of professional actresses and playwrights, and with it the beginnings of the fight for female body autonomy.

This transition from body private to body public inevitably ruffled many male (and female) feathers. The women who chose to compete with men on the stage and with the pen were mocked, chastised, and lambasted as unfeminine, immoral, and possibly mad even as they were openly ogled and sexualized. Once again, the issues of property and autonomy appear. Jacqueline Pearson, quoting John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester, states that in “satirical writing the female author is a harlot who ‘turns to fondling Books,

from fondling Men’.”<sup>26</sup> Like the actress, who also made her public appearance at this time, the woman dramatist also drew unflattering comparisons to that of the prostitute.

Pearson notes that to the seventeenth century male mind, “writing women were clearly guilty of something”<sup>27</sup> and that the “charges were usually formulated as accusations of unchastity, madness and plagiarism.”<sup>28</sup> Pearson continues saying that of all the accusations that were leveled against the female writer, it was the “constant reiteration of the charge that a woman prepared to make her writing public would be prepared to expose herself in other ways: that a woman writer was almost by definition sexually immoral.”<sup>29</sup> The public “exposure” of material that had previously been consigned to private consumption by way of the closet drama was clearly indicative of immorality: women may do all nature of things in the privacy of their homes, but the nature of making these private things accessible to all and sundry conferred a level of permissiveness that was contrary to the social expectation of women. Gallagher suggests this conflation of unchastity and playwriting, in some cases, went beyond mere immorality into the realm of prostitution and sex work:

... the seventeenth-century ear [hears] the word *public* in *publication* very distinctly, and hence a woman’s publication automatically implied a public woman. The woman who shared the contents of her mind instead of reserving them for one man was literally, if not metaphorically, trading in her *sexual* property. If she were married, she was selling what did not belong to her, because in *mind and body* she should have given herself to her husband.<sup>30</sup>

The female playwright struggled with the internal, in addition to the external, separation of her identities, meaning that the differentiation between her public self that was arguably for sale (alienable) as opposed to her private self (inalienable) was hard to make, even though the playwright was engaged in a form of self-sale. Gallagher observes: “[p]ublication, adultery, and trading in one’s husband’s property were all

thought of as the same thing ... the idea of a public mind in a private body threatened to fragment female identity ...”<sup>31</sup> thus drawing an intriguing comparison between a woman’s intellectual property and her chastity, both of which were intrinsically tied to her identity as dependent on a man.

Pheterson’s “Red Badge” or “Scarlet letter”<sup>32</sup> regarding this sexual double standard speaks directly to the work of Behn, who until the twentieth century, was frequently lambasted by critics as borderline pornographic, and to a lesser extent, also includes Cavendish and Cary, who have been largely ignored in dramatic circles as the result of their gender. Cavendish acknowledged this double standard in one of her numerous Notes to the Reader in her Dedicatory to *Playes* (1662):

I Know there are many Scholastical and Pedantical persons that will condemn my writings, because I do not keep strictly to the Masculine and Feminine Genders, as they call them ... for the division of Masculine and Feminine Genders doth confound a Scholar more, and takes up more time to learn them, than they have time to spend; besides, where one doth rightly understand the difference, a hundred, nay a thousand do not, and yet they are understood, and to be understood is the end of all Speakers and Writers; so that if my writings be understood, I desire no more ... and if any dislike my writings ... let them not read them, for I had rather my writings should be unread than be read by such Pedantical Scholastical persons.<sup>33</sup>

In this case, Cavendish seems to be referring to her critics who take umbrage to her writing solely on the basis of her gender; she voices confusion over the ways in which particular virtues, vices, and humor are gendered, while suggesting that the division of masculine versus feminine with regard to *work* done “doth confound [scholars],” and more than would admit to such a state.

Behn did likewise, fifteen years later in her notes to the reader in the Dedicatory of *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678), where she specifically calls out the gender bias Cavendish alluded to over fifteen years prior:



I Printed this Play with all the impatient haste one ought to do, who would be vindicated from the most unjust and silly aspersion ... That it was Baudy, the least and most Excusable fault in the Men writers, to whose Plays they all crowd, as if they came to no other end then to hear what they condemn in this: but from a Woman it was unnaturall ... The Play had no other Misfortune but that of coming out for a Womans: had it been owned by a Man, though the most Dull Unthinking Rascally Scribler in Town, it had been a most admirable Play.<sup>34</sup>

While Behn's Preface has a tone of exasperation and irritation, where she appears to express a measure of confidence in her writing while acknowledging the gender bias, Cavendish's Dedicatory gives the impression of being less confrontational, but no less aware of her crime of publishing while female: the content that was acceptable to audiences from the pen of William Wycherley, whose play *The Country Wife* (1675) deals almost entirely with the sexual exploits of Horner, and from Rochester, whose poetry would be considered highly profane even by contemporary standards, failed to produce the same outrage as those of Behn.

Furthermore, the penchant for conflating writing with specifically female sexuality was something with which both Cavendish and Behn were familiar, although Cary seems to have mostly escaped such unfavorable comparisons between writing and prostitution. Cavendish, however, was frequently publicly derided. She was the unflattering subject of a verse attributed to John Stansby following the death of her husband, William Cavendish in 1676, three years after her own passing in 1673 and interment at Westminster Abby in 1674:

Here lies wise, chaste, hospitable, humble ...  
I had gone on by Nick began to grumble:  
'Write, write,' says he, 'upon her tomb of marble  
These words, which out I and my friends will warble.  
Shame of her sex. Welbeck's illustrious whore,  
True man's hate and grief, plague of the poor ...<sup>35</sup>

Alexandra Bennett also remarks upon the “explicit links drawn by [seventeenth century] commentators between a woman’s writing and her sexuality,”<sup>36</sup> suggesting that Cavendish’s publication of her work could, and was, viewed as a form of prostitution.

This is not to say that Cary and Cavendish garnered all contempt and no compliment: Renaissance poet John Davies wrote of Cary (as well as two other women of letters) in his dedicatory to his play *The Muses Sacrifice*:

Such nervy *Limbes* of *Art*, and *Straines* of *Wit*  
*Times* past ne'er knew the weaker *Sexe* to have;  
And *Times* to come, will hardly credit it,  
if thus thou give thy *Workes* both *Birth* and *Grave*.<sup>37</sup>

Davies encourages Cary to “publish [her] writings so posterity will believe that members of ‘the weaker Sexe’ can write with strength.”<sup>38</sup> Similarly, a collection of letters to William and Margaret Cavendish, published posthumously, includes one from “The Master and Fellows of the Colledge [sic] of St. John the Evangelist in the University of Cambridge” to the “Most Illustrious Princess”:

We have lately with extraordinary joy received the two testimonies of Your great mind and favor towards us, namely your Epistles and Poems, with which your Grace hath been pleased to honor us, both which we embrace with the same mind with which we do all Sublime and Excellent things, which so long as there is any Curtesy among men, do bring Fame to their Authors.<sup>39</sup>

However, approval for women writing and publishing was heavily mixed with disapproval, with the acts of writing and publishing generally viewed as unfeminine and subversive to the Aristotelean presumption of women as naturally subordinate. Barry Weller and Margaret Ferguson note that regardless of Davies’ encouragement for Cary to continue writing and publishing,

[Cary] no doubt shared to some extent a view ... held by many prominent persons in Tudor-Stuart England that the emerging institution of publishing was an unsuitable arena for aristocrats in general and for noble ladies in particular. ... the

[*Lady Falkland*] testifies to the psychological and cultural obstacles that stood between women like Cary and the role of public author. ... Cary's life story dramatizes the many impediments that even the socially privileged Renaissance wife<sup>40</sup> encountered when she attempted to assume the role of author.<sup>41</sup>

As such, while critics agree that Cary, at least initially, sought to be a dutiful wife, that she still read and wrote despite familial and conjugal objections<sup>42</sup> indicate Cary's own desire to at least partially break from prescribed Renaissance gender roles.

Again the issue of ownership—with the female mind (and body) as the commodity in question—comes into play:

[She] sacrifices to create a different idea of identity ... She who is able to repeat the action of self-alienation an unlimited number of times is she who is constantly there to regenerate, possess, and sell a series of provisional, constructed identities. Self-possession, then, and self-alienation are just two sides of the same coin; the alienation verifies the possession.<sup>43</sup>

While Gallagher is specifically referencing Behn, this idea of self-alienation certainly applies to Cary and Cavendish. In other words, the use of a public persona (identity) enables the author to virtually “sell” herself over and over without doing irreparable harm to her sense of unity and self. Margarete Rubik makes the comment with regard to Behn's assumption of multiple public personas that “even in her [Behn's] forwards she assumes many roles, and plays alternately the whore, the woman working for her bread, the literary critic, the social satirist, [and] the victim of unjust attacks ...”<sup>44</sup> Gallagher's argument for “self-possession” and “self-alienation” being “two sides of the same coin” creates a loophole for the author to exploit: only the woman who is fully aware of her own “wholeness” can deliberately create the illusion that what she sells is herself.

Working backward from Behn, Cavendish's created identities, while perhaps less theatrical in print than Behn, are no less present. Emma Rees observes that “there have ever been ... problems inherent in constructing too close a connection between an author

and her work ... In the extraordinary case of Margaret Cavendish ... attempts to separate writer and work are doomed because of the author's dogged textual insistence and presence,"<sup>45</sup> particularly in her multitude of dedicatories, suggest examples of Cavendish's own constructed public identities. While Rees indicates the "doomed" possibility of "separating" Cavendish from her work, the alternative is that Cavendish's "body natural" is already separate: what the seventeenth century reader (and beyond) are actually seeing/reading is Cavendish's "body cinematic." Furthermore, her outward reputation of eccentricity also supports the supposition that Cavendish had a form of created alternate identity designated for public consumption. Cavendish's unconventional behavior and manner of dress were perhaps a deliberate act on her part, as "attracting such attention to her person simultaneously deflected it from where it would really have mattered—her writing,"<sup>46</sup> and in doing so, set a precedent that blended a deliberate measure of infamy and notoriety with the persona of the female playwright.

What is more, Cary had her own created personas, although more subtle. Nancy Cotton Pearse writes,

... considering that Salome and Mariam are the most convincing characters in [*Tragedy of Miriam*], it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the sentiments expressed in the play are autobiographical. Elizabeth Cary apparently entered marriage with an impossible idealization of wifely behavior, which she expresses through Mariam, and with an even more impossible ideal of an independent, even rebellious, intellectual life, embodied in Salome.<sup>47</sup>

What Pearse calls "autobiographical," referring to the frequent parallels drawn between themes of domesticity in *Miriam* and Cary's own life, may actually be considered corroboration for Cary's own constructed identities. Both *Miriam* and *Salome* seem to exhibit characteristics and traits admirable to Cary: *Miriam*'s "[ideal] wifely behavior" is very much in accordance with the Renaissance mandates of "chaste, obedient, and

silent”<sup>48</sup> female behavior, and can be seen as the “dutiful” persona, the one who “taught her children to love their father better than their mother ... acceded to her husband's wishes [to] become a fashionable dresser and an accomplished horsewoman, despite ... indifference to clothes and terror of horses. ... [and] mortgaged her jointure to advance her husband's career.”<sup>49</sup> Here, the characterization of Miriam is suggestive of Cary having created her as an ostensibly *private* persona created expressly for *public* consumption.

Inversely, Salomeis Cary’s iteration of the “body cinematic.” Cary continued engaging in acts of rebellion as a way to feed her intellectual ambitions, including her conversion to Catholicism, and her continued writing and publication, among which exists a translation of Abraham Oretellus’s *Le Mirroir du Monde* (1598), her translation of Cardinal Perron’s reply (1630) to King James (which was “publicly burned”<sup>50</sup>), and her *The History of the Life, Reign and Death of Edward II*, or *The History of the most Unfortunate Prince, King Edward II*, published posthumously in 1680, in addition to *The Tragedy of Miriam*. In this case, the difficulty rests in Rees’s action of separating “writer and work”; Cary’s extant body of writing is considerably slimmer than that of Cavendish and Behn, and unlike her successors, seemed desirous of neither fame (as with Cavendish) nor had a financial need to publish (as did Behn). Because of this, it is difficult to see if/whether the constructed identities of Miriam and Salome existed outside of *Miriam*. For Cary, writing in a time when “publishing was an unsuitable arena for aristocrats in general and for noble ladies in particular,”<sup>51</sup> as previously discussed, her continued publication suggests the adoption of her “rebellious” Salome identity, at least in part, as a reflection of her own “body cinematic” for public consumption.

By constructing a persona separate from the self, the female playwright was able to “resell” herself over and over without compromising that which is intrinsic to the individual. However, Gallagher contends that “if a woman’s writing is an authentic extension of herself, then she cannot have alienable property [i.e. her published writing] in that without violating her wholeness,”<sup>52</sup> the implication being that in order to be truly self-alienable, then the veracity of the writing itself becomes suspect and cannot be considered a “true” facet of the author. By this argument, any woman who “embraced possessive individualism” did so “with a consciousness that she thus contradicted the notion of female identity on which legitimate sexual property relations rested.”<sup>53</sup> A paradox is created that suggests the women dramatists of this remarkable time walked a fine line between autonomy and authenticity with their gender at the heart—women writers were either autonomous, but inauthentic; or authentic, but still dependent on men as part of their identities. This apparent contradiction highlights the disparity between how female versus male playwrights were perceived with regard to ownership, as issues of authenticity versus autonomy are rarely, if ever, used to frame the works of male dramatists. Gallagher indicates that these women effectively appropriated ownership—i.e. re/claimed body autonomy—of their status as “whores,” indicating that they, being well aware of the strictures that society placed on women authors, were savvy enough to make such a risqué and titillating career work for them,<sup>54</sup> thus claiming autonomy over their minds and bodies via writing as a feminist form of self-expression.

## Closet Drama

*“Work Lady, work, let writing Books alone, For surely wiser Women nere wrote one.”*

*—Margaret Cavendish<sup>55</sup>*

It is already acknowledged that the seventeenth century introduced an apparent explosion of published plays written by female playwrights. However, while Aphra Behn is the uncontested star with this respect, she did not emerge a fully formed Athena out of the Restoration consciousness. Consequently, a feminist theatre historiography would still be incomplete without also considering the English playwrights who came before Behn, but still remain relatively unknown and understudied in theatre circles. Specifically, the works of Elizabeth Cary and Margaret Cavendish stand out as significant early modern feminist playwrights worthy of appreciably more pedagogical and performance attention from theatre historians than they currently receive. With Cary writing in the early Stuart years, and Cavendish following after into the Interregnum and 1660s, both women tend to be classified as ‘closet dramatists’; Anne Shaver offers a point of clarification, noting that Cavendish’s genre of writing was *not* strictly speaking closet drama, as “it is not a term that appropriately applies to plays that simply were not produced,”<sup>56</sup> where Shaver’s definition seems to stem from Cavendish’s many assertions that her plays were never intended to be performed.<sup>57</sup>

Publishing, however, continued to be something not socially condoned for women, and publishing *commercially* was looked at with even more disapproval.<sup>58</sup> As a result, women writers were obliged to find alternate means and justifications for their dramatic works. In England, this meant the production of the closet drama, plays that Marta Straznicky defines as the “products of aristocratic leisure but ... permeated with the traditions of commercial drama”<sup>59</sup> that enabled ‘closet dramatists’—largely written by women—the ability to give voice to their opinions without the censure that accompanied a commercial production.

The closet drama is arguably where the lines between public and private begin to blur with regard to the female playwright. Straznicky goes on to ask *why* these early modern women were writing plays intended only for reading rather than performance, suggesting that in doing so, these plays enabled women to straddle the line between public and private that “simultaneously involves retreat and engagement in public culture”<sup>60</sup> which, in turn, engendered a kind of agency via dramatic texts that would lead to an environment that could and would allow Aphra Behn to write professionally during the Restoration:

A play that is not intended for commercial performance can nevertheless cross between private playreading and the public sphere through the medium of print ... a woman can avoid public censure by insisting that her play not be staged while also issuing it in print. ... the closet play ... is situated in a cultural field in which private and public are shifting rather than fixed points of reference. The private household in which a play may be read is also the locus of social and political networks, the medium of print is both more and less public than commercial performance, and manipulations of print and manuscript format enable the woman writer to address a readership that is selectively public or private.”<sup>61</sup>

Just as the early modern female playwright was compelled to blur the lines between public and private self through the creation and adoption of public persona(s), writing and making publicly available plays that nevertheless were ostensibly meant to be consumed in private can then be interpreted as an additional subversion of patriarchal power and example of female agency: the private nature of the closet drama distributed publicly functions as a way for the private self to gain a voice *without* the exposure associated with a public persona.

The contradictory response to theatres in Jacobean England, regardless of whether they were “public” or “private,” was already a bone of contention. Playgoing was denounced, with analogies drawn between theatres and corruption of both the body and



soul. *Playreading*, however, was a different matter. Where theatres and performance were held comparable to disease and the plague,<sup>62</sup> reading dramatic texts were viewed as “safe,” the justification of which, as made by William Prynne in his *Histrion-Mastix* (1663):

... Stage-plays may be privately read over without any danger of infection by ill company, without any public infamy or scandal, without giving any ill example without any encouraging or maintaining of Players in their ungodly profession, or without participating with them in their sins ... stageplays may be read without using or beholding any effeminate amorous, lustful gestures, complements, kisses, dalliances, or embracements; any whorish, immodest, fantastique, womanish apparel, vizards, disguises; any lively representations of Venery, whoredom, adultery, and the like, which are apt to enrage men’s lusts ... he that reads a stage-play may pass by all of seen or amorous passages, all profane and scurrill<sup>63</sup> jests, all heathenish oaths and execrations even with detestation ...<sup>64</sup>

Prynne’s sponsorship of playreading, however, is wholly dependent on the reader engaging in willing acts of self-restraint and self-censorship; unlike physically attending the theatre, where the participant may have immorality inflicted upon him involuntarily, *playreading* provides a measure of control over what is consumed.

Prynne’s “support” in favor of playreading was not without its caveats, claiming that in spite of the apparent virtues of reading plays, the “eyes [and] ears of Play-readers want all those lust-enraging objects,” and as such, although the “reading of Stage-playes may be lawfull ... the composing, acting, or seeing them in all these several regards, cannot be so.”<sup>65</sup> In other words, while one may “safely” read a play, it is better would they never be written in the first place so as to avoid the temptations of including objectionable material for the reader to avoid seeing in print or action.

However, the problem with closet dramas in general, and Cary and Cavendish’s historical inclusion as closet dramatists in particular, rests in the way in which theatre history tends to approach these works. Margaret Ezell, writing in 1993, asserts:

What concerns me in my reading of contemporary feminist theory is that the structures used to shape our narrative of women's literary history may have unconsciously continued the existence of the restrictive ideologies that initially erased the vast majority of women's writings from literary history and teaching texts. That is, there appear to be several underlying assumptions about gender, genre, and historical progress which link together even the well-recognized divisions within feminist criticism. Such historiographical structures, although they have in fact enabled the serious study of women's texts in the university, privilege certain genres and periods ...<sup>66</sup>

While Ezell is referring primarily to the rather robust *literary* manuscript culture of the Renaissance and seventeenth century, it would not be fair to exclude plays from this classification, as many dramas also circulated in manuscript form prior to being printed. Ezell's reasoning that such heavy emphasis on *publication* with regard to English literature "is neither profitable nor accurate"<sup>67</sup> is one that resonates across disciplines to include 'closet drama' in the realm of theatre history, where the "anachronistic sense of the importance of print ignores the fact that well through the Restoration and early eighteenth century, manuscript circulation, not print, was the standard, traditional form of intellectual exchange for men *and* women"<sup>68</sup> as with the 'closet drama.'

From the literary standpoint, closet dramas have been known and studied for decades as an acknowledged disciplinary subgenre. Theatre history, inversely, has historically been predicated almost entirely on the basis of *public performance*. Under these standards, plays that are considered 'closet dramas' are then excluded from both study and production on the basis that as ostensibly *private* works, there is little to no inherent worth in terms of producibility. Elizabeth Schafer debates the consensus of reading over performance with regard to these closet dramas, stating that "these plays have been corseted and closeted by critics—some of them feminist—who have claimed access to the theatre makers' intentions and have asserted, despite *no documentary*

*evidence*,<sup>69</sup> that these were not intended to be performed,”<sup>70</sup> thereby raising the question of *performability*—why write *plays*, a literary form that arguably is meant to be *performed*, instead of poetry or prose if the intention is they should not be staged? It is this implicit paradox of “page over stage” that forms the basis of inquiry critical to these proposed inclusions to current theatre historiography and theatre production by establishing Cary and Cavendish as *both* literary *and* dramatic authors.

Furthermore, this continued negation of the closet drama in theatre history as a legitimate form of theatre perpetuates the skewed perception of history, first by denying the largely female authorship their place as contributors to drama, and second through the preservation of the masculinized version of history that makes it appear that a playwright like Behn appeared out of thin air with no additional context. In this case, for a feminist theatre historiography inclusive of Behn to be considered complete, dramatists like Cary and Cavendish as essentially *private* authors and feminists during the first half of the seventeenth century *must* be included as means of contextually getting to Behn as a *public* author and feminist during the Restoration. If we accept the consensus that: 1) closet dramas were primarily written by women; 2) the emphasis of theatre history studies remains on the public/commercial performance over private; 3) closet dramas were written for private reading *and/or* performance; then, to create a truly *feminist* historiography, the closet drama as a genre of theatre—literary *and* performance—needs to be included in current theatre pedagogy and practice.

At this juncture, the spectre of Virginia Woolf’s fictional Judith Shakespeare is raised. Margaret Ezell identifies Woolf and *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) as perhaps the source of the “initial model of the silenced, alienated Renaissance woman,”<sup>71</sup> where

Woolf's own frustration at the lack of female authorship in literary canons inspired the creation of Shakespeare's imaginary sister. Woolf imagines a tragic end to the woman who was as gifted and brilliant as her supposed brother, before concluding that "one would find any woman in the state of mind [to write as brilliantly as Shakespeare] in the sixteenth century was obviously impossible. ... no woman could have written poetry then."<sup>72</sup> However, the reality resides with the existence of Elizabeth Cary,<sup>73</sup> who was literally the contemporary of William Shakespeare (although not his actual sister), and who did *not*, as Woolf supposed for Judith, "[kill] herself one winter's night" and does *not* "[lay] buried at some cross-roads,"<sup>74</sup> and with Cavendish, about whom Woolf remarked, "what a vision of loneliness and riot at the thought of Margaret Cavendish brings to mind!"<sup>75</sup>

In the midst of the lonely existences and bitterness Woolf imagined for pre-1800 female writers, Ezell identifies Woolf's telling supposition: that "their writings were never intended to be read,"<sup>76</sup> with the:

... majority of twentieth-century feminist literary historians ... [seeing] the transition from a system of patronage to that of the paid professional writer as the turning point in women's literary history. ... This is why Aphra Behn has assumed such importance in the canon ... The "solitary ladies" mentioned by Woolf who "wrote for their own delight" are not, in this view, as significant in the development of women's writing and its "tradition" as the professional.<sup>77</sup>

Ezell elaborates further, indicating that for Woolf, coming out of the more restrictive Victorian and Edwardian milieus, "the professional woman writer was the one who could be independent of men ... The opportunity to be a *professional* writer in the current canon 'freed' the mind—being an amateur, it appears, did not."<sup>78</sup> When applied to the problem of the 'closet drama' in theatre history, the implications are astounding: the historical assumption of closet dramas as "private" not only associates them with the

“domestic” (i.e. “trivial”), they also carry connotations of servitude and dependency of thought—both anathemas to those feminist critics who keep such works “corseted and closeted” as a direct result. Furthermore, as a result of their exclusion from theatre pedagogy and practice, there is no complete context in which to examine the more known theatrical productions of the Renaissance and by extension, the framework with which we understand Shakespeare is incomplete. By relegating Cary and Cavendish to the roles of ‘closet dramatists,’ their contributions to seventeenth century feminist drama are effectively marginalized, along with any potential of contemporary production.

### Elizabeth Cary: *The Tragedy of Miriam*

One such woman coming out of the proverbial closet (drama) in Jacobean England, was Elizabeth Cary, Viscountess Falkland. Cary has the distinction of being the first woman in England to write a full-length, *wholly original* play currently extant, and yet in spite of this, she is virtually absent from theatre history pedagogy and production repertoires, in spite of being an active contemporary of Shakespeare, Thomas Middleton, Thomas Dekker, and Ben Jonson. Her play, *The Tragedy of Miriam, the Fair Queen of Jewry*, is believed to have been written sometime between 1602 and 1605 when Cary was in her late teens or early twenties, although it was not published until 1613,<sup>79</sup> and it is thought to have been her second dramatic work, with the first being currently lost, title unknown.<sup>80</sup>

Much of what is known about Cary comes from her biography *The Lady Falkland: Her Life*, written during the early years of the Interregnum by one of Cary’s four daughters—Anne, Elizabeth, Lucy, or Mary. Pearse points out that although “several [Cary] biographies have been based on [Simpson’s published] account” of Elizabeth

Cary's life, the majority of them are "preoccupied with Cary as a Catholic convert,"<sup>81</sup> than with her literary contributions. More significantly, Pearse notes that none of these other biographical accounts of Cary "pays more than peripheral attention to her talents as an author and intellectual, except to discuss her Catholic polemics" completely dismissing her "unique position in literary history as England's first woman dramatist."<sup>82</sup>

However, unlike Shakespeare and Jonson, as a writer of 'closet' (private) rather than commercial (public) drama, Cary's work has been historically passed off as inconsequential since her play(s) were never commercially produced. Furthermore, Cary had another strike against her: as an example of a Jacobean play, *Miriam* can be trivialized as inferior to *Hamlet* (1602) given that Cary, unlike Shakespeare, had no previous experience with theatre (and certainly not as a company shareholder-actor-professional playwright), and therefore is viewed as an amateur. The third "strike" against Cary was simply that she was a woman, where Brander Matthews centuries later suggested that women's writing was inherently weaker *because* of their apparent attention to "less solidly supported inquiries into the inter-relation of character and social convention"<sup>83</sup> as opposed to more "dramatic" themes, presumably those that exist outside the domestic sphere of family and home. *Miriam*, as noted by numerous Cary scholars, does indeed focus on the "domestic" impact of Herod's supposed death on his household; however, it is this kind of trivialization and prejudice against "women's writing" that has kept plays like *Miriam* and playwrights like Cary out of theatrical mainstream view.

Additionally, Ramona Wray seeks to explain the absence of both Cary and *Miriam* from theatre history and practice, again tacitly identifying the gendered nuances of current pedagogy and practice:

As the first original drama [in English] authored by a woman, we might expect *Miriam* to occupy an important position in theatre history. Yet the play in this regard has received little attention. Inside a discipline which defines itself in terms of the Shakespearean and the non-Shakespearean (with 'masque studies' occupying sub-sections of these two groupings), a play designated 'closet drama', no matter how historically significant, fails to fit into the 'early modern drama' canon.<sup>84</sup>

Nancy Cotton Pearse echoes the belief that "writing and publishing a play was an extraordinary achievement was for a woman of the Renaissance"<sup>85</sup> given the social repercussions; however, more likely it was the *publication* of her play that was unusual, rather than the writing of it, in the early seventeenth century, as it is misleading to maintain the fiction that women simply did not write as a general rule prior to the seventeenth century.

Pearse specifically calls attention to the circumstances under which *Miriam* was published, calling it "strange that *Miriam* ever came to be published."<sup>86</sup> Cary's daughter-biographer seemed to indicate just this: "[Cary] writ many things for her private recreation ... one of them was after stolen out of that sister-in-law's (her friend's) chamber, and printed, but by her own procurement was called in,"<sup>87</sup> although Pearse refutes this claim of publication after theft:

This explanation is suspect for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that the Stationer's Register shows that there was nothing surreptitious about the publication of the play. Moreover, Lady Falkland's daughter is making the standard excuse of the period for an aristocrat who stoops to publication.<sup>88</sup>

She suggests an alternate reason *Miriam* ended up in publication, citing Cary's friendship with Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, and sister of Sir Phillip Sidney. Pearse identifies Countess's publication of *Antione* in 1592 and 1595, a translation of Robert Garnier's *Marc-Antoine* (1578) and the first play published in England by a woman, as a possible inspiration for Cary's own publication two decades later.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, Pearse

observes that Mary Herbert was also a champion of the Senecan drama, commenting that as such, she “persuaded a group of friends and protégés to write Senecan closet drama at a time when theatrical taste had turned decisively toward romanticism and away from classical formalism”;<sup>90</sup> although Shakespeare’s own *Hamlet* and *Othello* (1603), both written around the same time as *Miriam*, are certainly indicative that the Senecan tragic form wasn’t as completely out of favor as Pearse suggests, and plays that a teenage Cary might very well have attended or read. Alternately, Clare Carroll suggests in her Introduction to her edited edition of *Othello* and *The Tragedy of Miriam* that prior to *Miriam*’s 1613 publication, the probable existence of its earlier manuscript form “has led some critics to hypothesize that Shakespeare may have read Cary’s work,”<sup>91</sup> and although this is again based in speculation predicated on Carroll’s own observations on similarities between *Othello* and *Miriam*, given the popularity of manuscript over print as a means of circulation,<sup>92</sup> it is not outside the realm of possibility.

Cary’s daughter-biographer documents that “After her lord’s death [in 1633] she never went to masques nor plays ... though she loved them very much, especially the last extremely,”<sup>93</sup> suggesting a strong familiarity, at least, on the part of Cary with the dramatic form. Wray adds that:

... recent studies have begun to highlight the extent to which Cary achieved recognition in her own time as a well-networked translator, poet, and dramatist. ... That *Miriam* shares an interface with the drama of its time further suggests the play’s sensitivity to other dramatic influences. These include Marlowe’s major plays, as well as *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*.<sup>94</sup>

As a model of neo-Senecan drama—like other Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge tragedies—Cary’s play takes its inspiration from the histories written by Titus Flavius Josephus (37 CE – 100 CE), namely Book I from the *War of the Jews* and Book XV of



*Antiquities of the Jews*. Josephus documented the fall of Jerusalem by Antiochus Epiphanes through the death of Herod the Great,<sup>95</sup> and includes the Talmudic story of Herod and Miriam (called Miriamne) in Book I, Chapters 22 – 24, with the 1602 English translation by Thomas Lodge generally credited as Cary’s source translation.<sup>96</sup> Wray indicates the use of the Lodge translation, indicating that “Cary’s appropriative practice and use of Old Testament history powerfully link her to other playwrights, such as [Philip] Massinger, whose *The Duke of Milan* similarly relies on Thomas Lodge’s translation of Josephus’s Herod and Mariam narrative,”<sup>98</sup> although the Lodge shares a publication date with the earliest probable year in which Cary penned *Miriam*.

However, comparisons between Cary and Shakespeare tend to be mostly dismissed. Wray cites Jeremy Lopez’s *Constructing the Canon of Early Modern Drama* (2014) as an example of this continued omission of closet dramas as “legitimate” theatrical offerings in the current millennium, stating that “Cary’s play is conspicuous by its absence [in Lopez’s canon],” adding that “[Cary’s] invisibility means that we regard early modern drama as constituting a wholly male-authored preserve,” where as a result, “[t]he identification of *Miriam* as a closet drama excludes the author from generic discussion: for Lopez, and for others working in the discipline of theatre history, Cary is not ‘Shakespeare’s contemporary’.”<sup>99</sup> Again, the tacit implication is that ‘closet drama’ equates to ‘private sphere,’ which in turn, equals ‘domestic sphere’: a false equivalency that perpetuates the historic trend of dismissing the domestic as somehow *less than* more ‘public’ themes.

Furthermore, Pearse intimates, with regard to why *Miriam* has all but been excluded from current historiographies, that “those few critics who have glanced at the

play have judged it by the standards appropriate to the work of mature dramatists,”<sup>100</sup> whereas Cary would have been in her late teens to early twenties when it was written, and thus the comparison between *Miriam* and a work such as Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* (1592), both of which were written when their respective playwrights were in their thirties to forties, is grossly unfair. Pearse speculates that “one wonders what Cary might have done had she been born into a time and social caste that would have allowed her an authentic literary life rather than a life of constant child religious mania,” advocating that Cary’s role in English dramatic history “must still be remembered.”<sup>101</sup>

From a feminist perspective, *Miriam* offers an intriguing glimpse into Cary’s apparent internal struggle reconciling her prescribed duty as a Jacobean wife and her desire for learning and agency. Carroll, again reiterates the Jacobean significance place on female behavior, writing:

In addition to being chaste and silent, a woman was counseled to be obedient to her husband as well, even when it contradicted her own, because the husband was the head of his wife as Christ was of the Church, and as the king was of his subjects. A woman was thus held to the conflicting standard of being completely true to her husband, and yet out of necessity, disassembling her emotions in order to maintain harmony in the household.<sup>102</sup>

Naomi Miller suggests *Miriam* is framed within “the gendered dynamics ‘domestic politics,’ or competing structures of familial authority,” with specific attention to the “women’s ties within the household [that] particularly as manifest in maternal conflicts and bonds”<sup>103</sup> as analogous to Cary’s relationships with her mother and mother-in-law. However, it is Pearse’s 1977 analysis of *Miriam* that is of most interest from the feminist perspective that alludes to Cary’s use of authorial personas by way of her characterizations of Miriam and Salome.<sup>104</sup> Specifically, it is Salome that suggests

*Miriam*'s feminist roots; Cary's Salome is unabashedly Machiavellian in her machinations to rid herself of both her husband Constabarus and her rival, Miriam, and expresses her desire for a kind of agency that Miriam, whom Carroll calls "chaste, yet outspoken,"<sup>105</sup> seems to lack.

To begin, both Salome and Miriam are unhappily married: Miriam to Herod, and Salome to Constabarus. Miriam has grown to despise Herod for not only ordering the deaths of her brother and grandfather, he also left strict orders that in the event of his own death, Miriam should be killed to ensure that she would never replace him as a husband. Inversely, Salome is motivated by self-interest: she wishes to divest herself of her husband so that she may marry her Arabian lover, Silleus.

SALOME. He loves, I love; what then can be the cause,  
Keeps me [from] being the Arabians wife?  
It is the principles of Moses laws,  
For Constabarus still remains in life,  
If he to me did bear as Earnest hate,  
As I to him, for him there were an ease,  
A separating bill might free his fate:  
From such a yoke that did so much displease.  
Why should such privilege to man be given?  
Or given to them, why barr'd from women then?  
Are men than we in greater grace with Heaven?  
Or cannot women hate as well as men?  
I'll be the custom-breaker: and begin  
To shew my Sex the way to freedoms door.<sup>106</sup>

Salome openly questions Jewish law that decreed that while men were free to divorce their wives, wives were not allowed the same "privilege" to initiate a "separating bill" from their husbands. Laurie Shannon expounds upon this imbalance, claiming:

Cary's play describes the *différend*<sup>107</sup> status of women under men's (Herod's or Moses') law, offering a detailed account jurisprudential gap that results from a founding inequity or *différend* within the constitution of the social order. In *Miriam*, that fundamental *différend* is found in the social, biblical, and legal rules treating women, especially married women. Cary focuses on "Moses' Law,"

which allows husbands an absolute right of divorce, while allowing no such right to wives.<sup>109</sup> This imbalance necessarily places wives in positions of dependency and contingency that make moral constancy a practical impossibility, even as it condones male inconstancy.<sup>110</sup>

It is this inconsistency in Judaic (and Renaissance) law that Cary voices via Salome.

Since she cannot divorce Constabarus, Salome resolves to force his hand, telling Silleus “I’ll find a quarrel, him from me to drive,” (1.5.372) although she acknowledges this method obtaining a divorce as “imperfect” (1.5.330); if Constabarus can be made to divorce her (as opposed to *her* divorcing *him*), then Salome would be effectively free to wed Silleus. Where perhaps this willingness to commit what amounts to social suicide may certainly have been viewed as highly transgressive in the Jacobean era, Salome is easily interpreted as a forerunner to later champions of women’s rights, particularly with regard to marriage and divorce.

Salome also alludes to her own willingness to escalate things to arrange the death of Constabarus, “If Herod had liv’d, I might to him accuse / My present lord” (1.4.313 – 14). Pearse refers to this as “villainess talk,” adding the proviso that regardless, “not even Renaissance villainesses were talking about women's rights and equitable divorce laws.”<sup>111</sup> Barry Weller and Margaret Ferguson add that for Salome, by “[f]rankly claiming for women the male prerogative of divorce ... and asserting the preeminence of will over law and tradition (1.6.454 – 55), she crosses millennia of boundaries and ... suggests a strikingly direct alternative to Miriam’s careful (and finally unsuccessful) negotiation of conflicting moral imperatives.”<sup>112</sup> As the play’s “villainess,” Salome is able to effectively wrest agency from her circumstances in a way that Miriam, following the “rules,” is not.

When Pearse suggests Miriam and Salome are manifestations of Cary's own internal conflict between her marital duty and her desire to engage as an intellectual, it is also possible to expand this view into a more feminist approach to Jacobean mandates of female behavior. Weller and Ferguson call Salome "a (perhaps unique) female descendant of the Vice tradition of medieval drama, a cousin to Richard III, Edmund, or Iago."<sup>113</sup> Where "Renaissance women were to be 'chaste, silent, and obedient,' ... *Miriam* explicitly interrogates, even challenges, this image of normative womanhood."<sup>114</sup> This interrogation is evidenced in the outcomes of both Miriam and Salome: Miriam, though innocent, is convicted of treachery and beheaded, while Salome is successful in her machinations against Constabarus and Miriam and, more tellingly, remains unpunished for all her intrigues at the end of the play—a fate that not even Iago escapes in *Othello*.

Additionally, the paradox between Miriam and Salome is further illustrated by Pearse, who notes that "[a]s she is facing death, [Miriam] declares that her fault was a sullenness of temper that prevented her from defending herself. She feels guilty because she had placed her full reliance on chastity of body without giving her husband her chastity of spirit; she has, then, been guilty of a certain infidelity of mind,"<sup>115</sup> that Pearse then interprets as a sort of admission on Cary's part of Renaissance justice for Miriam's supposed transgressions against Herod. The chorus seems to reinforce this opinion, pronouncing:

When to their Husbands they themselves do bind,  
Do they not wholly give themselves away?  
Or give they but their body not their mind,  
Reserving that though best, for others pray?  
Not sure, their thoughts no more can be their own,  
And therefore should to none but one be known.

Then she usurps upon another's right,  
That seeks to be by public language grac'd:  
And though her thoughts reflect with purest light,  
Her mind if not peculiar is not chaste.  
For in a wife it is no worse to find,  
A common body, then a common mind. (3.3.233 – 244)

After Salome's talk of divorce and machinations of self-interest, for the Chorus to make this pronouncement on marriage is perplexing. On the surface, Cary seems to be promoting the kind of wifely submission to her husband that demands total obedience, in accordance with the domestic milieu of Jacobean England. Where Carroll questions the trope of "chaste women ... murdered for [alleged] adultery"<sup>116</sup> in both *Othello* and *Miriam*, the trope itself is not unfamiliar. Often the mere *suggestion* of unchastity resulted in harsh reprisals;<sup>117</sup> in literary conventions this usually meant death for the heroine, regardless of whether she is actually guilty, as an example of the consequence for "bad" behavior. And, yet in spite of the ostensible choral admonishment of Miriam's "infidelity of the mind," Salome's astounding success as the villain suggests the possibility of an alternative, more feminist interpretation of *Miriam* that in turn implies a certain justification for her transgressions, and one that is better suited for twenty-first century theory and production.

As such, *The Tragedy of Miriam* needs to be also examined from a performative point of view, in addition to its historical significance as the first original, full-length play by an English woman. Elizabeth Schafer identifies *Miriam* as an example of a female-driven early modern play that has "been strangled by critics' use of the anachronistic and inappropriate nineteenth-century term 'closet drama',"<sup>118</sup> with Wray attributing Cary's exclusion to the "general reluctance to think about *Miriam* as a theatrical creation" that

historians and feminist critics alike “follow convention” in assuming that, as a ‘closet drama,’ *Mariam* would never have been performed, where “[t]he consensus of opinion is that *Mariam* was written to be read aloud by Cary’s domestic circle (rather than staged as part of an aristocratic entertainment); some critics see the play as not only unperformed but also unperformable,”<sup>119</sup> which, as Straznicky submits, it was never intended for in the first place.<sup>120</sup> Because of this, closet dramas like *Miriam*, have a distinct lack of a production history; if one exists at all it is usually a collection of “experimental” or academic productions rather than what could be considered “mainstream.” Thus, a bit of a logical conundrum emerges: *Miriam* is dubbed “unperformable” solely on the baseless assumption that as a presumed ‘closet drama,’ Cary never intended it to be performed, rather than on the play’s ability to stand or fail as a *staged* entity; however, the result then becomes its thin production history, which in turn, seemingly reinforces the belief that *Miriam*, in fact, is “unperformable.” This rather circular argument, however, is still predicated on the baseless initial assumptions that closet dramas were never written to be performed,<sup>121</sup> the erroneous nature of which *should* call for the subject of closet drama and performability to be seriously reassessed.

Given this lack in Performance as Research (PaR) historiography, Schafer turns her attention to the methodology employed when staging a contemporary production of early modern ‘closet dramas,’ identifying the 2013 performance-studies based productions of *Miriam* directed by Rebecca McCutcheon in honor of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Miriam*’s publication as one of the case studies. Schafer writes:

McCutcheon uses a frankly performance studies approach to consider how changes in performance context ... can create new meanings for, and insights into, *The Tragedy of Mariam*. McCutcheon’s primary interest is in placing the play in non-theatrical spaces—reimagining it and reconfiguring it as ... a gallery

installation—and her reflections are full of revelations of benefit to Cary scholars. McCutcheon’s very diverse *Miriam*s offer a series of valuable, creative, theatrically astute, but also critical encounters with ‘Elizabeth Cary’ and her play.<sup>122</sup>

In this case, McCutcheon’s production of *Miriam* relies heavily on reimagining Cary’s play in terms of both literal and figurative liminality. Her use of non-traditional performance spaces removes *Miriam* from conventional theatres just as it removes it from the established form of the unstaged genre of the closet drama, thereby forcing audiences to reconsider what *theatre* means and scholars to reformulate the producibility of *Miriam*, and by extension, the entire closet genre.

Schafer and McCutcheon’s critical encounters with *Miriam* raise the ways in which PaR encourages the use of production as a medium with which a previously overlooked text may be engaged to further understanding of theatre history. What is more, and equally critical to the study of history, is that in a sense, play production is being implemented as a means of play conservation, essentially seeking to ensure that a lack of performance history past does *not* mean a lack of performance history future.

McCutcheon’s artistic vision is a matter of aesthetics; for some, re-interpretation and reimagination of historic plays is a necessary component to “proving” production viability of “classical” plays in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. For others, success of a more “purist” approach to historical plays, where traditional (i.e. period) staging, language, costumes, and such are implemented is necessary for play feasibility. The critical factor of either aesthetic, however, is taking the requisite step in removing a play like *Miriam* from the restrictions of the page by placing it within the same contemporary performance context as Shakespeare, just as theatre scholars and students would do well to remember that *Miriam* stands as a means of further historically



contextualizing Jacobean plays by including Cary's feminist perspective as part of the lens through which this theatre is evaluated. With this in mind, Cary becomes a meaningful addition to the current pantheon of (formerly) all-male Jacobean playwrights, while *Miriam* is now positioned to not only rise as an example of Senecan tragedy within current theatre historiography, but also begin a renewed dialogue on how 'closet dramas' are defined and studied as eminently producible texts.

### Margaret Cavendish: *Bell in Campo*

From Elizabeth Cary, the discussion and re-evaluation of the 'closet drama' moves to the work of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle. Cary's death in 1639 preceded the English Civil War between the Parliamentarians and the Royalists (1642 – 1651) by a few years, the outcome of which resulted in a Parliamentary victory and the heavy imposition of the Puritan values held by the new majority and its supporters on English culture.

Under Puritan influence, the years during the Interregnum saw the prohibition of all public theatre performances, yet Straznicky notes that in spite of—or *because* of—this ban, there was an “unprecedented growth in the writing of closet plays and the publication of stage drama” where plays effectively became the medium of choice with royalist sympathizers who “transformed playreading into a form of political dissent.”<sup>123</sup> Where prior to the Interregnum the publication and reading of closet dramas and dramatic manuscripts had the ability to circumvent possible censorship by the Master of Revels, Straznicky observes that during the Commonwealth (1649 – 1660), playwriting and reading continued to remain virtually unchecked by the censors, who seemed to limit themselves to the performative element of theatre only. “As a result,” Straznicky adds,

“unemployed playwrights and actors flocked to print both for financial gain and in an effort to keep the theatre in the public eye,”<sup>124</sup> effectively making very public the private genre of the closet drama. Straznicky compares the ongoing discourse between public and private saying, “As with the manipulation of “public” and “private” by publishers and theater professionals, definitions of scholarly, religious, and political playreading are selectively public, which also means that they can be selectively private: writers who [were] either unwilling or unable to speak in a ‘public’ voice”<sup>125</sup> could still reach their intended audience by employing these openly circulated dramas as the means of expressing ideas and opinions freely, with primarily women falling into this category.

As a royalist living with her husband in exile on the continent during this time, Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle stands out as an Interregnum playwright, just as Elizabeth Cary stands out as a Jacobean dramatist. Also like Cary, Cavendish’s own aristocratic title meant that for her, writing was not a necessity for financial gain—in spite of the Newcastle lands and properties being seized by Cromwell during the Civil War—although she became a “compulsive writer,” producing twenty-three volumes of work over her lifetime,<sup>126</sup> while her marriage to William Cavendish “introduced her to a world of political, scientific, and literary ideas to which women were generally denied direct access”<sup>127</sup> in his position as patron and officiant of several scientific and literary salons during their time as exiles in Paris in the 1640s.<sup>128</sup>

Hero Chalmers remarks that “1653 constitutes a landmark year in the history of Englishwoman’s writing”<sup>129</sup> as it marked the year that Cavendish first published *Poems and Fancies*. Although Cavendish was not the first woman published (noted by Pearse as Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke<sup>130</sup>) nor the first woman to publish an original work

(as opposed to a translation),<sup>131</sup> Chalmers explains that as an author, Cavendish nevertheless broke “new ground on numerous fronts”:<sup>132</sup>

First, she voiced an unprecedentedly bold promotion of herself as a *female*<sup>133</sup> author. Secondly, she was the first Englishwoman to publish a large collection of secular texts, eagerly embracing the medium of print. Thirdly, her work spanned a wider variety of genres than any of her countrywomen to date, including a range of recognizably literary forms from verse to prose fiction, epistolary writings and plays.<sup>134</sup>

Additionally, one of Cavendish’s own correspondences with a woman identified as E. Toppe contains a measure of *public* validation for Cavendish’s writing. Toppe’s reply to Cavendish includes the praise: “You are not onely [sic] the first *English Poet* of your *Sex*, but the first that ever wrote this way: therefore whosoever that writes afterwards, must own you for their Pattern, from whence they take their Sample.”<sup>135</sup> Toppe also admired the vast number of genres with which Cavendish experimented, writing, “... neither can there be anything writ, that your *Honour* have not imployed your Pen in.”<sup>136</sup> By writing in such a vast breadth of genres on subjects that ranged from the political to the romantic to the newly scientific, Cavendish effectively moved away from the more “genteel”—that is to say *feminine*—areas of religion and neoclassic translation—and into the creation of the “modern female author,”<sup>137</sup> the woman who is “innovatively disregarding of the idea that women’s publication is shameful.”<sup>138</sup> Furthermore, Toppe’s recognition of Cavendish as a literary force, especially when paired with Cavendish’s letter from the Master and Fellows of the Colledge [sic] of St. John the Evangelist in the University of Cambridge,<sup>139</sup> denotes that Cavendish was acknowledged as a significant writer in her own time, regardless of gender. Cavendish fell into relative obscurity only after her death, although, again like Cary, she too has effectively been “rediscovered” and appreciated as an early modern writer of consequence by feminist scholars over the past fifty years.

Although Cavendish openly published, and published extensively, the front matter and prefaces to her early works tend to read more like a series of pre-emptive *mea culpas*—a definite deniability tactic that presents Cavendish as self-effacing as a way to disarm those critics who she knew would attack as the result of her writing, even as it served as a common literary convention of the time. Rees comments on the sheer volume of Cavendish’s “peritextual self-displays,” noting that that the 1662 volume *Playes* contains twelve such pieces that clearly evidence her “anxieties over how her readers would receive her works ... [as] ... symptomatic of ‘functional ambiguity’”<sup>140</sup> and how it then related to the “repercussions for authorial intentionality.”<sup>141</sup> By alleging she was “forced to do all my self ... without any help or direction”<sup>142</sup> she effectively both claims and denies responsibility for audience reception: if the response was favorable, then it is due to her own work; if it was negative, then it is because she is self-taught and did not know any better.

By the time her second volume of plays was published in 1668, however, Cavendish’s front matter was reduced to a single dedicatory to the readers. Where the front matter to *Playes* is indicative of the “anxieties” of a novice to publishing, her *lack* of apology before *Plays Never Before Printed* seems to evidence a more confident and experienced writer. Straznicky notes that that it was “published with the greater ambition of reaching readers in ‘future Ages’”<sup>143</sup> with Cavendish herself indicating that she “[regards] not so much the present,” which she refers to as a “malicious, and envious Age,”<sup>144</sup> but the future, which suggests a kind of optimism where the act of publishing while female isn’t subjected to as much “Publick Censure”<sup>145</sup> as female authorship was in Cavendish’s time.

Cavendish also flouted custom by publishing her works under her own name rather than anonymously or even using her husband's already well-established literary name. Her ownership can be construed as a separation of identity from her husband: *Margaret Cavendish* is a published author completely autonomous in this regard from *William Cavendish*, and the presence of her name indicates her intentions to publicize her *intellectual* proprietorship of her work. By seventeenth century standards, this kind of declaration of (marital) independence speaks to Cavendish's brand of feminism, where she has effectively proclaimed herself an *individual*, rather than allowing her *self* to be subsumed by her husband's intellectual and literary cachet. In this case, claiming full authorial ownership of her works by publishing openly rather than secretly, under a *nome de plume* (as many women did<sup>146</sup>), or apologetically, allowed Cavendish to effectively establish a path of autonomy and agency that successive female authors such as Behn would follow in the years to come.

Furthermore, for Cavendish, publishing was a deliberate act with the specific purpose of establishing herself in the public eye and developing her own form of "the body cinematic." She writes in her *Sociable Letters*:

I should weep myself into water, if I could have no other fame than rich coaches, lackeys, and what state and ceremony could produce, for my ambition flies higher, as to worth or merit, not state or vanity; I would have my actions known by my wit, not by my folly, and I would have my actions so wise and just, as I might neither be ashamed or afraid to hear myself.<sup>149</sup>

Both Straznicky and Mona Narain indicate that this desire for fame (or infamy) stems from a desire to "establish a public and literary fame that would extend beyond her lifetime"<sup>150</sup> thus "ensuring she would be known to future readers."<sup>151</sup> Narain continues, reporting that this desire originated from Cavendish's own uncertainty of the existence of

heaven or an afterlife, as espoused by religion, and so “Cavendish came to believe that fame was the sure and necessary means to a different afterlife—one of celebrity, and the best means of ensuring that posterity would record and remember one's existence.”<sup>152</sup> In this case, Cavendish's published works effectively become her own “body cinematic.”

While Cavendish was writing and publishing during the Interregnum, it is a somewhat tricky exercise to classify her plays. Where Shaver is careful to point out that Cavendish was *not* writing closet dramas because her plays were never produced,<sup>153</sup> Bennett is more specific, referencing one of Cavendish's multitude of prefaces<sup>154</sup> that seems to clearly indicate the intention that her plays should be read rather than performed:

... but the printing of my Playes spoils them for ever to be Acted, for what men are acquainted with, is despised, at least neglected; for the newness of Playes, most commonly, takes the spectators, more than the wit, scenes, or plot, so that my players would seem lame or tired in action, and dull to hearing on the Stage, for which reason, I shall never desire they should be Acted ...<sup>155</sup>

Indeed, many of Cavendish's prefaces and other writings directed toward “The Reader” seem to support the traditional assertion that Cavendish truly had little interest in having her plays produced.<sup>156</sup> Straznicky reminds us that critics citing Cavendish's professed lack of interest in seeing her plays upon the stage as reason against classifying her work with other closet dramas “[fail] to examine the significance of the fact that the plays [were] written for an audience of readers at a time when the theaters were closed ...”<sup>157</sup> and as such, Cavendish's resistance to production should be evaluated in context with the English Puritan views on performance and playgoing.

Additionally, as Cavendish was in exile on the continent during the Commonwealth where theatre performance was *not* prohibited, the presumed lack of

private production along with Cavendish's proclaimed aversion to said performance is stated clearly in the same note to the readers:

The reason why I put out my Playes in print, before they are Acted, is, first, that I know not when they will be Acted, by reason they are in English, and *England* doth not permit, I will not say, of Wit, yet not of Playes; and if they should, yet by reason all those that have been bred and brought up to Act, are dead, or dispersed, and it would be an Act of some time, not only to breed and teach some Youths to Act, but it will require some time to prove whether they be good Actors or no  
...158

Her resistance seems to be predicated more on the number and quality of available *English* actors than in a genuine disinterest in the performability of her play as the rest of the dedicatory would suggest.

Margaret Ezell asserts with regard to early feminist English literary historiography:

[The] adherence to a linear narrative of women's literary history has directed the type of questions we ask about early women writers. ... the current theoretical model of women's literary history is very much concerned with who wins, who is better than another. ... The problem with this type of linear historiography that focuses on unique events ... As a result, this history can easily negate those events preceding the chosen significant one on the timeline; for example, women who do not fit the pattern of development signposted by the special events get labeled "anomalies" or are defined as doing something different and less important (writing "closet" literature) ...159

Ezell's statement forces us to change the perspective when it comes to theatre historiography. While Straznicky's contention that Cavendish's plays were not meant for performance on the basis that there were no performances currently being staged in *England*, she is also predicating this claim on the traditional conception of the closet drama and linear narrative of female playwriting that adheres to the current theatrical standard based almost entirely around *public* performance. The argument then becomes against the ways that current theatre historiography is inherently sexist when it comes to

early modern female dramatists, such as Cavendish and Cary given the bias against closet drama.

Moreover, many of Cavendish's plays include an introductory scene, prologue, or epilogue that in some ways references active theatre attendance, without mention of the current state of theatre in England. The Prologue to *Loves Adventures* opens with the lines "Noble Spectators, you are come to see, / A Play, if good, perchance may clapped be";<sup>160</sup> *Youths Glory, and Deaths Banquet* ends with "Noble Spectators, now you have seen this Play; / And heard it speak, let's hear what now you say"<sup>161</sup> to indicate a few. Cavendish's repeated use of *spectators* implies a distinct departure from her addresses "To the Reader" in the front matter of *Playes*, that implies a reality—or at least a future—in which Cavendish envisioned her plays performed before an audience, contradicting her earlier assurances that her plays were only for reading and not for seeing. This discrepancy calls into question, then, Shaver and Bennett's assessment that Cavendish was not writing closet drama because her authorial intentions were never intended for production.

Furthermore, Shaver and Bennett do not account for the possibility/probability of Cavendish's plays circulating in *manuscript* form prior to their publication in 1662, possibly *without* the numerous dedications and performed as such. Critics and Cavendish scholars agree that Cavendish (then Margaret Lucas) fled into exile in 1644 as part of Henrietta Maria's retinue, meeting and marrying William Cavendish in Paris the next year.<sup>162</sup> Cavendish and her husband remained in exile, first in Paris, then Rotterdam, and finally Antwerp,<sup>163</sup> until 1660 when they finally (and permanently) returned to England.<sup>164</sup> While in exile, Cavendish returned briefly to London in 1653, with her



brother-in-law, Charles, in an attempt to negotiate (unsuccessfully) with Cromwell's parliament for the return of the confiscated Cavendish estates,<sup>165</sup> before returning to Antwerp. It was during this trip when Cavendish had her first volumes, *Poems and Fancies* and *Philosophicall Fancies* published, thus launching her extensive published body of work.<sup>166</sup>

It is also accepted that Cavendish did not begin her "compulsive writing" until after meeting and marrying William in 1645. Given the large quantity of plays in *Playes* (1662) (thirteen, with some in several parts), it seems unrealistic to believe that Cavendish was inactive as a writer for the nine years between *Poems and Fancies* when *Playes* was published, or that she wrote thirteen plays in the two years between her return to England and publication (although the latter is not impossible). Rather, it is more likely that Cavendish wrote her plays consistently over the course of her exile, where the probability remains that they were circulated, and even performed, in manuscript form. If this is the case, then Cavendish's multiple prologue addresses to her "Noble Spectators"—who could have been noble by virtue of being part of the displaced royalist aristocracy in exile with the Cavendishes—certainly indicates a reasonable assumption that her plays, in fact, saw some kind of performance, contrary to current consensus.

Additionally, the General Introductory scene to *Playes* further hints at Cavendish's complex relationship with performance of her plays. Of particular note, Cavendish seems to use this scene to directly address the controversy of female authorship while also alluding to active playgoing. The scene centers around three unnamed gentlemen engaged in discussion over attending the theatre. After some banter back and forth, during which 2 GENTLEMAN mostly disparages plays as being

“tiresome” and nothing but “empty words, dull speeches, long parts, tedious acts, ill acts ... and ... not enough variety,”<sup>167</sup> 1 GENTLEMAN offers that the play in question is a “new play” that was “writ by a lady, who on my conscience hath neither language, nor learning but what is native and natural.”<sup>168</sup> 2 GENTLEMAN’s responds:

2 GENTLEMAN. A woman write a play! Out upon it, out upon it, for cannot be good, besides, you say she is a lady, which is the likelier to make a play worse, a woman and a lady to write a play; fie, fie.

3 GENTLEMAN. Why may not a lady write a good play?

2 GENTLEMAN. No, for a woman’s wit is too weak and too conceited to write a play.<sup>169</sup>

Again, the spurious argument against women writing “good” plays is in evidence: the new play is judged and deemed lacking solely on the basis of female authorship.<sup>170</sup> By addressing this prejudice outright, Cavendish cleverly creates a space in which she may argue against this assumption by allowing her *male* characters to refute it for her:

1 GENTLEMAN. But if a woman hath wit, or can write a good play, what will you say then.

2 GENTLEMAN. Why, I will say nobody will believe it, or if it be good, they will think she did not write it, or at least say she did not, besides, the very being a woman condemns it, were it never so excellent and rare, for men will not allow women to have wit, or women to have reason, for if we allow them wit, we shall lose our preeminence.<sup>171</sup>

Again, Cavendish cunningly strikes at the crux of the matter: women writers were accused of plagiarism and/or inferiority because it was deemed “unnatural” for a woman to have the “wit and reason” necessary to generate a “good” play; any admission by men (as written by Cavendish) that women were, in fact, capable *autonomous* people, suggests that the entire patriarchal power structure would change. For all of Lady Victoria’s agency in the *Bell in Campo*, this short scene is what drives Cavendish’s work as feminist and champion of female authorship. Cavendish’s use of men to identify and *then dismantle* the patriarchy in a sentence that directly recognizes female (intellectual)

inferiority as a *deliberate social construct* as an act of subjugation seems shocking to a contemporary reader, especially coming from current (theatre) historiographical assumptions of early modern female authorship and behavior.<sup>172</sup> Cavendish's brief introductory scene concludes:

1 GENTLEMAN. If you will not go Tom, farewell; for I will go see this play, let it be good, or bad.

2 GENTLEMAN. Nay stay, I will go with thee, for I am contented to cast away so much time for the sake of the sex. Although I have no faith of the authoress' wit.

3 GENTLEMAN. Many a reprobate hath been converted and brought to repentance by hearing a good sermon, and who knows but that you may be converted from your erroneous opinion; by seeing this Play, and brought to confess that a lady may have wit.<sup>173</sup>

Again, the emphasis is succinctly placed on 2 GENTLEMAN's "erroneous opinion" with a sly acknowledgement that "[he] may be converted ... by seeing this Play," the subtext of which implies that 2 GENTLEMAN will change his mind after seeing the quality of work and acknowledging that women had equal claim to wit and reason as men.

Additionally, 2 GENTLEMAN capitulates rather readily once 1 GENTLEMAN asserts that he, at least, intends to go regardless of 2 GENTLEMAN. Where the significant objective of this scene is the obvious advocacy for female authorship in *public* spaces, Cavendish's clever and subtle satire on the patriarchal status quo that included the intellectual suppression of women by "disallowing female wit and reason," suggests a deeper feminist connection between *Playes* and her later *Observations on Experimental Philosophy* (1668) where she wrote:

... it is sufficiently known, that our Sex being not suffered to be instructed in Schools and Universities, cannot be bred up to [learning]. I will not say, but many of our Sex may have as much wit, and be capable of Learning as well as Men; but since they want Instructions, it is not possible they should attain to it ... <sup>174</sup>

By this point, Cavendish had already been famously excluded from membership of the Royal Society, although she was invited to observe on several occasions, and her own lack of formal education seems to have been a point—albeit small—of frustration for her. Whatever Cavendish’s educational limitations were, they did not prevent her from speaking and writing her mind, nor did they keep her from advocating for female agency in her works.

*Bell in Campo* (1662)<sup>175</sup> seems to speak directly to the matter of female agency, and, like Cary’s *Miriam*, is objectively a clear example of a feminist play. Written following the Civil War that had such a devastating impact on Cavendish, and while she was in exile, *Bell in Campo* is often interpreted as a satire on war and the impact on the role of women within that framework. The battle is set between two fictitious nations, Reformation and Faction, where the women of Reformation follow their men into battle in contrast to the ladies of Faction who choose to remain at home. The women of Reformation, led by Lady Victoria (wife to the Lord General), form their own army, save their male counterparts, and return home as “heroickesses,”<sup>176</sup> while Lady Jantil and Madam Passionate of Faction, both of whom suffer the loss of their respective husbands, fall to sad or ignominious ends: Lady Jantil effectively willing herself to death at the tomb of her husband and Madam Passionate imprudently wedding a man several years her junior.

Bennett writes that it “would be easy to see the play as an elaborate fantasy of agency for a [royalist],”<sup>177</sup> particularly given how Cavendish’s own deep love for her husband could feasibly inspire dreams of riding to his rescue;<sup>178</sup> however, she cautions that “such a reading ignores ... that women ... [fought] for both sides in the English Civil

War,” both openly as women and disguised as men.<sup>179</sup> Lady Victoria’s army of Reformation women echoes Queen Henrietta Maria’s own involvement, where Bennett references letters from the Queen: “This army is called the Queen’s army, but I have little power over it, and I assure you that if I had, all would go on better than it does.”<sup>180</sup> It is easy to draw comparison from this line between Queen Henrietta Maria and Lady Victoria, as the latter is effectively a utopian idealization of the Queen and her efforts to aid her husband against the Parliamentarians.

Bennett recommends looking beyond the obvious “rollicking story of a female army” noting that *Bell in Campo* also surveys the impact of civil conflict on social conditions<sup>181</sup> while also looking at representations of female agency (however quixotic). In this sense, Lady Victoria stands out as the clear paradigm of female virtue. From the start, she is unhappy about being left behind as her husband (identified as Lord General) is making preparations to leave for war. She declares that she will go with him and holds her resolve in spite of her husband’s trepidation and cautioning that “long marches, ill lodging, much watching, cold nights, scorching days, hunger and danger are ill companions for ladies” adding that soldiers are often “rough and rude, being too boisterous for ladies.”<sup>182</sup> Lady Victoria responds, telling him:

LADY VICTORIA. ... contrive it as well you can for go I must or either I shall die or dishonour you; for if I stay behind you, the very imaginations of your danger will torture me, sad dream spell a friend to me, every little noise will sound as your passing Bell, and my fearful mind it will transform every object like as your pale ghost, until I am smothered in my sighs, shrouded in my tears, and buried in my griefs ... as for the honour of constancy, or constant fidelity, or the dishonor of inconstancy, the lovingest and best wife in all story that is reported to be ... was Penelope, Ulysses wife ... and though the siege of her chastity held out, yet her husband’s wealth and estate was impoverished and great riots committed both in his family and kingdom, and her suitors had absolute power thereof; thus though she kept the fort of her chastity, she lost the kingdom ... so if you let me stay behind you, it will be a thousand to one but either you will

lose me in death, or your honour in life, where if you let me go you will save both.<sup>183</sup>

Lady Victoria's rhetoric sways the Lord General and both depart for the front.

*Bell in Campo* looks beyond the virtues of Lady Victoria, through the other named female characters: Madams Ruffle and Wiffell of Reformation and Madams Jantil and Passionate of Faction. Madam Wiffell, upon being asked by her husband Captain Wiffell to follow Lady Victoria's example and come with him to the front, claims female delicacy and general infirmity as her reasons for not wanting to go; Madam Ruffell uses vanity and self-interest disguised as love as her refusal, telling her husband that she "will not disquiet [her] rest with inconveniences, nor divert [her] pleasures with troubles," adding that she "will not venture [her] complexion to the wrath of the sun."<sup>184</sup> When her husband threatens her with his infidelity with a "laundry-maid" in her absence, she retorts that not only should he also take her kitchen maid, but that while he "ride[s] with [his] laundry-maid in [his] wagon, [she] will ride with [her] gentleman-usher in [her] coach," telling him that "'tis out of love that [she] will stay at home."<sup>185</sup> Cavendish is advocating against attitudes and behaviors that stereotype the women of her age, and thereby effectively prevent them from any kind of public accomplishment or accolade, by implying that women are petty, selfish, and only interested in the trivial; where Lady Victoria is the distinct standard of female virtue and rewarded for her ingenuity, bravery, and willingness to take action alongside her husband as his equal, Madams Wiffell and Ruffell are the clear examples of female vice, and are summarily dismissed as irrelevant and insignificant by Cavendish.

Alternately, Madam Jantil serves as the example of the dutiful wife. Although she expresses her desire to travel with her husband Seigneur Valeroso of Faction, she obeys

when he denies her request. In this case, Cavendish seems to be calling Jantil's passivity into question: like Lady Victoria, Jantil wants to accompany her husband to war; however, where Lady Victoria demonstrates her agency by successfully arguing as to why she should travel with the Lord General, Jantil responds to her husband's refusal with the meek "I shall obey you, but yet I think it were not well I should be a long time from you, and at a great distance."<sup>186</sup> Her acceptance of her husband's dictates at the start of war lead to her eventual death: Jantil is essentially unable to continue living without Virtuoso, and effectively wills herself to death upon hearing of his demise, an act of "devotion" that echoes the plot point in Cary's *Miriam*, where Herod decrees that *Miriam* should also die in the event he be killed so as to not continue without him. While Jantil's death is her "choice" rather than because of her husband's mandate, the end result is more or less the same, although without the accusations of unchastity

Similarly, *Madam Passionate* asks her husband *Monsieur La Hardy* why he must go, referring to his age and saying, "we have lived a married pair above these thirty years, and never parted ... shall we now be separated when we are old?"<sup>187</sup> to which *La Hardy* also references his own duty and honor. *Passionate* is also more or less passively accepting of her husband's duty; however, unlike Jantil, while initially distraught over *Captain La Hardy's* death, she soon begins to speculate about living a life alone. Several men woo her, all of whom spend their time plotting to coax either wealthy widow into remarriage. Once Jantil's intent to remain a widow in mourning is established as resolute, these men refocus their attention on *Passionate*, although one (*Monsieur Compagnion*) describes her as the "old woman that hath never a tooth in her head,"<sup>188</sup> evidencing a strong dislike for her age and appearance. In spite of his disparaging remarks,

Compagnion finds himself the target of Passionate's romantic interest, and marries her on his friend Monsieur Comrade's advice:

MONSIEUR COMRADE. Why, let her keep her age to herself, whilst you keep a young mistress to yourself, and it is better to have an old wife that will look after your family, and be careful and watch for therein, and a young mistress, then a young wife, which will be a tyrannical mistress, which will look after nothing but vanities, and love servants, whilst you poor wretch look like a contented cuckold  
...189

Given the mercenary nature of this advice, Passionate soon comes to regret her marriage, lamenting over not only her loss of wealth to an impecunious and rakehell young husband, but, more tellingly, the loss of her agency that widowhood granted, saying that in marrying Compagnion, she “[divested] myself of all power, which power had I kept in my own hands I might have been used better.”<sup>190</sup> Whereas Jantil passively surrenders her agency by (literally) sacrificing herself on the alter dedicated to the memory of her dead husband, Passionate actively gives hers away through remarriage to a man more invested in her material wealth than in herself, neither of which Cavendish holds in regard.

In this case, where Madams Wiffell and Ruffell are left to fade into obscurity and “infamy” due to their self-interest and superficial natures, Cavendish's treatment of Madams Passionate and Jantil is more of an indictment of their own passive acceptance of circumstance and by extension, the prescribed and sanctioned acts of womanhood-- death or returning to male “custody”—of seventeenth century social custom. Inversely, Lady Victoria retains and gains in agency when she actively disobeys her husband and becomes the phenomenally successful “Generaless” of the female army.

While superficially this may seem like commentary on the part of Cavendish on the state of seventeenth century marriage, where the woman who prospers is the one who actively and directly “disobeys” her husband by joining him at the front, the true agency



comes from Lady Victoria's autonomy as the Generaless. Cavendish's feminisms, then, become apparent through her characterization of Lady Victoria, where Victoria's achievements are neither because of nor in spite of the Lord General. Instead, Lady Victoria's success is the direct result of her own action, her motivation stemming from her desire not to remain a passive participant in her own life as opposed to from the need to "prove" herself.

As a vehicle for female agency and feminism, *Bell in Campo* seems to characterize Cavendish's own apprehensions for women that Kamille Stone Stanton indicates "were channelled into her creation of a particular type of heroine who stands as a model charismatic female leader"<sup>191</sup> and that Paula Backscheider dubbed "the Cavalier Woman."<sup>192</sup> This heroine is characterized as separate from the other early seventeenth century dramatic heroines by way of "her maturity, money, and engagement in the public sphere. The cavalier women expressed opinions about public affairs and events, believe they have the rights and ability to speak about these issues, and display other signs identified ... as 'deliberate behavior'"<sup>193</sup> in addition to the "courage, gallantry, loyalty, flair, and ... *fin de ère* consciousness"<sup>194</sup> that is representative of the cavalier hero.

Stanton suggests Cavendish's application of Lady Victoria as the cavalier woman, creates a tension between the "drive to demonstrate a challenge to gender roles while simultaneously seeking the approval of masculine power."<sup>195</sup> She notes in particular Lady Victoria's masculinization of her female army through their training habits, study of military strategy, singing of heroic songs about women, and strict adherence to martial discipline,<sup>196</sup> "sliding," as Stanton remarks, "easily between identifying her women with

and against the men.”<sup>197</sup> This created tension is furthered; Lady Victoria extolls her army of “heroickesses” the greater stakes of their action to take up arms:

LADY VICTORIA. [I]f we are both weak and fearfull as [men] imagine us to be, yet custom which is a second nature will encourage the one and strengthen the other, and had our educations been answerable to theirs, we might have proved as good soldiers and privy counselors, rulers and commanders and architects, as learned scholars both in arts and sciences as men are ... wherefore if we would but accustom ourselves we may do such actions, as may gain reputation, as men might change their opinions, insomuch as to believe to be copartners in their government, and to help to rule the world ... wherefore let us make ourselves free, either by force, merit or love ...<sup>198</sup>

Here Stanton identifies the objective as becoming “not just concern for the future, but a global enterprise for their eventual acceptance in government.”<sup>199</sup> Cavendish herself was fortunate in that she wrote and participated in scientific experimentation with the support of her husband, for which he was also criticized, and yet although she was demonstrably appreciative of his encouragement, as evidenced in her numerous dedications to him, she effectively forged her own way as a writer. By encouraging other women to achieve their own agency and advocating they “accustom ourselves” to the significant idea that women are entirely capable beings rather than the “weak and fearfull” ones “[men] imagine us to be,” Cavendish concretely demonstrates her own feminism by effectively promoting ideas of gender equality through her play.

### The AB and Cs: Aphra Behn, Cary, and Cavendish

The current “adherence to a linear narrative,”<sup>200</sup> as stated by Ezell, is predicated on the paradigm where “being ‘first’ ... establishes the model against which others are measured, but it also indicates a more rudimentary accomplishment—being the first is not usually equated with being the best,” where “women’s literary history is very much concerned with who wins.”<sup>201</sup> In the case of theatre historiography, pedagogy, and

performance practice, it is not so much Ezell's reckoning of "women's<sup>202</sup> literary history" that is concerned with "winning," namely because there is no form of current women's dramatic history that comes close to being analogous. In other words, theatre history has a lot of catching up to do.

The overall absence of women in theatre history, where Hrosvitha is an "anomaly" and Behn is considered the "unique event"<sup>203</sup> that ushers in the age of female playwrights, effectively negates the other female writers before 1700. Furthermore, by perpetuating the assumption that print material and public performance have more intrinsic *value* than manuscript and private performance, entire contexts of seventeenth century theatre culture are erased, leaving the "traditional" patriarchal version where Shakespeare reigns as the undisputed king of the Renaissance and Jacobean theatre world.

In this case, Elizabeth Cary is one of the "true" Judith Shakespeares, in that her work drifts along, virtually unknown, unexamined, and unperformed in contemporary theatre historiography and practice, though *Miriam* exists contemporaneously with some of Shakespeare's more recognized Jacobean plays. *Miriam* offers additional insight into the Senecan tragedy by way of being the first original, full-length play by a woman (but not necessarily the "best"), offering the perspective of a Jacobean woman into the conversation, and yet that it continues to be trivialized as 'closet drama' by theatre departments on the basis that it was never publicly produced makes a pretense out of any claim to understanding Shakespeare's milieu. *Miriam* is *necessary* to theatre historiography not because it is a work of genius or because it is the "best," but because of what Cary's presence as a playwright says about playwriting, playreading, and theatre

practices of the time: that *women* were very much active participants in early modern theatre.

Similarly, Margaret Cavendish's works, with her feminisms that bring the discourse out of Cary's domestic sphere and into public spaces, are also a necessary inclusion to theatre historiography, not only because her feminisms advocated for female autonomy, agency, and equal rights, but also because of what her plays offer as context to a period *known* for its lack of theatre performance in England. Also like Cary, Cavendish's works can tell a specific narrative about seventeenth century manuscript culture as it pertained to dramatic works explicitly, as well as what they suggest about private theatre performance amongst the Royalists during their exile. Judith Peacock reminds us that "[i]n spite of Cavendish's protestations about her intentions for her plays they constitute a major contribution to the dramatic endeavour of the Interregnum," that as previously established, was *not* a "dramatic or theatrical wasteland."<sup>204</sup> Ultimately, the feminisms both Elizabeth Cary and Margaret Cavendish advocated for in their plays, as well as Cary and Cavendish themselves as playwrights, effectively serve as the necessary framework for Aphra Behn to emerge as the first professional *female* playwright in 1670.<sup>205</sup>

The historical trend of referring to Cavendish's dramatic works as "unproducible" for stage performance echoes the similar reasons surrounding *Miriam*, namely that of the nature of the closet drama. Schafer, however, specifies:

Many [closet dramas] ... are also political because they are not mainstream. Student and amateur performances as well as staged readings are usually disregarded in conventional performance histories but, by operating on the margins of theatre practice, these productions can ignore commercial pressures and ... take more risks, be less conventional. So salvaging insights from these performances, workshops, and rehearsals taking place in theatrical nooks and

crannies, away from the mainstream and commercial theatrical marketplaces, is important.<sup>206</sup>

Straznicky's inference into the closet drama's synchronous "retreat and engagement" with the public sphere that limits these plays to reading<sup>207</sup> is again challenged by Schafer's argument that the current historical assumption of the non-performative intent of the early modern closet drama is a disservice to theatre historiography: Why even write in a format that is unique to theatre if the material was never intended to be performed? Perhaps it was the fear of the social stigma associated with playwriting and publication—which could be harsh—that deterred these playwrights from more aggressively pursuing the open performance of these works, as Pearse suggests. Perhaps the plays were, in fact, staged while in manuscript form for private audiences. Whatever the reasons were in the seventeenth century, there no longer exists a logical reason to continue to avoid production of these so-called closet dramas today:

Performing women theatre makers' plays also continues to be a political act. First, consider the aspect of equal opportunities: while those who discount its theatricality lock *The Tragedy of Mariam* into the 'closet', by contrast critics hail George Büchner's 1837 play *Woyzeck*, written for a theatre that simply didn't exist in Büchner's lifetime, as revolutionary, not closet drama. But if the work of a revolutionary male playwright deserves loving dramaturgy—and directors have to work hard and inventively to fill in the gaps between the words of Büchner's elliptical, unstable text—then plays of revolutionary female playwrights deserve equally loving dramaturgical remixing and repackaging; they cannot be expected to spring from the page Athene-like ready for battle/staging, speaking unproblematically to audiences across the centuries. After all, directors of Shakespeare—or Jonson, Marlowe, Middleton, Webster—routinely dramaturg or adapt the plays they are directing, remarketing them for audiences today.<sup>208</sup>

This isn't to say that Cary's play or all of Cavendish's plays necessarily deserve full productions; rather my argument, like Schafer's, is that these are plays that are worthy of the same kind of dramaturgical attention that seeks to redefine the work of these early

modern women dramatists in terms of twenty-first century feminist theatre pedagogy and practice.

Elizabeth Cary and Margaret Cavendish's interventions within playwriting, written within "... the traditions of seventeenth-century closet drama [that] invested the genre with a social engagement no less significant than that inherent in public performance ..."<sup>209</sup> and written in ways that indicates toward public performance, effectively pave the way for Aphra Behn, writing for an entirely public space. Cary's interrogation on women's rights within marriage in *Miriam* foreshadows Behn's approach to forced marriage, female commodification, and parallels between marriage and prostitution that she addresses in *The Rover* (1677), while Cavendish's investigation of female public and private spaces in *Bell in Campo* can be seen as a precursor to Behn's use of carnival space, also in *The Rover*. While there may not be any current evidence that directly links these women, it can be argued that Cary knocked on the door to female participation in public theatre, Cavendish opened it, and Behn was then able to walk through. Nevertheless, it is still evident that all three women used their writing to probe the boundaries of available feminisms through their mutual advocacy for women and critiques on male privilege, which in turn suggests that these sentiments were not ideologies unique to any one woman.

### *Notes to Chapter III*

<sup>1</sup> Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-seventy*, Vol. 2. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 47.

<sup>2</sup> Annette Kreis-Schinck, *Women, Writing, and the Theatre in the Early Modern Period: The Plays of Aphra Behn and Suzanne Centlivre* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 2001), 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>4</sup> See Michael Lueger, "Theatre History Podcast #35: Get thee to a Nunnery: Learning about Medieval Convent Drama with Dr. Elizabeth Dutton, Dr. Olivia Robinson, Dr. Matthew Cheung Salisbury, and

Aurèlie Blanc,” June 12, 2017, accessed August 27, 2019, <https://howlround.com/theatre-history-podcast-35>; Also see “Medieval Convent Drama,” University of Fribourg, <http://medievalconventdrama.org>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 13

<sup>6</sup> Kreis-Schinck, *Women, Writing, and the Theatre*, 12.

<sup>7</sup> Pilar Cuder-Domínguez, *Stuart Women Playwrights, 1613 – 1713*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>9</sup> Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 6 – 7.

<sup>12</sup> Dianne Purkiss, “Material Girls: The Seventeenth-century Woman Debate,” in Brant and Purkiss, *Women, Texts, and Histories, 1575 – 1760*, 72.

<sup>13</sup> Jessica Abrahams, “Everything You Wanted to Know about Fourth Wave Feminism-but Were Afraid to Ask,” *Prospect Magazine*, August 14, 2017. <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/everything-wanted-know-fourth-wave-feminism>.

<sup>14</sup> Sue-Ellen Case, *Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 37.

<sup>15</sup> In this case, I use *gender* almost interchangeably with the idea of biological sex assignment, by which I refer to the understanding that the seventeenth century appointment of the public sphere was as the purview of men and the *masculine*, while the domestic sphere was acknowledged as the domain of women and the *feminine*.

<sup>16</sup> Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 6 – 7.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 16 – 17.

<sup>18</sup> Jacqueline Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women and Women Dramatists 1642—1737* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988,) 10.

<sup>19</sup> Gail Pheterson, “The Social Consequences of Unchastity,” in *Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*, ed. Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander, (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1998), 237.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 123; Qtd by Pearson. Rochester, “A Letter from Artemesia in the Town to Chloe in the Country.”

<sup>21</sup> “A thing, Reader—but no more of such a Smelt: This thing, I tell ye, opening that which serves it for a mouth, out issued such a noise as this to those that sate about it, that they were to expect a woeful Play, God damn him, for it was a woman’s.”

Aphra Behn, An Epistle to the Reader in the Preface to *The Dutch Lover* (London: Thomas Dring, 1673), n.p.

<sup>22</sup> Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse*, 7; Qtd by Pearson. Anon. Triumphs of Female Wit in Some Pindaric Odes: or The Emulation (1683), preface: Goreau, op. cit., 133.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph R. Roach, *It* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 36.

<sup>24</sup> Clare Carroll, Introduction to *Othello (William Shakespeare) and The Tragedy of Miriam (Elizabeth Cary)* (New York: Longman, 2003), xx.

<sup>25</sup> Kirsten Pullen, *Actresses and Whores: On Stage and in Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>26</sup> Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse*, 9.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Catherine Gallagher, "Who Was That Masked Woman? The Prostitute and the Playwright in the Comedies of Aphra Behn," in Hutner, *Rereading Aphra Behn*, 69.
- 31 Gallagher, "Who Was That Masked Woman?" 70.
- 32 Pheterson, "The Social Consequences of Unchastity," 237
- 33 Margaret Cavendish, *Playes* (London: A. Warren, 1662), n.p. See Appendix B.2.
- 34 Aphra Behn, *Sir Patient Fancy* (London: s.n., 1678), n.p.
- 35 Qtd. in Emma L. E. Rees, *Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Genre, Exile* (Manchester: Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 2; also in Douglas Grant, *Margaret the First* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957), 199; and Alexandra G. Bennett, Introduction to *Bell in Campo and The Sociable Companions* (Ontario: Broadview Press, Ltd., 2002), 11.
- 36 Bennett, Introduction, 11.
- 37 John Davies, Dedicatory to *The Muses Sacrifice* (London, 1612), n.p. See Appendix B.1 for full dedicatory.
- 38 Barry Weller and Margaret W. Ferguson, Introduction to *The Tragedy of Miriam the Fair Queen of Jewry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 6.
- 39 *A Collection of Letters and Poems Written by Several Person of Honor and Learning, Upon Sivers [sic] Important Subjects, to the Late Duke and Dutchess of Newcastle* (London, 1678), 4.
- 40 See Susanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent, and Obedient: English Books for Women, 1475 – 1640* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982).
- 41 Weller and Ferguson, Introduction, 6 – 7.
- 42 Naomi J. Miller, "Domestic Politics in Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500 – 1900* 37, no. 2, Tudor and Stuart Drama (Spring 1997), 354. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/450838>,
- 43 Gallagher, "Who Was That Masked Woman?" 71.
- 44 Margarete Rubik, *Early Women Dramatists 1550 – 1800* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 36.
- 45 Rees, *Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Genre, Exile*, 2.
- 46 Ibid., 4.
- 47 Pearse, "Elizabeth Cary," 605.
- 48 Carroll, Introduction, xxi.
- 49 Pearse, "Elizabeth Cary," 605.
- 50 Ibid., 606.
- 51 Weller and Ferguson, Introduction, 6 – 7.
- 52 Gallagher, "Who Was That Masked Woman?" 71.
- 53 Ibid., 71.
- 54 Ibid., 68 – 69.
- 55 Margaret Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies* (London: s.n., 1653), n.p.
- 56 Anne Shaver, Introduction to *The Convent of Pleasure and Other Plays*, Anne Shaver, ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 8.
- 57 Margaret Cavendish, *Playes* (London: A. Warren, 1662), A3v.



- 58 Weller and Ferguson, Introduction, 6 – 7.
- 59 Marta Straznicky, *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama, 1550 – 1700*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 61 *Ibid.*
- 62 Straznicky, *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama*, 8.
- 63 NB: Early form of “scurrilous”
- 64 William Prynne, *Histrion-Mastix* (London, 1633), 930; qtd. in in part in Straznicky, *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama*, 9.
- 65 Prynne, *Histrion-Mastix*, 931.
- 66 Margaret Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 15.
- 67 *Ibid.*, 587.
- 68 *Ibid.*
- 69 Emphasis mine..
- 70 Elizabeth Schafer, “Introduction: Attending to Early Modern Women as Theatre Makers,” *Early Theatre* 18, no. 2 (2015), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44122667>, 125.
- 71 Margaret Ezell, “The Myth of Judith Shakespeare: Creating the Canon of Women's Literature,” *New Literary History* 21, no. 2, *New Historicisms, New Histories, and Others* (Spring 1990), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/469128>, 583.
- 72 Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1929), 61.
- 73 See also Emilia Lanier (1569 – 1645), another contemporary of Shakespeare, whose 1611 book of poetry, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, is considered to be the first *original* book of poetry by an English woman.
- 74 *Ibid.*, 50.
- 75 *Ibid.*, 65.
- 76 Ezell, “The Myth of Judith Shakespeare,” 584.
- 77 *Ibid.*, 585.
- 78 *Ibid.*, 586.
- 79 Pearse, “Elizabeth Cary,” 601.
- 80 Simon Barker and Hilary Hinds note “Cary seems to have written an earlier play, now lost, set in Sicily and dedicated to her husband (hence the reference to 'my first' in l. 13 [of the dedication to *Mariam*].” Simon Barker and Hilary Hinds eds., *The Routledge Anthology of Renaissance Drama* (London: Routledge, 2003), 194.
- 81 Pearse, “Elizabeth Cary,” 601.
- 82 *Ibid.*
- 83 Brander Matthews, “Women Dramatists,” *A Book About the Theater* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), 114.
- 84 Ramona Wray, “Performing *The Tragedy of Mariam* and Constructing Stage History.” *Early Theatre* 18, no. 2 (2015), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44122669>, 149.

85 Pearse, "Elizabeth Cary," 601.

86 Pearse, "Elizabeth Cary," 606.

87 *The Lady Falkland*, 9.

88 Pearse, "Elizabeth Cary," 606.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid.

91 Carroll, Introduction, xvii; Carroll does not provide a citation for this hypothesis.

92 Ezell, "The Myth of Judith Shakespeare," 587.

93 *The Lady Falkland*, 54.

94 Wray, "Performing *The Tragedy of Mariam*," 150.

95 Titus Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of The Jews or the History of The Destruction of Jerusalem*. Translated by William Whiston (London: s.l., 1737), Sacred Texts, accessed July 22, 2019, <http://sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/war-1.htm>.

96 "Josephus," Wikipedia Foundation, last modified 18 July 2019, 23:56, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josephus#Biography>. These dates and translations are unsubstantiated beyond what Wikipedia indicates, and are not referenced in the article.

It is also possible that Cary herself acquired and read a version of the story in Hebrew; in *The Lady Falkland*, her daughter indicates that Cary had more than a passing familiarity with that language, claiming, "Hebrew she likewise about the same time learned with very little teaching" adding it to her knowledge of French, Spanish, Italian, Latin (from which she "translated the Epistles of Seneca ... into English"), and a "Transylvanian his [sic] language," although the biographer admits that "for many years neglecting [Hebrew], she lost it much" although "not long before her death, she, again beginning to use it, could, in the Bible, understand well, in which she was most perfectly well read."<sup>97</sup>

<sup>97</sup> *The Lady Falkland*, 4 – 5.

98 Wray, "Performing *The Tragedy of Mariam*," 150.

99 Wray, "Performing *The Tragedy of Mariam*," 150.

100 Pearse, "Elizabeth Cary," 607.

101 Ibid., 607 – 608.

102 Carroll, Introduction, xxi.

103 Miller, "Domestic Politics in Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*," 354.

104 Pearse, "Elizabeth Cary," 605.

105 Carroll, Introduction to Elizabeth Cary, 139.

106 Cary, *Miriam*, eds. Barry Weller and Margaret W. Ferguson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 1.4.297 – 310. Text references are to act, scene, and line of this edition.

107 Laurie Shannon suggests that *Miriam* "questions the moral duties and natural rights of obedience and resistance when the citizen /subject of law finds herself an object of operation," employing Lyotard's *différend*<sup>108</sup> to describe the untenable nature of the situation.

Laurie J. Shannon, "The Tragedie of *Miriam*: Cary's Critique of the Terms of Founding Social Discourses" *English Literary Renaissance* 24, no. 1, Women in the Renaissance III: Studies in Honor of Ruth Mortimer (Winter 1994), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43447748>, 136.

108 “A case of *différend* between two parties takes place when the ‘regulation’ the conflict which opposes them is done in the idiom of one of the parties while the injustice suffered by the other is not signified in that idiom.”

Jean-François Lyotard and Georges Van Den Abbeele, “The Différend, the Referent, and the Proper Name,” *Diacritics* 14, no. 3 (1984), 5. doi:10.2307/464840, 5; annotated and qtd. in Shannon, “*The Tragedy of Miriam*,” 136.

109 Shannon annotates: “Biblical reference to divorce rules include Deuteronomy 24:1, 3; Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:8; and Mark 10:4.”

Ibid., 137.

110 Ibid., 136 – 137.

111 Pearse, “Elizabeth Cary,” 604.

112 Weller and Ferguson, Introduction, 40.

113 Ibid., 39.

114 Ibid., 6.

115 Pearse, “Elizabeth Cary,” 604 – 605.

116 Carroll, Introduction, xvii.

117 See Gail Pheterson, “The Social Consequences of Unchastity.” In *Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*, ed. Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander, (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1998).

118 Schafer, “Early Modern Women as Theatre Makers,” 125.

119 Wray, “Performing *The Tragedy of Mariam*,” 149.

120 Straznicky, *Privacy, Playreading, and Women’s Closet Drama*, 1.

121 Schafer, “Early Modern Women as Theatre Makers,” 125.

122 Ibid., 126.

123 Straznicky, *Privacy, Playreading, and Women’s Closet Drama*, 15.

124 Ibid.

125 Ibid., 18.

126 Anna Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 2 - 3.

127 Ibid., 2.

128 Ibid., 3.

129 Hero Chalmers, *Royalist Women Writers, 1650 – 1689* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 1.

130 Pearse, “Elizabeth Cary,” 606.

131 Wray, “Performing *The Tragedy of Mariam*,” 149.

132 Chalmers, *Royalist Women*, 1.

133 Emphasis mine.

134 Chalmers, *Royalist Women*, 1.

135 E. Toppe, “To the Author” in Margaret Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies* (London: s.n., 1653), n.p.; See Appendix B.5.

136 Ibid.

- 137 Chalmers, *Royalist Women*, 2.
- 138 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 139 A Collection of Letters and Poems Written by Several Person of Honor and Learning, Upon Sivers Important Subjects, to the Late Duke and Dutchess of Newcastle (London, 1678), 4.
- 140 Rees, *Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Genre, Exile*, 8. Rees's use of "functional ambiguity" is quoted from Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).
- 141 *Ibid.*
- 142 Cavendish, *Playes*, A6.
- 143 Straznicky, *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama*, 67; Margaret Cavendish, *Plays Never before Printed* (London: A. Maxwell, 1668).
- 144 Cavendish, *Plays Never before Printed*, n.p.; See Appendix C.4 for full Epistle Dedicatory.
- 145 *Ibid.*
- 146 Diane Purkiss writes that there is an "assumption that texts signed by women are indeed the work of women ... but because [several] sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts ... are pseudonymous, the gendering of their authors remains open to question," the implication being that women writing during this may or may not have used a pseudonym under which to publish, and furthermore, there is a distinct possibility that several works previously attributed to women, may have been written by a man engaging in a form of "playful rhetorical archness."<sup>147</sup>
- 147 Purkiss, "Material Girls," 71.
- 148 Chalmers, *Royalist Women*, 3.
- 149 Margaret Cavendish, *CCIX Sociable Letters* (London: William Wilson, 1664), 167.
- 150 Mona Narain, "Notorious Celebrity: Margaret Cavendish and the Spectacle of Fame," *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 42, no. 2 (Fall 2009), [www.jstor.org/stable/25674377](http://www.jstor.org/stable/25674377), 69.
- 151 Straznicky, *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama*, 78.
- 152 Narain, "Notorious Celebrity," 71.
- 153 Shaver, Introduction to *The Convent of Pleasure and Other Plays*, 8.
- 154 Alexandra G. Bennett, Introduction to *Bell in Campo and The Sociable Companions* (Ontario: Broadview Press, Ltd., 2002), 15.
- 155 Margaret Cavendish, *Playes* (London: A. Warren, 1662), A3v; also qtd. in Bennett, Appendix B, 210.
- 156 See Appendix B.3 for additional Cavendish dedications, forewords, and prefaces.
- 157 Straznicky, *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama*, 67 – 68.
- 158 Margaret Cavendish, *Playes* (London: A. Warren, 1662), A3v.
- 159 Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History*, 22 – 23.
- 160 Margaret Cavendish, "Prologue to Loves Adventures." In *Playes*, 3.
- 161 Cavendish, "Epilogue to Youths Glory, and Deaths Banquet," In *Playes*, 180.
- 162 Battigelli, *Exiles of the Mind*, 2.
- 163 *Ibid.*, 1.
- 164 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 165 *Ibid.*

166 Ibid., 4.

167 Margaret Cavendish, *An Introduction*, ed. Alexandra G. Bennett (Ontario: Broadview Press, Ltd., 2002), 28.

168 Cavendish, *An Introduction*, (Bennett), 29.

169 Ibid.

170 I reference this argument in the previous chapter with regard to Brander Matthews's *A Book About the Theater* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916).

171 Cavendish, *An Introduction*, (Bennett), 29.

172 Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History*, 22 – 23.

173 Ibid., 29 – 30.

174 Margaret Cavendish, *Observations on Experimental Philosophy* (London: A. Maxwell, 1668), n.p.

175 I suggest that the title *Bell in Campo* indicates a double meaning, where Cavendish's use of *bell* can refer to each *war* or *beauty* (referring to 'women'), or possibly both simultaneously, as either makes sense within the context of the play.

176 Bennett annotates:

Cavendish used the term “heroickesses,” rather than “heroines,” to refer her to female heroes, following her practice of feminizing male roles by adding “ess” (hence “Generaless,” “Tutoress,” and so on). Similarly she calls male heroes “heroicks”; I have maintained both “heroick” and “heroickess” in particular throughout the text because of the emphasis the feminized term places on the extraordinary physical achievements of the women concerned.

Cavendish, *Bell in Campo* (Bennett), 31.

177 Bennett, Introduction to *Bell in Campo*, 13.

178 Bennett references the frequent “effusive” references to her husband, William Cavendish, throughout her writings, combined with the fact that prior to their exile, William had been a general for the royalist army and Margaret Cavendish's own works often contained “outpourings of a vivid fantasy life.”

Bennett, Introduction to *Bell in Campo*, 13.

179 Ibid.

180 Mary Anne Everett Green, ed. *Letters of Queen Henrietta Maria, Including her Private Correspondence with Charles, the First* (London: Richard Bentley, 1987), 200; Letter dated “York, May 14, 1643” qtd. in Bennett, Appendix D to *Bell in Campo*, 217.

181 Bennett, Introduction to *Bell in Campo*, 14.

182 Cavendish, *Bell in Campo* (Bennett), 34 – 35.

183 Ibid., 36 – 37.

184 Cavendish, *Bell in Campo* (Bennett), 41 – 42.

185 Ibid., 42.

186 Ibid., 43.

187 Ibid.

188 Ibid., 93.

189 Ibid., 104.

190 Ibid., 110.

- 191 Kamille Stone Stanton, "'An Amazonian Heroickess': The Military Leadership of Queen Henrietta Maria in Margaret Cavendish's *Bell in Campo* (1662)," *Early Theatre* 10, no. 2, (2007), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43499411>, 72.
- 192 Paula R. Backscheider, "The Cavalier Woman," *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 24 (1995), doi: 10.1353/sec.2010.0161, 4.
- 193 Backscheider, "The Cavalier Woman," 5.
- 194 Ibid.
- 195 Stanton, "'An Amazonian Heroickess'," 78.
- 196 Ibid.; Cavendish, *Bell in Campo* (Bennett), 51 – 56.
- 197 Stanton, "'An Amazonian Heroickess'," 79.
- 198 Cavendish, *Bell in Campo* (Bennett), 48; qtd. by Stanton, "'An Amazonian Heroickess'," 79 – 80.
- 199 Stanton, "'An Amazonian Heroickess'," 80.
- 200 Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History*, 22.
- 201 Ibid.
- 202 Emphasis mine.
- 203 Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History*, 23.
- 204 Judith Peacock, "Writing for the Brain and Writing for the Boards: The Producibility of Margaret Cavendish's Dramatic Texts," in Clucas, *A Princely Brave Woman: Essays on Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle*, 88.
- 205 Ibid.
- 206 Schafer, "Early Modern Women as Theatre Makers," 128.
- 207 Straznicky, *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama*, 3.
- 208 Schafer, "Early Modern Women as Theatre Makers," 128.
- 209 Marta Straznicky, "Restoration Women Playwrights and the Limits of Professionalism," *ELH* 64, no.3 (Fall 1997), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30030237>, 703.

## CHAPTER IV

### APHRA BEHN: *THE ROVER*

NB: Parts of this chapter have been adapted from Rogers, J.K. *Bodies for Sale: Prostitution and Marriage in Restoration Comedy*. Master's thesis, University of Nebraska Omaha, 2011., previously published by ProQuest.

Following closely on the heels of Margaret Cavendish, Aphra Behn emerged onto the theatrical scene in 1670 as the first *professional* female playwright, effectively leaving the 'closet drama' genre by way of the definitively public productions of her plays. Marta Straznicky notes that "Elizabeth Cary and Margaret Cavendish were ... able to imbue their closet plays with the broadly public aims that performed drama can accommodate,"<sup>1</sup> suggesting that a playwright such as Behn was the next logical step. However, where theatre history studies acknowledge Behn's place, again heavily weighting the importance of public performance, and although she is not overlooked like Cary and Cavendish, her inclusion in various curricula remains more tokenistic than anything else. While I certainly recognize the difficulties associated when it comes to curating material for theatre history courses, Behn's significant impact on theatre, both during and after her life, tends to be downplayed even as she remains celebrated in the field of English literature. As a female dramatist, her feminisms continued to explore and interrogate the changing world of Restoration theatre and the role of women, now firmly situated in both the private *and* public spheres.

The 1990s saw something of a renaissance in Aphra Behn Studies, resurrecting her work as a seventeenth century playwright, poet, translator, and novelist for academic study, particularly in the field of English literature. However, it is significant to

remember that in the *theatre*, the 1991 6th edition of Oscar Brockett's seminal undergraduate textbook had merely expanded its entry on Behn to:

Perhaps because of the influence of Corneille and the Spanish dramatists, the comedy of intrigue was also popular in [the Restoration]. The best example of this genre was Mrs. Aphra Behn (1640—1680) with such plays as *the Rover*, parts 1 and 2 (1677—1680) (Mrs. Behn is also the first woman to have made her living as a playwright.)<sup>2</sup>

More than twenty years later, and Behn is still considerably under-studied as a subject of importance in theatre history curricula and definitively under-produced as an early modern Restoration playwright and feminist. Unlike our sister discipline of English literature, theatre history has a somewhat inexplicable record of reductive academic attention to a woman whose dramatic contributions were far from inconsequential, upon which improvement is decisively necessary for a feminist historiography to evolve.

This isn't to say that Behn has been totally overlooked in theatre history pedagogy and performance. She is certainly still produced on occasion, with *The Rover* (1677) persisting as the one most often staged. However, she remains one of Margaret Ezell's "signposted special events,"<sup>3</sup> and tends to be presented to theatre history students as the "token" early modern female playwright, with timelines leaping from mention of Hrosvitha in the tenth century to Behn in the seventeenth to Susan Glaspell and Sophie Treadwell in the early twentieth century. When taught in this manner, Behn's appearance seems anomalous, abrupt, and out of context. Her feminist approach to writing, strong female characters, and perceptive use of satire to critically assess social themes and mores get overshadowed in the classroom by her "novelty" as the first professional female playwright, which while significant, is the least of her tremendous contributions to understanding Restoration theatre.



Behn's use of satire can be seen as an extension of Cary and Cavendish's own critiques on the roles occupied by seventeenth century women both within (upper class) familial relationships and as a means of navigating the world. Robert Markley makes the observation:

In their ironic treatment of female chastity and masculine constancy ... [Behn's] comedies present a sophisticated and sympathetic understanding of the ideological complexities of women's existence in a misogynistic society. By demystifying the masculinization of desire that constructs women only as sexual objects, Behn undermines the ideological assumptions and values that make female identity dependent on inviolate chastity and rigorous self-policing ...<sup>4</sup>

Cary's approach to female identity within the bond of marriage in *The Tragedy of Miriam* questions female agency is one that Behn extends to the entire institution in *The Rover* through examination of the culture, practice, and double standards within the practice of its commodification via the "mercenary marriage." Where Cavendish began an interrogation of female identity in the public sphere in *Bell in Campo* as her Lady Victoria successfully negotiated her way through female agency from the domestic into war, Behn began extending the conversation through her continued exploration of prescribed gender roles outside of the domestic sphere.

Given the contradictory attitudes of the Restoration public toward the model of feminine virtue, the appearance of the female libertine/cavalier woman in *The Rover* comes as no surprise. A character such as Florinda embodies the past Renaissance virtuous ideal of "chaste and obedient" while the characterizations of Hellena and Angellica Bianca are what arguably establishes *The Rover* as a distinctly feminist play. Both women effectively defy standard definitions of chastity and morality by disrupting their prescribed gender and class roles. As the tragic heroine, Angellica escapes the

traditional fate of death reserved for “fallen women,” although her ending is ambiguous and suggests she finds some resolution as Antonio’s mistress. Meanwhile, Hellena’s ending is no less troubling. Although she is the cavalier heroine, a contemporary readership/audience is left with a different ambiguity, where the focus becomes how Hellena could compromise her strength and autonomy with one so flawed as Willmore. However, all of this only achieves Behn’s original interrogation and indictment of gender roles, female agency, and marriage for profit.

When approached as an evaluation of male sexual entitlement, *The Rover* becomes absolutely relevant to current discourse on the state of feminism and sexual politics in the US. The elements that can make it challenging to produce can be utilized to instead initiate dialogue not only on Behn’s feminist attitudes regarding women and marriage, but also as a means of introducing this play to contemporary audiences as one that is not only historically significant, but also germane to topics regarding female body autonomy and sexual violence. In teaching and producing this play, theatres have the opportunity to offer audiences additional community resources to survivors and loved ones of sexual trauma while also approaching the topic from a distance of over three centuries. As Behn’s most popular play during her life, *The Rover* deserves more modern attention than it currently has in commercial theatres.

As such, this chapter will look at *The Rover* as a way to advocate for the need for a more robust approach to her work in theatre history classrooms through an examination of her feminisms via her approach to issues concerning female body commodification, prescribed gender roles within the institution of marriage as it relates to prostitution, and her representations of sexual assault as a means of social critique. By emphasizing these

points as they impact the play's primary female characters—Florinda, Hellena, and Angellica Bianca—the strength of *The Rover* as a feminist approach to Restoration comedy of intrigue provides essential context to understanding early modern female dramatists and becomes its most substantial point in favor of a more definitive and extensive inclusion of early modern female playwrights in theatre history pedagogy and performance.

### Plot Hybridity

*“The banished cavaliers! A roving blade! A popish carnival! A masquerade!”*<sup>5</sup>

In 1660, the expulsion of the Puritan government followed by the restoration of the monarchy initiated an explosion of theatre that capitalized on the sense of bawdy revelry and sexual excess that King Charles II seemed to embody. *The Rover*, as a comedy of intrigue—a favored Restoration genre comprised of convoluted plots and subplots, complex situations, and hidden agendas that are pursued and perpetrated through elaborate use of deception and farce<sup>6</sup>—is at home in the shifting world of a pre-Lenten, Spanish-owned Naples<sup>7</sup> during Carnevale with its numerous plot twists and turns, and overall themes of deception. It also contains the necessary elements of a post-Puritan regime, echoing the then-current antics of Charles II's sexually liberated court, with its plot following the escapades of several English cavaliers (Willmore, Blunt, Frederick, and Belville)—royalists that escaped to the continent during the Interregnum—in an evocations of Charles II and his entourage in exile in France.<sup>9</sup>

One of the cavaliers, Belvile, is enamored with one of two aristocratic Spanish sisters, also living in Naples with their brother as part of the then Spanish occupation. The sisters, Florinda and Hellena, are each contracted with futures determined by their

father and brother, with Florinda committed to the wealthy, older Don Vincentio and Hellena scheduled to enter a convent. Neither sister is happy with her fate; Florinda is in love with Belvile, while Hellena has no desire to become a nun. Under the camouflage of Carnevale, the sisters determine to circumvent their prearranged fates in favor of more preferable outcomes. Two prostitutes are also thrown into the mix: the famous courtesan Angellica Bianca and the common prostitute Lucetta, both of whom have several run-ins with the cavaliers; in particular, Angellica Bianca has fallen in love with Willmore, the titular rover, who in turn, falls in love with Hellena.

Additionally, although ostensibly a comedy, *The Rover* exists as more of hybrid between comedy of intrigue, tragedy, and pointed satire than a play full of nonstop belly laughs. The general plot of the play largely concerns the requisite intrigues of repeated attempts at assignations and the use of disguise and cases of mistaken identity, while the double marriage at the end satisfies the dramatic convention that dictates comedy ends with a marriage (or two). However, Behn's inclusion and incongruous representation of a prostitute (Angellica Bianca) as the tragic heroine rather than as comic relief is what partially induces the play's hybridity. The audience cannot fail to sympathize with Angellica's circumstances as the jilted lover, while her use of blank verse—a literary convention generally reserved for tragic *noble* heroes—sets Angellica Bianca apart and marks her as “different” from the common prostitute. Her elevated use of language serves to additionally problematize Angellica Bianca by presenting her as difficult to classify as an archetype by Restoration standards. When Willmore rejects her, though she swears vengeance on him as the vindictive “woman scorned,” she is ultimately unable to carry through because of her love for him, departing with:

ANGELLICA: —But now, to show my utmost of contempt,  
I give the life; which, if thou wouldst preserve,  
Live where my eyes may never see thee more.  
Live to undo someone whose soul may prove  
So bravely constant to revenge my love. (5.351 – 355)

Nancy Copeland adds that the “momentary idealization of Angellica’s libertinism, and the lack of closure in the play’s treatment of her, call into question the value of female chastity and challenge her consignment to the status of ‘whore’.”<sup>10</sup> Given these contrasting dramatic tensions, *The Rover*’s very hybridity suggests an intention to blur lines about social expectations, gender roles, and push the liminality of these spaces as they existed in the seventeenth century.

Moreover, Behn’s use of sexual violence against Florinda is a tactic that can be interpreted both dramatically as a repeated trauma as well as a satire, with regard to the tropes of the ingenue’s requisite (dangerous) naiveté and “damsel in distress syndrome,” and in her treatment of the men as parodic variations of the “rake-hero.” Willmore’s assault on Florinda is a gross example of male entitlement, particularly as he suffers no repercussions, while his perpetual drunkenness and propensity for violence undermine his role as the “hero” by calling into question his reliability and honor as a cavalier. Pacheco notes, “There is no doubt that this political analysis [of rape] is partially neutralized by the scene’s comic project, which finds humor in the confusion born of the characters’ opposing perspectives and ensures that it is Willmore, chronically incapable of accepting that Florinda’s ‘No’ means ‘No,’ who gets the laughs.”<sup>11</sup> Additionally, although rape/assault scenes—“accomplished or attempted”—“were popular in both tragedy and comedy,” Hughes specifies that in comedy, “[rape] was always used to criticize the

sexual predator, and to show the darker side of ... libertinism”<sup>12</sup> allowing Behn to interrogate Willmore’s bad behavior and the (lack) of social repercussions.

The trope of the comedic ending is also called into question: Hellena is the clear “hero,” whose wit and intelligence allows her to arguably “tame” and “reform” Willmore as a previously dedicated libertine, and yet the audience is left to question why Hellena would even want such a man in the first place, thereby compromising the use of a wedding as a comedic convention and Hellena’s potential for a “happily ever after” with Willmore.

### Dismantling Gender Stereotypes

*“I don’t intend every he that likes me shall have me, but he that I like.”*<sup>13</sup>

Behn’s obfuscation of the virgin/whore trope serves as an additional form of hybridity and an excellent example of her feminist approach to exploring representations of seventeenth century womanhood. Elizabeth Howe notes that the blurred line between virgin and whore found its way rather quickly into the popular plays of the Restoration by way of “contrasting pairs” of female characters.<sup>14</sup> The use of the “lustful virgin” and the “virtuous villainess” on the Restoration stage effectively established a pattern of blurred archetypes that Behn seems to capitalize on as a means of interrogating female gender roles and toxic masculinity of the time. Susan Owen compares sisters Florinda and Hellena to other Restoration play-characters, stating:

... Behn’s women have a far more developed subjectivity than [other] women. ... Florinda is destined for forced marriage twice over, by her father and brother who favour different but equally loathed husbands. Hellena is intended for the convent. ... The intertwining of the two different ‘women’s stories’ represents different paradigms of female experience. Florinda ... is somewhat passive, waiting to be rescued ...

Hellena is a new and more contemporary character, full of mockery and a self-professed love of mischief ...<sup>15</sup>

Behn's female characters are sympathetic and resilient in the wake of trauma and disappointment while also demonstrating strength, wit, and nobility of character<sup>16</sup> in direct opposition to the "consistent mock-heroic representations of competitive male posturing, ineffective and parodically depicted dueling, drunken brawling, violent sexual predation, and unruly squabbling"<sup>17</sup> pervasive in her male characters.

As the representation of the romantic female *ideal*, Florinda embodies the Renaissance mandates that decreed women should be "chaste, silent, and obedient."<sup>18</sup> Dagny Boebel offers that Florinda is "the perfect victim" as she is the internalization of the "sentimental construction of womanhood."<sup>19</sup> She is willing, at least, to make some effort to save herself from her forced marriages, but as Owen indicates, it is a passive effort. Florinda disobeys her brother's edict of marriage, seeking out Belvile at Carnevale, but only at the urging of Hellena, and only passively, to deliver a letter to him to "let him know what I've resolved in favor of him" (1.1.197 – 198). The expectation is, of course, that Belvile will save her from either forced marriage, presumably by marrying her himself, although neither Florinda nor Belvile actually articulate this assumption, and the subject of marriage is only broached by lady's maid Valeria in Act 5 (5.147 – 148).

On the few occasions they are able to catch up with each other, some disguise—his or hers—is in play, making their courtship into a farce of mistaken identities. In this case, the constant threat of danger to Florinda from the other men, including her brother, is what keeps this farce from getting overly saccharine, while still maintaining the trope of the romantic lovers. Gill goes one step further, making the claim that both "Florinda and Belvile serve as ideal, but not models: their language, love, and devotion are not of

this world; they belong to a different, mythical time and place.”<sup>20</sup> As such, Florinda’s standard is one that Behn marks as unattainable—not to mention dangerously naive—and therefore unrealistic and imprudent. Furthermore, by establishing Florinda’s standard as unrealistic, Behn’s argument for the specious nature of female chastity is again underscored: if Florinda represents a “mythical” ideal of the virgin, then that ideal cannot exist in reality.

Florinda’s innocence and naivete—admirable in the sentimental romantic heroine—mean that she lacks both the mental and verbal facility displayed by Hellena to safely navigate the many dangers of Carnevale. The assurance of anonymity offered by Florinda’s mask and disguise, promises a measure of “safety” that it then fails to deliver, where the anonymity she seeks to experience Carnevale and meet with Belvile is the same anonymity that allows her to be confused for a prostitute. While neither Florinda nor Hellena are *experienced* with love, Hellena recognizes the danger of the masquerade even as she flirts with it; Florinda’s innocence prevents her from seeing it until it is nearly too late. As such, Florinda’s *inability* to navigate this world suggests Behn’s own recognition of the fiction of the sentimental romantic ideal and unrealistic patriarchal standards that declare what women *should* be.

From the masculine end of the spectrum, the full title of the play, *The Rover; or The Banish’d Cavaliers*, where Behn’s use of “cavaliers” has multiple meanings—ranging from referring to royalist supporters to her use of the “reformed rake” trope—and indicates her intention to interrogate male behavior and representations in addition to female. The play centers on a group of (young) English men as they “rove” around Italy as exiles during the Interregnum. Paula Backscheider suggests an ambiguity with regard to



the term “cavalier.” On the one hand, it can refer to a “knight and ‘a gay spritely military man who was also a courtly gentleman’”; inversely, *cavalier* can “also [be] pejoratively used to describe ‘swashbucklers ... who hailed the prospect of war’ and was consistently joined to adjectives such as ‘haughty, domineering’ and ‘careless in manner’.”<sup>21</sup> She adds that the “images of cavaliers were ‘heroic Prince Ruperts<sup>22</sup> or debauched devil-may-cares.’ Long, curling hair, a horse, and the sword maintain the class overtones that were both respected and reviled,”<sup>23</sup> creating a distorted image of Behn’s cavaliers and Spaniards alike that tends toward the uncomplimentary.

Behn utilizes the popular archetype of the “rake-hero,” a character archetype Robert Hume suggests has its basis in the lives of Charles II and John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester, to name a few, and whose sexual exploits were well known at the time.<sup>24</sup> John Harold Wilson identifies this circle as the “Court Wits,” with the king setting an “example of promiscuity.”<sup>25</sup> Wilson characterizes the “Court Wits,” writing:

The Wits have been variously labeled cynics, skeptics, libertines, [and] Epicureans ... To a certain extent, some of the terms apply, yet none is strictly accurate. They were cynical ... because their limited experience demonstrated that no man was honest and no woman chaste. ... They were not true skeptics, for they accepted the materialism of Lucretius and Hobbes. They were libertines by instinct ... but they were libertines by conviction as well, for they saw no ethical values in the world, and no purpose in living save the gratification of their senses. They were Epicureans ... but only as that title has become compounded with hedonism; they were addicted to the unholy trinity: wine, women, and song.<sup>26</sup>

Where Hume calls Wilson’s assessment of the Restoration rake a “fair characterization,” he also allows that the description is only partially accurate in terms of the theatrical counterpart,<sup>27</sup> noting that as a character, the “‘Rake’ is not a single identifiable type.”<sup>28</sup> As such, Hume briefly identifies Willmore as an example of the “extravagant rake,”<sup>29</sup> recognized more for his sense of “hyperbolic extravagance and impertinence,”<sup>30</sup> where

his libertinism is more affectation than substance, “far wilder in word than in deed.”<sup>31</sup> This description certainly fits Willmore to a degree: he is clever, witty, roguishly likeable, and has the ability to charm the highly intelligent Hellena and Angellica Bianca. Where the play intimates at Willmore’s capacity for emotional growth and redemption through his love for Hellena, Willmore’s own persistent inconstancies and fickleness simultaneously suggests a cynical approach to his professed love. Additionally, Hume’s classification of Willmore as the “extravagant rake” also fails to take seriously the active threat Willmore poses to Florinda, thereby making Willmore less comedic hyperbole and more dangerous threat as fitting to the carnival setting of *The Rover*.

Hume also suggests that the ubiquity of the rake-hero in Restoration comedy, particularly in the 1670s, stemmed from hostility toward “marriage of economic convenience, and especially to ‘forced’ marriage,”<sup>32</sup> both of which Hume recognizes as “serious problems in upper-class seventeenth-century society,”<sup>33</sup> a theme that Behn picks up on and subverts as a means of feminist interrogation of the female role within such marriages.<sup>34</sup> Given this “hostility” to the mercenary marriage, the rake-hero stands as an emblem of a kind of liberated sexual freedom, also evident in part in Wilson’s description of the “Court Wits.”

Conversely, Backsheider’s “Cavalier Woman” embodies all of the positive traits of the masculine cavalier, namely “courage, gallantry, loyalty, flair . . .”<sup>35</sup> without the negative traits of tendency toward violence, arrogance, and negligence.<sup>36</sup> As such, Backsheider’s cavalier woman tends toward more heroisms than the male counterpart—an interesting distinction that allows an entrée for a feminist lens when looking at Hellena and Angellica as representations of this archetype. Given these definitions of both the

female libertine and the cavalier woman, we can then construct an amalgamation that combines the female libertine's sexual playfulness with the cavalier woman's courage and gallantry, where the resultant character is definitively "hero" material, without the moral rigidity generally associated with the ingenue.

## Feminism and the Cavalier Woman

*"Why must we be either guilty of fornication or murder if we converse with you men?"*<sup>37</sup>

Behn's application of the cavalier woman—particularly when placed in context with her use of the cavalier/rake-hero—in *The Rover* presents an intriguing feminist employment of the theme, and suggests that her play is an even more critically necessary inclusion to a feminist historiography, specifically because of combined juxtapositions of her cavalier women and cavalier heroes, and her depiction of *both* virgin and whore as the heroic standard within her play. With Hellena, Behn blurs convention that dictates "women, unlike men, are either angels or whores,"<sup>38</sup> creating an amalgamation of "angel" and "whore" that is a complex and nuanced representation of female agency and sexuality. Dagny Boebel observes, "[t]hrough her self-signifying nun, Hellena ... Behn unites the two extremes of sexual possibilities for women."<sup>39</sup> Hellena embraces her sexuality and the freedom from social mores that Carnevale offers. Furthermore, although her chastity is inviolate, Hellena is frequently chastised for "unladylike" behavior:

Behn goes further in *The Rover*, questioning the facile categorizing of women and destabilizing gender categories ... the prostitute Angellica refuses to stay in the 'whore' category, and Hellena, similarly, refuses to behave like a 'lady of quality.'<sup>40</sup>

Her inquisitive attitude toward sex is established from the start; Florinda opens the play saying to her sister, "What an impertinent thing is a young girl bred in a nunnery!" (1.1.1

– 2) before the conversation launches into the topic of love and lovers. Hellena’s curiosity of her sister’s romances and her desire for her own (1.1. 9 – 15) lead Florinda to remind her, “Hellena, a maid designated for a nunnery ought not be so curious in a discourse of love” (1.1.32 – 33). Florinda’s constant reminders serve to establish Hellena’s bold character, where societal tradition would dictate that young women raised in convents and contracted to enter a life of chastity, piety, and religious reflection should not display such overt knowledge of sex and sexuality. As the result, Hellena is immediately established as counterpoint to Florinda’s “sentimental womanhood”; where Florinda demonstrates passive defiance, Hellena’s rebelliousness is active. She displays an agency lacking in Florinda with her enthusiasm and drive to change the future designated for her.

When Pedro arrives to discuss Florinda’s impending marriage to either their father’s choice, Don Vincentio, or his preference of Don Antonio, Hellena continues to demonstrate her own knowledge of men, making quips about Vincentia’s impotence and speculating on her sister’s future (lack of) sex life should she carry through with the marriage to Vincentio. Pedro finally has enough, and orders that Hellena be “[locked] ... up all this Carnival” (1.1.143) where she is to stay until “[beginning] her everlasting penance” (1.1.144) at Lent. Of course, Hellena escapes confinement to explore Carnevale in hopes of finding a suitable man, hoping that Florinda’s love, Belvile “has some mad companion or other that will spoil my devotion” (1.1.37 – 38).

Behn’s feminisms make a clear appearance in Hellena: her determination to effectively wrest sexual agency away from her male relatives and sexual *knowing* beyond what a virgin should be is funny, outrageous, and smart. Behn has immediately established

Hellena as a paradox—the *knowing* virgin—that effectively refuses to be limited by her gender. It is Hellena who convinces Florinda and her brother’s manservant to attend Carnevale and “take all innocent freedoms” (1.1.182) telling her sister, “We’ll outwit twenty brothers if you’ll be ruled by me,” (1.1.183 - 184), and it is Hellena that Behn grants the ability to engage in witty repartee when she encounters Willmore a scene later (1.2) while dressed as a “gipsy” at Carnevale.

Hellena’s wit also marks Behn’s feminisms, as it was considered a desirable *masculine* trait, and one that Cavendish marked as equally *feminine*<sup>41</sup> some years previous. Hellena’s agency is a recognizable thing; she not only accomplishes her goal of finding a man to “spoil her devotion” by actively entering the carnival space and engaging with Willmore, she is also able to “redeem” him into the “reformed rake” archetype. Her banter is not confined to “demure” conversation; not only is Hellena able to hold her own with her flirtations with Willmore as they grow more and more sexual in nature, she is frequently the aggressor, placing Willmore on the defensive, occasionally unable to parry her verbal ripostes with anything but acquiescence. She also uses the conversation to take his measure, recognizing his own inconstancies for all his blandishments. Indeed it is Hellena’s wit that attracts Willmore and makes it so “I cannot get her out of my head” (2.1.7 – 8). Willmore’s fickleness, however, is continually exposed when he successfully woos favors from Angellica Bianca in spite of having only just sworn faithfulness to Hellena (1.2.243 – 247), and regardless of lacking Angellica’s going price of a thousand crowns. His dalliance with her is found out by Hellena, as is his forgetfulness; however, instead of recriminations, she tells him:

... [W]e are both of one humor: I am as inconstant as you, for I have considered, captain, that a handsome woman has a great deal to do whilst her face is good. For

then is our harvest time to gather friends, and should I in these days of my youth catch a fit of foolish consistency, I were undone: 'tis loitering by daylight in our great journey. Therefore, I declare I'll allow but one year for love, one year for indifference, and one year for hate; and then go hang yourself, for I profess myself the gay, the kind, and the inconstant. (3.3.184 – 194.)

Hellena woos Willmore by effectively out-playing him, first swearing that she, herself, is as fickle as he is, and then by getting him to swear constancy to only her. By challenging Willmore's honor and masculinity by declaring him not interesting enough to keep her attention, Hellena is able to retain the dramatic tension between them by keeping Willmore's superficial attention span focused on her.

With Hellena as the aggressor in this courtship, Behn has artfully inverted conventional gender roles by allowing her virgin to initiate pursuit—a classical allusion to Diana as the virgin goddess<sup>42</sup> of the hunt. By fusing Hellena with Diana, she becomes neither female nor male: her virgin status and subsequent inferred worth as such—a value found only in women—highlights Hellena's femininity, while her facility of wit and repartee combined with her role as the huntress giving chase to Willmore—as masculine traits—allow Behn to interrogate what it means to be female, while simultaneously honoring Carnevale traditions of misrule and disorder.

Furthermore, Hellena's appearance in the breeches role can be viewed as a challenge to heteronormative courtship rituals, namely via Hellena's proactive initiative in seeking out and wooing her own husband. She becomes the sexual aggressor, successfully wooing Willmore both in her disguise as a gypsy and while dressed as a boy. Behn, in this case, seems to be interrogating traditional (i.e. heteronormative) gender roles where it is the woman who is pursued by the

male suitor by inverting accepted courtship rituals. By appearing in her disguise as a boy, Hellena *embodies* the male role in the courtship situation and introduces a queer space that challenges the liminality of a heteronormative romance narrative as part of Behn's feminisms that successfully challenge presumed gender roles and sexuality.

## Prostitution and Marriage

*"Such a wedlock would be worse than adultery with another man!"*<sup>43</sup>

Behn's interrogation of female gender roles and subsequent representation alludes to the "myth" that is the social construct of female-specific chastity, namely the conflation of *virginity* with *value*. My argument here is to demonstrate Behn's commentary on the ways in which women were commodified, both as prostitutes as well as within the institute of marriage, as an additional feminist approach to looking at *The Rover*. Behn satirizes this practice of assigning monetary value to women as a whole—whether as a prostitute selling her body, a playwright selling her mind, an actress selling her image, or a bride selling herself by way of an advantageous marriage—where the common denominator is that all of these women serve as examples of how the female body was commodified. Pacheco looks at this commodification, commenting:

Critics have often remarked that in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*, ladies act like whores and whores like ladies. On this level, the play presents a dramatic world dominated by the two principal patriarchal definitions of women, but in which the boundary separating one category from the other has become blurred.<sup>44</sup>

The blurring of boundaries that Pacheco mentions is not confined to the characters but extends to virtually every aspect of the play. The action of the play takes place in Naples during the Interregnum during the carnival season, thereby adding the element of masks

and disguises as both a popular dramatic convention of the Restoration and as a means to further undermine distinctions between the preconceived ideas of identity and social order: After all, when everyone is masked, there is no “legitimate” way to differentiate between the ‘good’ girls and the ‘bad,’ the ‘valuable’ from the ‘worthless,’ and the gently bred from the common. This obfuscation is noted by Susan Owen, who makes mention of Behn’s specifically casual treatment of class distinction:

The first discussion between the men in the play in I. ii begins with the question of the merits of whores versus virtuous mistresses. . . . Sometimes whores and ‘women of quality’ seem interchangeable to the men, especially Willmore; at other times the distinction is all-important.”<sup>45</sup>

The salient point here is the *lack* of distinguishing characteristics, such as clothing and manners, that would enable the woman in question to be identified and labeled as a member of a particular social class, thereby making the women of the play “interchangeable” with each other and each other’s class. Behn’s use of this interchangeability between her female characters establishes a societal contrast between the virgin (Florinda and Hellena) and the whore (Angellica Bianca), while simultaneously erasing the line of distinction between the two. By “refusing to demonize the woman [Angellica] whose sexuality does not serve patriarchy’s dynastic ends,”<sup>46</sup> Behn’s comedy satirizes the ease with which women are commodified and muddles the virgin/whore archetypes as a way of commenting on the oppressive nature of the practice of mercenary marriage, as well as implied parallels between contracted marriage and the sex work industry.

As noted previously by Hume, the 1670s looked at the institute of marriage with a rather jaundiced eye, particularly where forced marriage and marriage for commercial gain were concerned, and *The Rover* is no exception. However, while other plays



approach the issue from the masculine perspective of the rake, Behn's play uses the impact of marriage on women, critiquing marriage for financial gain as a legalized form of prostitution. In particular, the opening scene establishes that both of the play's (actual) virgins are on the cusp of being "sold": Florinda into marriage to either Don Vincentio or Don Antonio, and Hellena into an allegorical marriage within a convent. Pat Gill observes that when compared to other plays of the Restoration, Behn's "works treat women who married for money with a kindness and clemency not found in other dramas of the period" and that "husbands who purchase young wives cannot expect the fidelity and accretion due unions based on love."<sup>47</sup> The critical phrase within Gill's statement is her referral to the "purchase of young wives" by their husbands, where marriage is reduced to a commercial transaction.

Neal Wood describes the economic state of England during the seventeenth century as "transitional," meaning that it was "neither feudal nor capitalist,"<sup>48</sup> but some mixture of both. As the bourgeoisie continued to develop, "ties between the upper-middle class and the aristocracy were close enough that no exclusive urban merchant patriciate developed ... Marriage and blood connections between the two classes were quite common."<sup>49</sup> Deborah Burks continues this sentiment, stating that "[i]n the seventeenth century, marriage provided an important opportunity for propertied English families to form alliances, to build or repair their fortunes, to improve their social standing."<sup>50</sup> The material point to these alliances was climbing the social ladder. Marrying "beneath" one's social class was a blurring to be avoided.

As such, the commodity for sale in marriages such as these was the virtue (and by extension, the virginity) of the bride. Doris Tishkoff emphasizes the importance of the

virgin bride as a commodity stating that “a virgin bride insured the integrity of the family, while a sexually experienced woman threatened it.”<sup>51</sup> So by definition, one can argue that the *personhood* of the female in question is indeed being “sold” whether she is a whore selling sexual favors in exchange for money or a wife exchanging her virtue and the promise of legitimate progeny in return for material comfort and stability.

Furthermore, Katherine Binhammer points out in her article titled “The Whore’s Love” that the “re- definition of the wife’s sexual role under domestic ideology”<sup>52</sup> has a greater implication for the prostitute. She expands the theory with the claim that the “emergence of companionate marriage” during the eighteenth century, meaning marrying for love rather than for financial gain, merely “provoked the repeated comparison between mercenary marriage and prostitution.”<sup>53</sup> By referring to such arrangements as “legal prostitution,” Binhammer concludes that the comparison drawn between prostitution and “mercenary marriage” fills “the overlap between the sexual and the economic in the new commerce between the sexes.”<sup>54</sup> While cynical, this conflation of marriage and prostitution suggests that not only was Behn’s satirizing this early modern trend of female commodification by setting up Florinda and Hellena at extreme ends—Florinda to the wealthy, *older* Don Vincentio, and Hellena to a convent, both circumstances where virginity/chastity is the signifying factor—she is also presenting an indictment against Florinda and Hellena’s lack of agency by suggesting the greater theme of women having the intrinsic right to make their own decisions.<sup>55</sup>

Based on these statements, the roles of virgin and whore within *The Rover* begin to take on an entirely new dimension, one that does not vilify the practice of marrying for financial gain and that accepts the custom of taking a lover to assuage needs not met

within the confines of the marriage. While *The Rover* by no means advocates marriage as legal prostitution or adultery, Behn's approach is more pragmatic, implying that all of these things are a necessary evil and as such, deserve neither praise nor censure. As ladies of *quality*, the expectations for Florinda and Hellena are limited to either marriage or convent life, where the choice for either is the responsibility and decision of their male relative(s).

Furthermore, with marriage, the expectation for upper class and aristocratic women was remained based on the medieval template of marriage for the purpose of gaining alliances, expanding family assets and wealth, or all of the above. Stephanie Coontz indicates in her book, *Marriage, a History*, that "the older system of marrying for political and economic advantage remained the norm until the eighteenth century," and although cases had been made evidencing companionate marriages as early as the thirteenth century,<sup>58</sup> the companionate marriage—or at least marriages that were *not* based "exclusively on property"—were generally among the "petty bourgeois" rather than the aristocratic.<sup>59</sup> "Among the wealthy," adds Bernard Murstein, "marriage was primarily a business arrangement."<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, the Commonwealth and English Civil War had effectively "ruined the English nobility financially," so that by the Restoration, "the [nobility's] rate of intermarriage with the rich merchant class accelerated,"<sup>61</sup> the implication being that a title could effectively (and "conveniently") be exchanged for an infusion of money.

Such is the case for Florinda. The decision was made by her father (absent in the play), that as the dutiful older daughter, her responsibility to the family was an advantageous marriage as a means of increasing family wealth. While Behn seems to

accept the advantageous marriage as a customary practice, it is Florinda's lack of *choice* that bothers Behn the most. Florinda clearly states to her brother Don Pedro "I hate Vincentio [her betrothed]" and entreats him to petition their father for a change of heart saying, "I would not have a man so dear to me as my brother follow the ill customs of our country and make a slave of his sister" (1.1.73-6). Pedro relents, saying "This absence of my father will give us opportunity to free you from Vincentio," (1.1.158 – 159), but tells Florinda that she must still marry by the next day. In exchange for voiding the marriage contract with Vincentio, Florinda must marry his friend Don Antonio, whose status and wealth is at least equal to Vincentio, and has the added qualities of being young and virile. Pedro's capitulation implies some genuine affection for his sister; however, he tells Florinda that his insistence on Antonio is "not [based on] my friendship to Antonio ... but love to thee and hatred to Vincentio," (1.1.161 – 163), and it does not prevent him from viewing her as an object to be bartered. The significant point is that Pedro is permitting Florinda the *appearance* of a choice between *who* she marries, rather than the actual choice itself, thus effectively, and tacitly, commodifying Florinda's status as a virgin.

Behn's sympathy is evidenced by the presence of Belvile as a third "rival" option. In this case, although he lacks the fortune, status, and titles of Vincentio and Antonio, Behn sets Belvile up as the preferred option of the three: he and Florinda are in love *and* he is Florinda's *choice*. This inclusion seems to indicate Behn's feeling that while an advantageous marriage is considerably better than one that is forced, the optimum scenario is one where *both* parties make the decision to marry as a matter of love and

affection, as opposed to the (patriarchal) unilateral decision predicated on property that leaves the bride-to-be without agency.

Behn acknowledges this commercialization of marriage and overt societal commodification of virginity via Hellena's reactions to her and Florinda's destined futures at the hands of their (absent) father and brother, Don Pedro. Hellena "declares adultery preferable to forced marriage (1.1.131), and she rejects constancy as an ideal ..."62 thereby adopting a particularly male sentiment: namely that without love, a monogamous marriage is not a reasonable expectation for either party. Rather than complacently accepting the edicts of her father and brother regarding her and Florinda's future, she speaks out to her brother against her sister's forced marriage:

HELLENA: Marry Don Vincentio! Hang me, such a wedlock would be worse than adultery with another man. I had rather see her in the *Hostel de Dieu*,63 to waste her youth there in vows, and be a handmaid to lazars and cripples, than to lose it in such a marriage. (1.1.125 – 128)

By Hellena's way of thinking, "[wasting Florinda's] youth ... in vows" in the "Hostel de Dieu" is an eminently preferable fate over a loveless and sexless marriage to "old Sir Fifty" (1.1.132 – 133) who, although old and impotent, "would barter himself (that bell and bauble) for your youth and fortune" (1.1.134 – 135) as if he were still some prize worthy of having. As Hellena, herself, is designated for a nunnery, a fate with which she also vehemently disagrees, her suggestion that Florinda would actually be better off cloistered away from men rather than endure a loveless marriage is one that is extreme and implies Hellena's desire for personal agency that would allow her (and Florinda) to make their own decisions about their futures.

Furthermore, Hellena's comparison between marriage—in particular, marriage to Don Vincentio—to the slave trade is indicative of her own recognition of her and Florinda's value as commodities rather than identification as autonomous individuals. Laura Rosenthal extrapolates from the comparison between slavery and marriage saying, "Don Vincentio repulses [Florinda and Hellena] not only because of his age, but because global travel and trading for slaves has associated him with 'third world' ... Hellena compares the marriage market with the slave market: 'He thinks he's trading to Gambo still'."<sup>64</sup> Here Behn again deliberately draws parallels between forced marriage, slavery, and prostitution: if marriage to Don Vincentio is tantamount to slavery, then according to Hellena, Florinda's status would drop even lower than that of a prostitute. Prostitutes, as "businesswomen," have more than a modicum of control over their fortunes and clients. Angellica Bianca and Lucetta, although they occupy a lower social stratum, serve as evidence within the play that the prostitute is able to maintain some level of autonomy. As a virgin bride, however, Hellena implies that were Florinda to marry Don Vincentio, she would not be afforded the same autonomy, and would effectively be nothing more than a possession.

Hellena concludes her bold statements to her brother saying, "I had rather be a nun than be obliged to marry as you would have me if I were designed for't" (1.1.131 – 147). Craig Monson, chronicling the "goings on" in seventeenth century Italian convents, remarks:

[In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy, a] respectable woman's choice—actually, her father's uncle's, or brother's choice *for* her—was either marriage or the convent. ... The wealth of Renaissance aristocratic families had to be kept intact. ... So while one daughter was commonly groomed for the marriage market, the rest were regularly bound over to the cloister.<sup>65</sup>

Hellena's preference is clear: being sold to a cloister is preferable to being sold into marriage without love. Either way, Hellena and Florinda (and their virginity) are commodities to be bartered away in marriage or sold to a convent by their family.

Owen astutely discusses the recurring theme of commodification as it pertains to Hellena's sense of self:

Hellena is mistress of the unexpected. She is desirable as a wealthy, well-born virgin who nevertheless acts on her desire and advertises her charms. Where she differs from the prostitute characters, ironically, is in her self-possession. Economically the prostitute 'possesses' herself and can repeatedly sell herself, while Hellena is possessed by her father and brother. Yet Hellena is self-possessed in character. She has freedom to manoeuvre because she is able to keep a distance from her passions, rather than being subsumed by them.<sup>66</sup>

By granting Hellena the "masculine" trait of the ability to "reason, free from passion,"<sup>67</sup>

Behn creates a liminal space where Hellena exists as neither fully female or entirely male: she has the desirability of a woman, but the logic and reasoning of a man. Owen follows up, conferring upon Hellena additional masculine sentiments with regard to her sister's impending betrothal and her own designation for a cloistered life:

[A]lthough Hellena may seem more 'liberated' than her older sister, in fact she also espouses a male ideology, modified to give her what she wants. In her case it is the witty, cavalier ideology of the dispossessed royalists, younger sons and rake heroes.<sup>68</sup>

It should be noted, however, that Hellena's outrageous proclamations still conform to the patriarchal principles that govern her time, modified to serve her own ends: while her spirited arguments against marriage are done primarily on behalf of Florinda, Hellena states her own objective clearly: "Nay, I'm resolved to provide myself this Carnival, if there be e'er a handsome proper fellow of my humor above ground" (1.1.38 – 40), the implication being that Hellena is not adverse to a romance of her own. As Heidi Hutner

points out, “*The Rover* ... shows us that Hellena, the virgin heiress, attempts to turn her world upside down—to transgress class and gender boundaries—but she is eventually and willingly brought back into the patriarchal fold”<sup>69</sup> via her marriage to Willmore.

Inversely, Behn grants Angellica Bianca (and Lucetta) the freedom to make their own choices with regard to sex. Both of these women have significant agency by Restoration standards. Both are effectively able to pick and choose their own clients, with Angellica as a high status courtesan, able to set her own “price” of one thousand crowns per month (2.1.118). Frederick (one of the cavaliers) even remarks that Angellica’s price is “a portion for the Infanta,” (2.1.118), where “portion” refers to a woman’s dowry, and thus further conflating marriage and prostitution. In this case, Behn does not suggest that Angellica is in the wrong for selling her favors at such a high price, or even at all. Instead, Behn sets her up as a rather business savvy woman. The impoverished cavaliers take turns lamenting that none can afford her, until Pedro arrives and casually states, “I never wished to buy this beauty at an easier rate,” (2.1.122 – 123) suggesting that not only can he afford Angellica’s price, but that he considers her company worth the cost. It also creates a counterpoint to Florinda and Hellena’s dowries: where part of their value comes from the monies they will bring to their husband or nunnery, Angellica’s value resides in what men are willing to pay for *her*. By this reasoning, we can construe that Angellica, then, is valued more by the men in Behn’s play-world than Hellena and Florinda.

Where the expectation for aristocratic virgins was the advantageous marriage without mention of love, Angellica takes the approach of being “resolved that nothing but gold shall charm my heart,” (2.2.146) where love is called a “general disease of [the



female] sex” (2.2.149). Nancy Copeland defends Angellica saying that “she [Angellica Bianca] shows no sign of regret or repentance for her loss of virginity: her only fault is being mercenary, a vice that can, apparently, be separated from her sexuality,”<sup>70</sup> where Angellica Bianca is well aware of the hypocrisy of being denigrated for earning her living as such, saying to Willmore:

ANGELICA: Pray tell me, sir, are you not guilty of the same mercenary crime? When a lady is proposed to you for a wife, you never ask how fair, discreet, or virtuous she is, but what’s her fortune; which, if but small, you cry “She will not do my business,” and basely leave her, though she languish for you. (2.2.90 – 95)

Behn is emphasizing the manufactured parallels and double standards for women versus men: Angellica Bianca is charged with mercenary behaviors toward men, fishing for wealthy patrons and charging them a thousand crowns for her services, and yet the male practice of fortune hunting when it came to selecting a wife was common, if not entirely socially acceptable.

The interesting comparison here is that Florinda and Hellena are being forced into transactional “marriages”—the first to a man she does not love, the second in a metaphorical marriage to God and the Church—where money is the signifying aspect of each, and yet are both desirous of love and its physical components, while Angellica is (presumably) *not* being forced into the position where sex *is* the transaction (and marriage is completely out of the question), and yet she has no interest in love at all. Furthermore, where Hellena and Florinda’s value lies in their ignorance of the sex act, Angellica’s is in her expertise, and neither state of being is condemned by Behn with one preferable to the other. Behn’s lack of disapproval for Angellica’s line of work not only keeps to Restoration attitudes toward sex (that were largely reactionary to the austere

Puritan values of the Interregnum), it is also indicative of Behn's tendency for "clemency" toward women forced into advantageous marriage as a parallel to high-end prostitution, while simultaneously critiquing the societal assumption of marriage as the desired and required outcome for women.

Moreover, Gill's comments regarding Behn's representation of female sexuality indicates her belief that Behn's plays were more critical of her character's social ambition than the character's virtue, or lack thereof. Gill makes the observation that "while similarly kind to debauched young girls and generous to prostitutes, the plays are far less tolerant of affected young social climbers or degenerate old ladies."<sup>71</sup> Nancy Cotton adds that the characterized prostitutes, such as Angellica Bianca, within Behn's plays are "[weapons] in her [Behn's] thematic attack on mercenary marriage."<sup>72</sup> Cotton goes on to say:

Behn uses the series of *Rover* plays to make in a stronger form the point she makes in her plays against forced marriage. In those plays, heroines forced into, or about to be forced into, loveless but profitable marriages feel themselves prostituted. In the *Rover* series Behn goes a step further to say that the only difference between prostitution and marriage for money is that prostitution is the more candid, less hypocritical way for a woman to earn a living.<sup>73</sup>

Angellica is honest in her mercenary approach to sex, saying that "'tis for [Don Pedro] or Don Antonio the Viceroy's son that I have spread my nets," (2.1.155 – 156) with the two gentlemen in question being young, handsome, and most significantly, *wealthy* enough for her standards. With prostitution, the expectations are clear: sex and "company" in exchange for money, jewels, and property. With the advantageous marriage, although the outcomes are arguably similar—sex and an heir in exchange for money, jewels, and property—the explicit commercial nature of such transactions are rarely, if ever stated, although it is "understood" that with marriage, sex is for procreative purposes and not

necessarily for pleasure. Angeline Goreau remarks upon this very issue, indicating her understanding that Behn's opposition to the "property-marriage system"<sup>74</sup> was more her opposition to "the intrusion of 'interest' into intimacy of whatever sort between men and women—whether it be marriage or love; whether that interest be property, title, money, ambition, or other."<sup>75</sup> As such, the necessity for a woman to marry well was more a flaw in the custom rather than in the woman herself.

Behn also demonstrates the other side to the transactional marriage, where she raises the suggestion of male fortune hunting that Angellica alludes to. None of the cavaliers in *The Rover* have the assumption of any great material wealth or title. Don Pedro goes so far as to ask Florinda "You have considered, sister, that Belvile has no fortune to bring you to; banished his country, despised at home, and pitied abroad" (1.1.136 - 138), comparing Belvile's impoverished state to the wealthier Vincentio and Antonio. Inversely, Florinda and Hellena are both young, beautiful, wealthy, and titled, theoretically making them the social superiors to the cavaliers. Altruistically, there is no real mention of her fortune between Florinda and Belvile; however, Belvile and Florinda had met prior to convening in Naples. She tells Hellena at the start of the play, "I knew him at the siege of Pamplona; he was then a colonel of French horse, who when the town was ransacked, nobly treated my brother and myself, preserving us from all insolences" (1.1.52 – 55). This prior knowledge carries a cynical thread that unlike Willmore's supposed ignorance of Hellena's wealth, Belvile is fully aware of Florinda's social and financial standing, and persists through the end when Belvile and Florinda effectively arrange an impromptu marriage as a way of forestalling any possibility of Florinda

getting married off to either Antonio or Vincentio, alluding to an additional reason for Belvile's haste to get married to Florinda.

Furthermore, although Willmore and Hellena profess their love for each other at the end of the play, Willmore's claim that he was unaware of Hellena's status as an heiress with "three hundred thousand crowns" (5.523) is also somewhat suspect and carries the hint that perhaps Willmore's confession of love is motivated by the prospect of significant financial gain. In either case, Florinda and Hellena's personal wealth is enough to "overcome" the relatively impoverished states of their respective beaus; where both women were effectively commodified at the start of the play, by the end, Behn's interrogation of seventeenth century marital practices is also inverted, where the women have arguably "bought" husbands rather than the other way around suggesting an additional blurring of gender roles. In this case, both parties are effectively commodified: the men as the financial inferiors to the women, and the women as both heiresses and virgins. As such, the required "happily ever after" is further brought into question when both bride and groom use marriage as a less than honest means of earning a living.

### Sexual Assaults and Cavalier Masculinity

*"Must I be sacrificed for the crimes of the most infamous of my sex?"*<sup>76</sup>

One of the more troubling plot points of *The Rover* concern the multiple sexual assaults and rape attempts on Florinda. However, by problematizing the cavaliers as "mock-heroic," Behn is effectively questioning the unrealistic standards of masculinity in a manner similar to the equally unrealistic standards of feminine chastity while concurrently interrogating the system that is exceedingly permissive of male transgression just as it is equally censorious of similar behavior in women, once again

recalling Pheterson's "Red Badge of Courage or Scarlet Letter"<sup>77</sup> dichotomy that exists as systemic means of gender oppression even in the twenty-first century.

Furthermore, *The Rover* isn't unique in its depiction of sexual violence against women, making a number of Restoration plays equally problematic. Couch scenes and assault/rape scenes seemed to rise in popularity and proliferation in Restoration drama, a phenomenon Elizabeth Howe attributes to the appearance of the first English actresses, that "encouraged a great deal of stage violence which was clearly intended to provide a sexual thrill for spectators" where the "actresses caused rape to become for the first time a major feature in English tragedy."<sup>78</sup> She speculates:

Rape became a way of giving the purest, most virginal heroine a sexual quality. It allowed dramatists to create women of such 'greatness' and 'perfect honour' as was felt to be appropriate to tragedy and heroic drama, but at the same time to exploit sexually the new female presence in the theater. The [seventeenth century] critic and dramatist John Dennis even chauvinistically suggests that the fact that rape involves women being enjoyed against their will made it acceptable not only to lust for males in the audience, but also to those hypocritical ladies spectators who would censure sex scenes and comedy.<sup>79</sup>

However, Howe specifies that "rape was never actually simulated on stage," that Restoration "dramatists extracted more titillation by avoiding a staging of gruesome details."<sup>80</sup> Derek Hughes splits hairs, arguing against Howe's contention of the increase in rape scenes after 1660, offering the equally troubling conditional statement, "By rape I mean forcible rape, rather than intercourse achieved by false pretenses,"<sup>81</sup> in which "mere" attempted rape is discounted. Hughes then speculates that the popularity of rape in Restoration theatre was not directly related to the emergence of the actress but rather was indicative of a different kind of zeitgeist:

... it was part of a more general phenomenon: the unprecedentedly complex exploration of sexual behaviour which was developing at this very time. ... Yes, there is more rape in Restoration than in Renaissance drama, but it is not an

isolated phenomenon with an isolated cause. It is part of an initially enlightened testing of received systems of sexual morality and sexual power, in which the concern may be as much with the woman's subjection to male versions of history, as to male force.<sup>82</sup>

What Hughes is proposing is intriguing and speaks to the producibility of a play such as *The Rover* in the twenty-first century. Specifically, this “enlightened testing of received systems of sexual morality and sexual power” that he alludes to is one that transposes well into the twenty-first century, particularly in light of the #MeToo movement that seeks to “address both the dearth in resources for survivors of sexual violence and to build a community of advocates, driven by survivors.”<sup>83</sup> Behn’s own participation in staging sexual assault and explicit bedroom scenes demonstrates her own awareness of how women were (are) both idealized, fetishized, and ultimately commodified. Howe submits that Behn “had no qualms about exploiting her sex in this way,” in spite of the fact that her “plays often assert the rights of women in a patriarchal society”<sup>84</sup>—concepts that may seem at odds with each other, until one considers the agency with which Behn imbues her female characters. She does not shy away from openly depicting her women as sexual, particularly in the cases of Hellena and Angellica, and even Florinda is implicitly sexualized, where part of her distaste for Vincentio is the prospect of the requisite sexual relations “for threescore years” (1.1.127) that marriage to him would entail.

In this case, Behn’s frank approach to *female* sexuality, more than suggestive of her opinion that *female* sexual gratification is as important and as much of an imperative as male sexual gratification.<sup>85</sup> Although not as problematic *during* her life, successive generations of writers and literary critics grew more and more repressive with regard to human sexuality in general, and female sexuality in particular, before culminating in rigid

morals of the Victorian Age, with standards reminiscent of the Puritans. As such, Behn went from celebrated author and playwright in the Restoration to a “disgrace”<sup>86</sup> who “wrote foully”<sup>87</sup> in the 1800s. Moreover, because of the Victorian attitude toward sex, Behn still remains one of the more under-rated seventeenth century playwrights, while (American) attitudes toward sex and sexuality still have not recovered from Victorian influence in conjunction with the country’s Puritan origins

Nearly three hundred and fifty years later, and the subjects of rape, sexual assault, and the social and criminal repercussions thereof are still very much in the foreground. Students and audiences approaching *The Rover* as problematic are perhaps conflating Willmore’s troubling actions with those in current events, where cases of sexual violence are notorious for splitting hairs between intent versus action. Pacheco writes with regard to linguistic semantics that still plague matters of rape and sexual assault, saying, “Florinda faces three attempted rapes that are called not rape, but seduction, retaliation, or ‘ruffling a harlot’; in presuming to make her own sexual choices, she enters a world where the word ‘rape’ has no meaning”;<sup>88</sup> the 2015 *People v. [Brock] Turner* case exemplifies this double standard:

The particularities of language matter a great deal in Turner’s case. When he first became a household name following his victim’s release of her heart-wrenching, beautifully written impact statement, anti-rape activists argued that journalists should start calling him a rapist, not a Stanford swimmer. And last year, a college textbook about criminal justice placed his mugshot next to the section titled “Rape,” calling him “rapist Brock Turner.”

But Turner was never convicted of rape. He was convicted of three felonies related to sexual assault: assault with intent to commit rape of an intoxicated person, sexually penetrating an intoxicated person with a foreign object, and sexually penetrating an unconscious person with a foreign object. In California, rape requires a perpetrator to commit forcible sexual intercourse, which Turner did not.<sup>89</sup>

Similarly, Florinda’s first assault is also downplayed away from rape:

FLORINDA: I'll cry murder, rape, or anything, if you do not instantly let me go.  
WILLMORE: A rape! Come, come, come, you lie, you baggage, you lie: what, I'll warrant you would fain have the world believe now that you are not so forward as I. no, not you! Why, at this time of night, was your cobweb door set open, dear spider, but to catch flies? Ha, come, or I shall be definitely angry. Why, what a coil is here! ... That you would do it for nothing? Oh, oh, I find what you would be at. Look here, here's a pistole for you. Here is a work indeed! Here, take it I say. (3.5.49 – 59)

Just as rape isn't considered rape unless active *penile* penetration occurs, to Willmore's mind, rape isn't rape if he's willing to pay for it, in spite of Florinda's protestations to let her go. Behn continues her satire of the mock-hero through Willmore's drunken lust, while also furthering her problematization of rape culture as she saw it in the seventeenth century.

Additionally, Willmore's refusal to accept Florinda's rejection serves to illustrate male entitlement, particularly with regard to the female body. The carnivalesque atmosphere of the play provides the perfect camouflage, where “[c]arnival masquerade ... makes it impossible to tell a gypsy or a prostitute from an aristocrat,”<sup>90</sup> and “Florinda's carnival ‘undress’ gives Willmore [and the rest] more a ‘right’ to have her ...”<sup>91</sup> Anita Pacheco elaborates, identifying Willmore's attempt as an additional double standard at play in the form of a “double seduction, where “it is at once an attempt to seduce and a claim to have been seduced.”<sup>92</sup> On the one hand, Willmore's gross flattery seeks to persuade Florinda to accept his advances; on the other, her presence in the garden at night, casually dressed, and smelling “like any nosegay” (3.5.25) is seen as an active seduction on her part, thus granting Willmore the “right” to her body. In this case, Pacheco observes that this perceived double seduction “constitutes a fairly brutal assertion of masculine power” where “[the] seduction narrative ... not only validates the man's use of force, but also disallows the woman's non-consent on the grounds that,



having called eros into play, she is not permitted to withhold gratification.”<sup>93</sup> Just as Willmore “has every right” to Florinda’s body, Turner’s actions indicate the same kind of prerogative: as a (white) male, it was Turner’s “right” to freely access “Emily Doe’s” unconscious body, which apparently was provocation enough to rouse his sex drive, and disallow any thought that, conscious or not, “Doe” would “withhold [his] gratification.”

The paradox of presenting Willmore as the “romantic hero,” and yet so vitally flawed, emphasizes the contrast between his attempts at “seduction” and the violence of his actions.<sup>94</sup> Florinda’s noncompliance is rendered irrelevant; Willmore deliberately confuses Florinda’s non-consent with a sex-game where “yes, means yes; and no, means yes.” Still-common “patriarchal standards”<sup>95</sup> regarding sexual assault and consent maintain the supposition of, if “[Willmore] is unaware of [Florinda’s] non-consent, can he be a rapist?”<sup>96</sup> In this case, the indictment is directed toward the false equivalency that non-consent—either because the victim is unable, incapacitated, or “does not mean it”—is the same as active consent. Furthermore, the issue of consent is often additionally confounded in the United States because rape, sexual assault, and sexual abuse are defined at the state level instead of federally, meaning that there is a continually shifting *legal* definition<sup>97</sup> of sexual violence, where Willmore’s assault might be classified as a misdemeanor in one state and *not a legal crime* in another.<sup>98</sup>

Willmore only ceases his attack on Florinda when Belvile and Frederick arrive and interrupt, providing Florinda the chance to escape. Although Belvile seems incensed by Willmore’s “mistake,” Pacheco specifies that:

[Belvile] appears on the scene not as an opponent of rape as such, but as the champion of chastity and class distinction, defending from involuntary defilement the woman who represents patriarchal feminine ideal. The chivalric attitude to

rape, it would seem, that it exists only in relation to women whose class and sexuality make them valuable patriarchal commodity.<sup>99</sup>

The fact that Belvile is incensed more because it was a woman of *quality* being assaulted rather than the assault itself not only speaks to the depressingly normative acceptance of sexual assault, but also further suggests the deeply flawed natures of all of Behn's supposed heroes. Backscheider and Pacheco note, Belvile's cavalier distinction stems more from maintaining "class overtones ... as the champion of *chastity*<sup>100</sup> and *class distinction*"<sup>101</sup> than as someone with truly noble ideals who opposes sexual assault regardless of the victim. Belvile's gallantry, then, is relatively superficial—a trait that Behn uses to highlight inconsistencies in the supposed 'gentlemen's code of honor' and Belvile's own representation of mock-heroism.

In the case of Blunt, his failed involvement with Lucetta that results in him being robbed and left naked in the gutter leads him to "[decide] to take phallic revenge 'on one whore for the sins of another' [4.5.51]"<sup>102</sup> in a disturbing scene reminiscent of any current incel<sup>103</sup> ideology predicated on the suggestion that all women are to blame for any romantic or sexual failure past, present, and future. From this perspective, Blunt's rage is nothing less than terrifying in its inherent violence. When Florinda stumbles into his house in yet another attempt to escape Willmore, Blunt decides to revenge himself on her:

BLUNT: Cruel? 'Adsheartlikins, as a galley-slave, or a Spanish whore. Cruel, yes: I will kiss and beat thee all over; kiss, and see thee all over; thou shalt lie with me too, not that I care for the enjoyment, but to let thee see I have ta'en deliberated malice to thee, and will be revenged on one whore for the sins of another. I will smile and deceive thee, flattered thee, and beat thee, kiss and swear, and lie to thee, embrace thee and rob thee, as she did me; fawn on thee, and stripped thee stark naked, then hang thee out at my window by the heels, with a paper of scurvy versus fastened to thy breast, in praise of damnable women. (4.5.47 – 56)

Blunt's pronouncement that he intends to rape Florinda, not because he "[cares] for the enjoyment," but to demonstrate his power and ability to dominate her through terror solely because "[he has] ta'en deliberated malice" to Florinda as representative of all women is increasingly relevant to certain twenty-first century attitudes of misogyny. Furthermore, Behn—via Blunt—is also effectually acknowledging that rape and sexual assault are never about sexual gratification, but about the ability of one person or persons to intimidate, subjugate, and dominate another as a repugnant display of power.

In May 2014 self-identifying incel Elliot Rodger embarked on a shooting and stabbing spree in Isla Vista, California, killing six and wounding fourteen before turning the gun on himself and fatally shooting himself. Rodger identified his rage and loathing toward woman as part of his frustration for being a virgin at twenty-two.<sup>104</sup> In a video posted to *YouTube* shortly before his spree, Rodger raged, "I'm 22 years old and I'm still a virgin. Within those years, I've had to rot in loneliness. It's not fair. You girls have never been attracted to me. *I don't know why you girls aren't attracted to me, but I will punish you all for it.*"<sup>105</sup> While Blunt was 'wronged' by one woman in truth, and Rodger's slights were his perception only, the end result becomes the same: women as a gender must be "punished" for daring to violate Blunt and Rodger's sacrosanct masculinity.

Behn was very much aware of the various sexual double standards of her time, not least of which were attitudes of male entitlement with regard to sex. She notes in her Prologue to *The Debauchee, or, The Credible Cuckold* (1677) addressed to "men of sence [sic]":

But you come bawling in with broken *French*,  
Roaring out Oaths aloud, from Bench to Bench,

And bellowing Bawdy to the Orange-wench;  
Quarrel with Masques, and to be brisk, and free,  
You sell 'em Bargains for a Repartee,  
And then cry Damn 'em Whores, who e're they be.<sup>106</sup>

Behn lambasts hypocritical male behavior, particularly when attending the theatre, alluding to pretensions of wit and culture. When rebuffed by the “Orange-wench” or “Masques,” for their boorish behavior, she is critical of the knee-jerk response to label them as “Whores” for presumably insufficient acquiescence to the male entitlement that should permit bad behavior without reprisal.

Her Prologue to *The Feign'd Curtizans* (1679) is even more specific with regard to the double-standard of male versus female morality:

But now are something in meer contradiction,  
And piously pretend, these are not days,  
For keeping Mistresses and seeing Plays.  
...  
Yet I am handsome still, still young and mad,  
Can wheadle, lie, dissemble, jilt—egad,  
As well and artfully as e're I did,  
Yet not one Conquest can I gain or hope,  
No Prentice, not a Foreman of a Shop ...<sup>107</sup>

Behn directly addresses the contradiction of piety and “keeping Mistresses,” and yet the author/speaker suggests that although she, too, is has the ability to “wheadle, lie, dissemble, jilt” equivalent to her (masculine) targeted audience, she is unable to receive equal treatment “upon the stage,” the presumption being that gender confers specific social allowances for behavior and structures of morality.

David Morse writes concerning the Restoration paradoxical view of virtue and standards for morality, commenting that:

Morality ... appears as a superogatory system of rules that have no real bearing on actual life. Restoration comedy does not claim to satirize or

castigate vice in the Jonsonian manner but to project as forcefully, frenetically, and grotesquely as possible.<sup>108</sup>

However, Behn's "grotesque" renderings of Willmore's drunkenness and hedonistic indulgence in his appetites; Blunt's vicious misogyny and outright violence toward women; and Belvile's tepid attempts at playing the white knight satirize and problematize male behavior throughout the play. Not only does *The Rover* examine patriarchal attitudes toward sexual violence from the female perspective, it also holds up for example and ridicule how the patriarchy does an equal disservice to men. Behn's satirized encouragement—and even reward of—bad behavior establishes examples of a toxic masculine ideal with the cavaliers as the ersatz "heroes," which in turn problematizes those same behaviors. In the end, Behn's cavaliers are more "debauched devil-may-cares" than "Prince Ruperts."<sup>109</sup>

### *The Rover* and Theatre Pedagogy and Practice

*"... a spongy site of imitation and innovation ... understood through a study of the palimpsestic nature of the performance text."* <sup>110</sup>

As generally the only specific example of early modern female authorship theatre history students are likely to encounter,<sup>111</sup> *The Rover* needs to be approached in context with the Restoration as not only an example of the comedy of intrigue genre, but also as a feminist voice in the still-predominantly male space. Just as Cary provides additional context for Shakespeare, and Cavendish contributes to the conversation surrounding manuscript culture during the Interregnum, Behn needs to be approached less as the "only" female playwright, and more as a feminist lens that continues the conversations

begun by Cary and Cavendish on female agency, prescribed gender roles, and social expectations.

However, whenever I have taught this play as part of a theatre history class, I have found that students tend to struggle with Florinda's repeated sexual assaults at the hands of Willmore and Blunt, as well as with the idea of Willmore, the ostensible 'hero' of the play, not only assaulting Florinda, but also being "rewarded" with marriage to Hellena at the end. What should a twenty-first century audience *do* with this information? Anita Pacheco observes that "[t]his depiction of a rape culture causes problems for Behn, for if she alerts us to the tendency of romance to turn rapists into lovers, comic conventions dictate that she must turn her rapist-hero into a husband,"<sup>112</sup> and yet "in attempting to domesticate her hero and provide for her heroine's happiness, she is driven to participate in the concealment of rape that her play has systematically revealed as a characteristic patriarchal strategy."<sup>113</sup> Pacheco is not wrong; however, my argument here is that Behn's "concealment of rape" speaks to the larger issue at hand, namely that "[r]ape is the most under-reported crime; 63% of sexual assaults are not reported to police,"<sup>114</sup> where *The Rover* has the potential of being used as a way to examine current rape culture via Behn's seventeenth century perspective.

The unfortunate truth is that the issues of rape and sexual violence—particularly against women—are still relevant. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) publishes statistics on sexual violence in the United States, reporting that (as of 2015) "One in five women ... will be raped at some point in their lives" and that "91% of the victims of rape and sexual assault are female ..."<sup>115</sup> Given these troubling statistics, *The Rover* stands as a play that remains increasingly relevant, where Willmore and the

cavaliers exist in a peculiar grey area where they are neither the clear-cut villains to be reviled, nor are they obvious moral standards of masculinity.

In her essay for *HowlRound*, Christin Essin remarks:

When I teach Restoration drama in my theatre history classroom, I regularly assign Aphra Behn's *The Rover*; my syllabus includes a content warning (or "trigger warning") because the plot hangs on the threatened rape of one of the female characters by multiple male characters. ... If they are going to confront violence, even on the page, I want them to be alert rather than shocked, to be able to recognize early warning signs—a raised voice or grabbed wrist—so they can question the necessity of its deployment as a rhetorical or narrative devise [sic].<sup>116</sup>

However, although a critical plot point, Essin does the play a disservice with her claim that the "plot hangs" on Florinda's repeated sexual assaults. This is not to take a reductive view of rape and sexual violence in the play. Nor should this be interpreted as a dismissal of the potential trauma these scenes may have on contemporary readership and/or audiences. Furthermore, as previously discussed in this chapter, *The Rover* is hardly alone in its inclusion of sexual violence against women, most of which were written by Behn's male predecessors and contemporaries, and several of which continue to have a robust production history in addition to "automatic" inclusion into theatre history curricula. That being said, contemporary audiences (and students) tend to forget that realism as an acting style is still relatively new, where "[t]oo often we over-exalt violence in storytelling for being 'real' and 'gritty',"<sup>117</sup> whereas in several cases a hyper-realistic approach to (sexual) violence—particularly in "classical" plays—is superfluous. In this case, the question becomes whether or not Florinda's repeated assaults are superfluous to the overall point of *The Rover*, if they are Essin's identifying plot element, or if they exist somewhere in between being superfluous and significant.

In this case, I do think Florinda's assaults are significant rather than superfluous to the plot, because they are *necessary* to problematize the male behavior of the titular cavaliers as well as Behn's way of problematizing Restoration marriage expectations when the arguable hero(ine) of the play is so determined to marry a man such as Willmore. Just as her predecessors pushed their own boundaries, Behn's play also pushes its own liminality by exposing gender bias and double standards by creating satires of the "cavalier hero." *The Rover* also questions female archetypes through its continued juxtaposition of the virgin/whore trope. While the permissive atmosphere of her Carnevale backdrop encourages an expectation of misrule and inverted rules of engagement, it is merely the vehicle through which Behn presents and promotes her feminisms.

Ann Pelligrini, in her essay on staging sexual injury as it pertains to Paula Vogel's *How I Learned to Drive* (1997), writes:

Nonetheless, there is yet reason to scrutinize dominant feminist approaches to the question of sexual violence. Much feminist effort has been devoted to exposing and analyzing the ubiquity verging on normalization of violence against women, and rightly so.<sup>118</sup>

In the case of *The Rover*, it is precisely the "ubiquity verging on normalization of violence against women" that makes this play still so very relevant as well as Behn's way of addressing this issue. By "normalizing" the assaults on Florinda, especially where her own brother (unbeknownst to him) is a would-be assailant, Behn is commenting on the ubiquity of such violence and then satirizing through her grotesque representations of male sexual entitlement. We are left discomfited and dissatisfied with ending because we are meant to: We *shouldn't* like the way in which Florinda is treated by virtually every male character, just as we *shouldn't* laud Willmore as the "hero," or celebrate Hellena's



choice of Willmore as her husband. Instead, this play should be approached not just as a comedy, but as a satire that calls into question not only gender roles, but also audience expectation of “comedy.”

In spite of the spectre of sexual violence, *The Rover* remains an eminently producible play, that yet does not see the production history it deserves. One of the primary reasons for this neglect is the overall lack of American audience familiarity with the genre. General historical knowledge seems to jump from a somewhat clear idea of the Renaissance and Shakespeare, through the less distinct idea that the American Revolution happened sometime, probably after that, followed by the American Civil War and hoop skirts. This rather deplorable concept of history is only exacerbated by the American public-school system that tends to make these kinds of leaps when it comes to the study of history. As such it is no surprise that the highly specific period of the Restoration is so unfamiliar to the American public.

This is also compounded by the perception that theatre is an “elite” art form, where plays in general are only for the educated, and *classical* plays are certainly beyond the reach of “ordinary” people. As a theatre practitioner, I have been privy to innumerable conversations with friends and family outside of academia, all of whom tend to make the same confession: “I don’t like Shakespeare. I never really ‘got’ his plays,” as if this were a sin of the highest magnitude, where they come to me as a known theatre scholar in search of absolution. Regardless, given the primacy of Shakespeare in performance repertoire, where its overall ubiquity lends itself to a significant measure of familiarity with Elizabethan and Jacobean language and theatrical conventions.

However, "... the shadow cast by Shakespeare makes our perception [of early modern theatre] ... rather imperfect,"<sup>119</sup> and as such, Restoration (1660 – 1700) and eighteenth-century plays, which, due to frequently convoluted plots, archaic language, and past unpopularity,<sup>120</sup> rarely see full-scale productions outside of academic circles. This is largely due to the premise that Restoration comedy is considered difficult to perform/produce because of language, style, content, and thus "too difficult" to "translate" for modern audiences. Furthermore, Michael Malek Najjar offers the proposition:

One of the other difficulties is the "festival" model that promises a great weekend getaway to, say, Ashland or Stratford, which is contradicted by showing plays that are too challenging or dangerous to audiences' sensibilities. That said, I can't see how revenge tragedies can fall into this category but plays like *The Rover* cannot, but that might have more to do with the primacy of Shakespeare than anything (i.e. they don't produce *The Spanish Tragedy* either).<sup>121</sup>

This notion that a play such as *The Rover* is "too challenging or dangerous to audiences," and thus season programming must take into serious consideration a diffident audience, while not necessarily inaccurate, also does not take into consideration current audience viewing habits. Latinx playwright Caridad Svich, in her series of "Dear Theatre" tweets, posted the appeal:

Dear theatre, pls stop using your so-called "timid" audience as an excuse to not do things. This audience has seen a lot & are likely watching *Killing Eve*, *Russian Doll*, *Atlanta*, *Bojack Horseman*, and even *American Horror Story* on rotation.<sup>122</sup>

In this case, an audience used to twenty years of *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit* (1999) should ostensibly be able to process the considerably *less* graphic violence in *The Rover*, thereby rendering the argument of Willmore and Blunt's sexual assaults on Florinda as highly problematic as an excuse, rather than substantial reason, for its general lack of production.

Finally, if *The Rover* is “too dangerous,” it does not explain the continued absence of production of Behn’s *other* plays, most of which have the same kind of producibility as *The Rover* without the problematization of sexual assault and the mock-hero. Once such play is Behn’s second most popular comedy, *The Emperor of the Moon* (1687), which, considering the overall unfamiliarity of American theatre with Behn’s body of work, is also unsurprising. The next chapter will look at *Emperor*, which as a farce, tackles different social concerns than *The Rover*, yet is still one that is deserving of more pedagogical and production attention from theatres than it currently has.

#### *Notes to Chapter IV*

<sup>1</sup> Marta Straznicky, “Restoration Women Playwrights and the Limits of Professionalism,” *ELH* 64, no.3 (Fall 1997), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30030237>, 703.

<sup>2</sup> Oscar Brockett, ed., *History of the Theatre*, 6th ed. (Needham Heights: Allyn and Bacon, 1991), 238. See Chapter II of this dissertation for more.

<sup>3</sup> Ezell’s “signpost” refers to the current practice of identifying female authorship as either an “anomaly” or as a “special event,” where a playwright such as Behn tends to exist as a sole example of early modern female dramatic presence,

Margaret Ezell, *Writing Women’s Literary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 23.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Markley, “Aphra Behn’s *The City Heiress*: Feminism and the Dynamics of Popular Success on the Late Seventeenth-Century Stage,” *Comparative Drama* 41, no. 2 (Summer 2007), doi:10.1353/cdr.2007.0020, 142.

<sup>5</sup> Aphra Behn, *The Rover*, ed. Frederick M. Link (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), Epilogue. 1 – 2. Text references are to act, scene, and line of this edition.

<sup>6</sup> Comedy of intrigue (also called ‘comedy of situation’) is categorized by 1) dramatic action over character development; 2) plots driven by conspiracy and/or character use of complicated stratagems to achieve their goals; and 3) the use of farce and the ridiculous as the premise for various situations. This genre extends back to Roman comedy, most notably Plautus and Terrence, and is now most recognizable by audiences in its abbreviated form as the modern sitcom.

“Comedy of Intrigue,” *Merriam-Webster* (1995), 261; and “Comedy of Intrigue,” *Pavis* (1998), 65.

<sup>7</sup> Spencer, Notes to Pages 6 – 8 in *The Rover and Other Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 337.

<sup>8</sup> Behn was famously charged with accusations of plagiarism, although the practice of “borrowing” plots from other plays was a well-established tradition. Jane Spencer notes that in spite of being adapted from Thomas Killigrew’s play, *Thomaso, or The Wanderer* (1654):

Behn’s reshaping of Killigrew’s work, though, makes *The Rover* very much her own play. It is not just that *The Rover*, with its tight organization, swift pace, and clever use of the stage provides the theatrical flair lacking in *Thomaso*, a play of interesting but long-drawn-out ideas. Behn’s manipulation of the characters and situations set up by Killigrew shows her engaging in a thoughtful dialogue with the earlier play,

revising its notion of heroic male and female roles, and in the process of producing distinctive versions of stock Restoration characters such as the rakish hero, the abandoned mistress, and the witty heroine.

Spencer, Introduction to *The Rover and Other Plays*, xiii.

<sup>9</sup> Spencer, Notes to Pages 74 – 84, 347.

<sup>10</sup> Nancy Copeland, “‘Once a Whore and Ever?’ Whore and Virgin in *The Rover* and its Antecedents,” In Pacheco, *Early Woman Writers*, 150.

<sup>11</sup> Pacheco, “Rape and the Female Subject,” 328.

<sup>12</sup> Derek Hughes, “Rape on the Restoration Stage,” *The Eighteenth Century* 46, no. 3, J. Douglas Canfield (1941 – 2003) Commemorative Issue (Fall 2005), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41467978>, 229.

<sup>13</sup> Behn, *The Rover* (Link), 3.1.40 – 41.

<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth Howe, *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama 1660–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 148.

<sup>15</sup> Susan J. Owen, *Perspectives on Restoration Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 67.

<sup>16</sup> The exception here is Lucetta, who although clever, is presented as a point of contrast to Hellena, Angellica, and Florinda with regard to virtue and morality.

<sup>17</sup> Dianne Dugaw (dissertation committee institutional representative/advisor), personal communication with the author, September 7, 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Clare Carroll, Introduction to *Othello (William Shakespeare) and The Tragedy of Miriam (Elizabeth Cary)* (New York: Longman, 2003), xxi.

<sup>19</sup> Dagny Boebel, “In the Carnival World of Adam’s Garden: Roving and Rape in Behn’s *Rover*,” In Quinsey, *Broken Boundaries*, 64.

<sup>20</sup> Pat Gill, *Interpreting Ladies: Women, Wit, and Morality in the Restoration Comedy of Manners* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 146.

<sup>21</sup> Paula R. Backsheider, “The Cavalier Woman,” *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 24 (1995), doi: 10.1353/sec.2010.0161, 4.

<sup>22</sup> “Prince Ruperts” references Prince Rupert of the Rhine, Duke of Cumberland (1619 – 1689). He was a younger son of Prince Frederick V of Germany and a grandson of James I, making Rupert and Charles II first cousins. During the English Civil War, Rupert, at age 23, was appointed as the commander of the Royalist cavalry “becoming the archetypal ‘Cavalier’ of the war.”

*Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Prince Rupert of the Rhine,” page edited August 10, 2019, accessed August 19, 2019, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince\\_Rupert\\_of\\_the\\_Rhine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince_Rupert_of_the_Rhine).; Backsheider, “The Cavalier Woman,” 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*; Quoting Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis 1632 – 1642* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 161.

<sup>24</sup> Robert D. Hume, *The Rakish Stage* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 33.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>26</sup> John Harold Wilson, *The Court Wits of the Restoration* (1949; repr., New York: Octagon, 1967), 16 – 17; Qtd. in Hume, *The Rakish Stage*, 145 – 146.

<sup>27</sup> Hume, *The Rakish Stage*, 146.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., Qtnq. Robert Jordan, “The Extravagant Rake in Restoration Comedy,” *Restoration Literature*, ed. Harold Love (London: Methuen, 1972), 74 – 75.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Janet Todd suggests that Behn “probably married partly for money. Her irritation when she discovered there was not as much as she hoped and that Mr. Behn’s property was shares in ships which it was impossible to realise [sic] may have fueled her contemptuous descriptions of wedded sex,” thus possibly providing some additional insights into her representations of women in *The Rover*.

Janet Todd, *The Secret Life of Aphra Behn* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 71.

<sup>35</sup> Paula R. Backsheider, “The Cavalier Woman,” *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 24 (1995), doi: 10.1353/sec.2010.0161, 5.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>37</sup> Behn, *The Rover* (Link), 1.2.201 – 202.

<sup>38</sup> Boebel, “In the Carnival World of Adam’s Garden,” 60.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Owen, *Perspectives on Restoration Drama*, 70.

<sup>41</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *Observations on Experimental Philosophy* (London: A. Maxwell, 1668), n.p.

<sup>42</sup> Diana is the Roman iteration of the Greek Goddess of the Hunt, Artemis.

<sup>43</sup> Behn, *The Rover* (Link), 1.1.131 – 134.

<sup>44</sup> Anita Pacheco, “Rape and the Female Subject in Aphra Behn’s *The Rover*,” *ELH* 65, no. 2 (Summer 1998), doi:10.1353/elh.1998.0013, 323.

<sup>45</sup> Owen, *Perspectives on Restoration Drama*, 72.

<sup>46</sup> Copeland, “‘Once a Whore and Ever?’,” 149.

<sup>47</sup> Gill, *Interpreting Ladies*, 144.

<sup>48</sup> Neal Wood, *The Politics of Locke’s Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 15.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>50</sup> Deborah G. Burks, “‘I’ll Want My Will Else’: The Changeling and Women’s Complicity with Their Rapists,” *ELH* 62, no. 4 (Winter 1995), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30030102>, 759.

<sup>51</sup> Doris Tishkoff, *Madonna/Whore: The Myth of the Two Marys* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2006), 1.

<sup>52</sup> Katherine Binhammer, “The Whore’s Love,” *Eighteenth Century Fiction* 20, no. 4 (Summer 2008), doi:10.1353/ecf.0.0024, 508.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 509.

<sup>55</sup> Here Mary Chan and Nancy Wright’s discussion of the seventeenth century case of Elizabeth Wisemen is relevant. Some of the critical points illustrated by Chan and Wright’s usage of Elizabeth Wiseman’s case were that to the seventeenth-century perception, physical property and material goods were intrinsically tied to the sense of self-identification.<sup>56</sup>

The case itself revolved around Wiseman’s inheritance of £20,000 from her first marriage, and the subsequent battle over whom she would marry, thereby relinquishing control over this vast fortune. There was never any question that Wiseman could remain unmarried and in possession of such a large sum of

money. In Elizabeth's case, the concept of virtue as a commodity has little relevance; as a widow, her lack of virginity is only to be expected. There is, however, much mention of family and personal honor. Because of her inheritance, Wiseman is effectively reduced to being her inheritance—a fact that did not escape her notice:

From Elizabeth Wiseman's point of view, however, it is not merely her £20,000 that is at issue, but, more importantly, herself. The documents draw attention to the crude and market-driven nature of marriage and marriage portions in the late seventeenth-century: the common law doctrine of coverture in marriage and the fact that a married woman's property belonged to her husband. But in drawing attention to the fact that her inheritance was valued as a commodity to be transferred or alienated . . . the documents also make clear the subject's point of view: Elizabeth's sense of herself . . . <sup>57</sup>

This instance helps shed some light on ways in which a woman as a whole was regarded by Restoration society.

<sup>56</sup> Mary Chan and Nancy E. Wright, "Marriage, Identity, and the Pursuit of Property in Seventeenth-Century England: The Cases of Anne Clifford and Elizabeth Wiseman," *Women, Property, and the Letters of the Law in Early Modern England*, eds. Nancy E. Wright, Margaret W. Ferguson, A. R. Buck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 171.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History* (New York: Viking, 2005), 123.

<sup>59</sup> Bernard I. Murstein, *Love, Sex, and Marriage Through the Ages* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1974), 206.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Gill, *Interpreting Ladies*, 60.

<sup>63</sup> Transl.: place of God meaning a convent or other religious residence.

<sup>64</sup> Laura J. Rosenthal, "Masculinity in Restoration Drama," in Owen, *A Companion to Restoration Drama*, 99.

<sup>65</sup> Craig Monson, *Nuns Behaving Badly: Tales of Music, Magic, Art, & Arson in the Convents of Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 8. Monson refers to the late medieval maxim that decreed: "Aut virum aut murum oportet mulierem habere," where the translation from Latin reads: "A woman should have a husband or a wall."

<sup>66</sup> Owen, *Perspectives on Restoration Drama*, 70.

<sup>67</sup> Variation on "the law is reason unaffected by desire" from Aristotle, *The Works of Aristotle, Vol. III*, ed. W. David Ross (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>69</sup> Heidi Hutner, "Revisioning the Female Body: Aphra Behn's *The Rover*, Parts I and II," in Hutner, *Rereading Aphra Behn*, 103.

<sup>70</sup> Copeland, "'Once a Whore and Ever?'" 154.

<sup>71</sup> Gill, *Interpreting Ladies*, 143.

<sup>72</sup> Nancy Cotton, *Women Playwrights in England* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1980), 64.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 67 – 68.

<sup>74</sup> Angeline Goreau, *Reconstructing Aphra* (New York: The Dial Press, 1980), 229.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

- 76 Behn, *The Rover* (Link), 4.5.63 – 64.
- 77 Pheterson, “The Social Consequences of Unchastity,” 237.
- 78 Elizabeth Howe, *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama 1660–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 43.
- 79 Howe, *The First English Actresses*, 43 – 45.
- 80 *Ibid.*, 46.
- 81 Hughes, “Rape on the Restoration Stage,” 227.
- 82 Hughes, “Rape on the Restoration Stage,” 228.
- 83 “History and Vision,” *me too*, Me Too, 2018, <https://metoomvmt.org/about/#history>, n.p.
- 84 Howe, *The First English Actresses*, 55.
- 85 See John Wilmot, “The Imperfect Enjoyment,” *Poems on Several Occasions*, (Antwerp: s.n., 1680) and Behn’s response “The Disappointment.”
- 86 Todd, *The Secret Life of Aphra Behn*, 3.
- 87 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 88 Pacheco, “Rape and the Female Subject,” 323.
- 89 Christina Cauterucci, “Brock Turner Insists He Never Wanted Sex, Only ‘Outercourse,’” *Slate*, July 25, 2018, accessed August 14, 2019, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/07/brock-turner-says-he-didnt-attempt-rape-only-outercourse.html>.
- 90 *Ibid.*
- 91 *Ibid.*, 66.
- 92 Pacheco, “Rape and the Female Subject,” 329 – 330.
- 93 *Ibid.*
- 94 Pacheco, “Rape and the Female Subject,” 328.
- 95 *Ibid.*
- 96 *Ibid.*, 328.
- 97 See <https://apps.rainn.org/policy/> regarding individual US state laws regarding sex-related crimes and misdemeanors.
- 98 Nebraska would classify Willmore’s attack as Sexual Assault in the Third Degree, a Class I misdemeanor, because Florinda was “subjected to sexual contact without giving consent.” See <https://apps.rainn.org/policy/policy-crime-definitions.cfm?state=Nebraska&group=3>.
- Conversely, Oregon has no regulations regarding an assault that is sexual in nature, but does *not* involve vaginal or anal penetration. As such, Willmore’s (or his attorney) has an argument that presents his assault as non-sexual, and given that Florinda sustained no physical injury, has possible cause for dismissal. See <https://apps.rainn.org/policy/policy-crime-definitions.cfm?state=Oregon&group=3>.
- 99 Pacheco, “Rape and the Female Subject,” 327.
- 100 Emphasis mine.
- 101 *Ibid.*
- 102 *Ibid.*, 334.

<sup>103</sup> Portmanteau of “involuntarily celibate.” See also: Ana Valens, “Why Incels Are Nothing To Laugh At,” *The Daily Dot*, June 24, 2018, accessed August 14, 2019, <https://www.dailydot.com/irl/what-is-an-incel/>; Zack Beauchamp, “Our Incel Problem,” *Vox*, last updated April 23, 2019, accessed August 14, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/4/16/18287446/incel-definition-reddit>.

<sup>104</sup> “Elliot Rodger: How Misogynist Killer Became ‘Incel Hero’,” *BBC News*, April 26, 2018, accessed August 14, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-43892189>.

<sup>105</sup> Emphasis mine. Katherine Laidlaw, “The Man Behind the Yonge Street Van Attack,” *Toronto Life*, April 22, 2019, accessed August 14, 2019, <https://torontolife.com/city/man-behind-yonge-street-van-attack/>.

<sup>106</sup> Aphra Behn, *The Debauchee, or, The Credible Cuckold* (London: s.n., 1677), n.p.. See Appendix C.1 for full Prologue. See also Appendix C.2 for the full Prologue to Aphra Behn, *The False Count, or, A New Way to Play an Old Game*, (London: s.n., 1682), n.p, which carries similar themes.

<sup>107</sup> Aphra Behn, *The Feign'd Curtizans or, A Nights Intrigue*, (London: Jacob Tonson, 1679). See Appendix C.3 for full Prologue.

<sup>108</sup> David Morse, *The Age of Virtue* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 39.

<sup>109</sup> Backsheider, “The Cavalier Woman,” 4.

<sup>110</sup> Susan Carlson, “Cannibalizing and Carnivalizing: Reviving Aphra Behn's *The Rover*.” *Theatre Journal* 47, no. 4 Eighteenth-Century Representations (December 1995), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3208990>, 519.

<sup>111</sup> This omits the dramatic contributions of Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz (1648 – 1695), who lived and wrote in New Spain (Mexico) concurrent to Behn. While Sor Juana has gained appreciation in recent years in theatre history studies, she still tends to lack the same overall recognition as a baroque woman playwright as Behn, making her inclusion in theatre histories (unfortunately) more erratic. As a Spanish/Mexican playwright, Sor Juana is not part of the English Restoration scene, and while I consider her significant, is not part of this study.

<sup>112</sup> Anita Pacheco, “Rape and the Female Subject in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*,” *ELH* 65, no. 2 (Summer 1998), doi:10.1353/elh.1998.0013, 341.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

<sup>114</sup> “Statistics About Sexual Violence,” *National Sexual Violence Resource Center*, 2015, page updated 2018, accessed August 15, 2019, <https://www.nsvrc.org/node/4737/latest>.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Christin Essin, “Provoked and Triggered: Content Warnings and Student Spectators,” *HowlRound*, July 21, 2019, accessed August 13, 2019, <https://howlround.com/provoked-and-triggered>, n.p.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 419.

<sup>119</sup> E.J. Jensen, *Ben Jonson's Comedies on the Modern Stage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Research Press, 1985), 3.

<sup>120</sup> A playwright such as Aphra Behn (1640 – 1689) was the second most popular playwright of her time (and most popular of the 1670s through her death in 1689) but fell out of favor as “smutty” during the nineteenth century. Janet Todd (1996), one of the foremost contemporary Behn scholars, suggests that Behn's gender and open sexuality played a negative role in her inclusion in Restoration scholarship:

For centuries after her death, Aphra Behn was simply regarded as a smutty writer, worse for being a woman. ‘Mrs. Behn wrote foully; and this for most of us, and very properly, is an end of the whole discussion,’ said the booklover William Henry Hudson in 1897.

Janet Todd, *The Secret Life of Aphra Behn* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 2.



<sup>121</sup> Michael Malek Najjar (dissertation committee chair), personal message to author, August 28, 2019.

<sup>122</sup> Caridad Svich, (@Csvich), 2019, "Dear theatre," Twitter, September 10, 2019, 7:37 a.m. Twitter Web App, <https://twitter.com/csvich/status/1171432601795477505?s=21>.

## CHAPTER V

### APHRA BEHN: *THE EMPEROR OF THE MOON*

Aphra Behn's second most popular play, *The Emperor of the Moon* (1687), is a rather significant departure from the comedy of intrigue genre of *The Rover*. Instead, *Emperor* is also called "A Farce," in a manner suggestive of a subtitle.<sup>1</sup> Paula

Backscheider says of Behn's comedy that it was:

A stunning combining of English farce, [Italian] opera, and [French and Italian] court masque, the kinds of songs and dances common in comedy and *commedia dell'arte* especially as it had evolved on the French stage, it was an adaptation of a popular French play, *Arlequin Empereur dans la Lune*, and therefore was "news" from a prestigious source.<sup>2</sup>

Just as Behn blended style and genre in *The Rover* as a way of problematizing female gender role expectations, hyper-masculine male behavior, and sexual violence, she blends the more comic elements of popular culture, farce, and interculturality to craft *Emperor* as its own comedic hybrid that nevertheless also satirizes a number of issues Behn perceived as either predisposed to exclude women or outright preposterous.

Where *The Rover* is demonstrably feminist in its approach to marriage and female body commodification, *Emperor* exists, in part, as Behn's approach to female exclusion from higher learning as a way for her to question and critique "the role of the male-dominated institutional science within her world, and the ramifications of a public willing to believe everything it reads."<sup>3</sup> As such, it is more of a satire on the newly formed Royal Society, both as it existed as an exclusively male conclave,<sup>4</sup> and on the promotion of the "new science," developed during the seventeenth century by scientific luminaries such as Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, and Robert Hooke, that swept the public imagination and took astronomic speculation to new heights. Behn uses the play to ridicule not only the

various scientific “gadgetry,” such as the microscope, that was developed during this time, but also as a way to mock the seventeenth century explosion of “travel” narratives, many of which capitalized on the overwhelming popularity and public fascination with scientific discovery in general, and in astronomy especially.

In 1609, Galileo adapted the nautical telescope, turning the instrument from distant horizons to the night sky, thereby continuing the work of Copernicus in the previous century, and leading to the eventual adoption of the heliocentric model of our solar system. For the first time, the lunar surface was able to be viewed and subsequently mapped, capturing the popular imagination and creating wide-spread speculation of life on other planets. However, like any “new” discovery, the trick becomes sifting through the information to decipher what is verifiable from wild speculation or outright fantasy. It becomes significant to remember that while a mind like Isaac Newton (a contemporary of Behn) was writing on the principles of light and planetary movement, he was also writing about alchemy (called *chymistry*), suggesting a close relationship between what has come to be called “science” and elements of mysticism during the seventeenth century.<sup>5</sup>

Public interest was such that there was a veritable flood of print material which sought to benefit from the allurements of the moon and purported to be “true” accounts of people claiming to have visited the lunar surface. David Cressy remarks that in England:

A series of publications in the late 1630s put the moon and its inhabitants, and the likelihood of traveling to meet them, into the national conversation. The key texts, which were available together at London bookstalls, were John Wilkins, *The Discovery of a World in the Moone; or, A Discourse Tending to Prove, That 'Tis Probable There May Be Another Habitable World in That Planet* (1638); Francis Godwin, *The Man in the Moone; or, A Discourse of a Voyage Thither*, by Domingo Gonsales (1638); and Wilkins’s revised and expanded edition of *A Discourse Concerning a New World & Another Planet* (1640).<sup>6</sup>

The format of the travel narrative employed by many of these books seemed to be a point of confusion for the early modern reader; Behn's play suggests that book readership had a tendency to take these "true accounts" of travel to the moon as fact. Although the introduction of the novel as *fiction* is generally attributed to the latter part of the eighteenth century, as evidenced by Cressy's list of novels and by Behn herself,<sup>7</sup> fiction was being generated and consumed. Behn was certainly not unaware of the fictive nature of "information" gleaned from these books, as she specifically names several of the aforementioned as the source of Baliardo's "Don Quick-sottish" (1.1.84) behavior in the opening scene of *Emperor*:

SCARAMOUCH: How came he thus infected first?

ELARIA: With reading foolish books, Lucian's *Dialogue of Icaromenipus*, who flew up to the moon, and thence to heaven; an heroic business called *The Man in the Moon*, if you'll believe a Spaniard, who was carried thither, upon an engine drawn by wild geese; with another philosophical piece, *A Discourse of the World in the Moon*; with a thousand other ridiculous volumes too hard to name. (1.1.94 – 100)

Ironically, when it came to reading the *acknowledged* fiction of the seventeenth century, yet another double standard was in place:

Gently bred young ladies were instructed<sup>8</sup> to "refrain from any kind of bold or assertive behavior," and were told to "manifest a 'humble distrust of herself'." This advice for young ladies continued, stating that they "should refrain from reading romantic novels" as they were considered to provide a particularly "dangerous incentive to emulate the wanton behavior and stormy passions of their protagonists."<sup>9</sup>

And yet nothing indicates that similar strictures on reading were placed on early modern *men*,<sup>10</sup> who were presumably reading these examples of early science fiction and (unironically) conflating it with reality.

This blurred line between fact and fantasy as the major theme in *Emperor* is what makes this play the most relevant to twenty-first century study and production. Once

again we find ourselves presented with new ideas and ideologies, where instead of travel narratives, (mis)information is presented in the form of soundbites and memes, most of which are also imbued with the *appearance* of veracity, if not veracity itself. As a medium through which information may also be conveyed, Jonathan Heron comments that “the temporality and theatrical process is especially evocative when thinking about knowledge production,”<sup>11</sup> a factor that echoes one of the major themes within the play. As such, it grows increasingly more important to learn not *what* to think, but *how* to think, lest we be fooled into believing everything we read.

Furthermore, recent years have seen interculturality in the theatre as a necessary element in the promotion and production toward the ideal of an all-inclusive global theatre. Contemporary theatre artists have engaged in a discourse based on what makes theatre *truly* inclusive and intercultural, from the practice of “color-blind” casting, to the adaptation of source material, to performance collaborations between artists and theatre makers from diverse countries and cultures in large-scale, multi-national extravaganzas. Moreover, the concept of “borrowing” from other cultures is not new; the practice of setting plays in foreign locales to enhance the romance, mystery, or *exoticism* of a plot line extends back to the Greeks<sup>12</sup> as perhaps an early form of what Bertolt Brecht later coined as *Verfremdungseffekt*,<sup>13</sup> in which the locus of the play and characters are deliberately separated from the audience so as to inhibit a subconscious identification. Instead, the objective is to create a deliberated *conscious* response, where the audience accepts or rejects the actions in the play on a voluntary, as opposed to a visceral, level.

*Verfremdungseffekt*, however, is only one facet of interculturality which I am addressing. In this instance, it is the “exchange” that takes place through the adaptation of

particular artistic elements from one culture to another, particularly as it pertains to early modern theatre and *Emperor*. As with numerous other Renaissance and Restoration plays, *Emperor* has its basis in pre-existing work that was “borrowed” and then reworked. In this case, Behn’s use of Anne Mauduit “Nolant” de Fatouville’s French play *Arlequin Empereur dans la Lune* (1684)—extremely popular in its own right, and which in turn relied heavily on traditions and characters borrowed from *commedia dell’arte*—provides an interesting back drop for this play. However, Behn’s is very clear in her dedication of the play regarding her motivations for writing *Emperor*, aside from doing it as a favor for Charles II:

A very barren and thin hint of the Plot I had from the Italian, and which, even as it was, was acted in France eighty odd times without intermission. 'Tis now much alter'd, and adapted to our English Theatre and Genius, who cannot find an Entertainment at so cheap a Rate as the French will, who are content with almost any Incoherences, howsoever shuffled together under the Name of a Farce; which I have endeavour'd as much as the thing wou'd bear, to bring within the compass of Possibility and Nature, that I might as little impose upon the Audience as I cou'd; all the Words are wholly new, without one from the Original.<sup>14</sup>

Here she disparages French theatre habits as being “cheap,” while her choice of material lends itself to the suggestion that Behn was not above trying to capitalize on the popularity of de Fatouville’s *Arlequin*. Nevertheless, Behn’s adaptation of *Arlequin* and use of *commedia* as the vehicle for her satire necessitates a look into the elements of *commedia*, which have been construed by some as already subversive, as a way of approaching the feminist aspects of *Emperor*.

As a play, *Emperor* exists as a highly enjoyable comedy, and yet is once again overlooked by theatre departments. Its elements of farce with science fiction create a fantastic image of late seventeenth century, with enough challenging design elements to excite a production team. Although based in *commedia* stock characters, Behn’s

representations offer enough depth to flesh out some of the more two-dimensional character stock to make the play engaging. This world is populated with Behn's strong female characters that prove equal to the male characters in wit and humor, where the overall plot is an entertaining take on the "kids versus adults" trope that is recognizable to virtually everyone.

Where students may struggle with comedy of intrigue and *The Rover's* hybridity as a satiric tragicomedy, *Emperor* is an excellent play to include in theatre history curricula, possibly instead of, or as contrast to, *The Rover*, as it offers an additional look at post-1660 English theatre, where the sex and innuendo plot points that are ubiquitous in so many Restoration plays are noticeably absent. Its origins in *commedia* not only provide comedic tropes that are still recognizable to a twenty-first century audience, pedagogically it also provides an example of (modified) *commedia* in performance prior to its own recognition as an Italianate form of performance in the mid-eighteenth century. Furthermore, the overall *lack* of extant *commedia* playscripts prior to 1750, means that *Emperor* is positioned as an excellent seventeenth century example of the genre.

Although this may seem anomalous, *commedia* was gaining in popularity in England, in part because of Charles II's own fondness for the form, with which he was familiar as a result of his exile during the Interregnum. Paula Backscheider noted that "Behn said that she began writing *The Emperor of the Moon* in 1684 to please the "beleaguered and ill" Charles II, who had tried to bring a *commedia dell'arte* troop back to court in 1683,"<sup>15</sup> which although unsuccessful (and indeed Charles II did not live to see *Emperor* on the stage), the presence of *commedia*-esque theatre in England had, at least, some significant political support. This chapter will look at how *Emperor* suggests

evidence of Behn's feminisms as a means of critiquing seventeenth century science and learning as bastions of male privilege. It will also offer suggestions on the ways in which Behn used *commedia dell'arte* as a means of satirizing these institutions and information propagation while also engaging with the popular form of theatre. Lastly, this chapter will conclude with an examination of my own directorial process staging *The Emperor of the Moon* in 2017 for the University of Oregon as part of the doctoral program in theatre arts as a way of offering an example of staging *Emperor* for a twenty-first century audience.

### *Commedia dell'Arte*

*"I'll put myself into such a posture, that if he feel me, he shall as soon take me for a church spout as a man."*<sup>16</sup>

To begin, a look at what is now called *commedia dell'arte* is necessary. As a performance form, *commedia* has had an extremely far-reaching impact on theatre and performance. The "stock" characters we recognize today—the lecherous old man, the blushing virgin, the heroic prince, the wacky sidekick—all have their roots in *commedia*.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, many of the scenarios and situations commonly used, particularly in television, have their basis in *commedia lazzi* (jokes) that tend to revolve around the ridiculous, farcical, and outlandish. The pervasive familiarity of *commedia* scenarios and stock characters to contemporary audiences (even though they may not recognize it as *commedia*) lends itself to the importance for students to understand its origins and popularity from its early development around the sixteenth century. The generally ludicrous characters and scenarios of *commedia*, based largely in improvisation, provide an excellent medium for satire and parody, where actual situations and people are



distorted and lampooned as a means of social commentary in a manner similar to *Saturday Night Live* (1975).

Virginia Scott, in her work *The Commedia dell'Arte in Paris 1644 – 1697* makes the significant distinction that *commedia* itself was more or less “invented as a label for this abstract, theoretical genre ... In its own day, what we now call *commedia dell'arte*<sup>18</sup> was usually known as *commedia degli zanni*<sup>19</sup> in Italy and simply as the Italian theatre outside Italy.”<sup>20</sup> Indeed, it was not until the mid-eighteenth century and the infamous war of words between Carlo Gozzi and Carlo Goldoni over the fate of an Italy unified by language and custom that *commedia dell'arte* as we know it was officially established. Richard Andrews writes that “The term [*commedia dell'arte*] itself was not ... documented until its use by Goldoni in 1750,”<sup>21</sup> hence the style in question formally recognized or named until sixty-three years after Behn’s play was published.

Furthermore, *commedia* was very much itself what Robert Henke referred to as a “linguistic hybrid.” During this time, Italy was comprised of various regions and quasi-city-states, rather than standing as unified nation. Each region had its own customs, and more significantly, language dialect, the results of which were based on the various external influences of each region. Henke identifies that a certain “linguistic hybridity was built into *commedia dell'arte* from the beginning. The very character structure of the *commedia dell'arte* generated trans-linguistic exchanges (albeit of a stylized nature) between the Venetian *Pantalone*, the Bolognese *Dottore*, the Bergamask *zanni*, the Spanish *Capitano*, and others.”<sup>22</sup> Thus as an amalgamation of various regional comedy styles and tropes, the *commedia degli zanni*<sup>23</sup> should be considered intercultural in the broadest sense of the term.

Scholars generally agree that *commedia* had its primary origins in Venice sometime during the fifteenth century, due in particular to the strong presence and use of masks during the Carnevale period preceding Lent. Additionally, Venice's status as a significant European seaport further contributed to the vast diversity of *commedia*'s origins. Here the mixture of Greek, German, Albanian, Turkish, Spanish, Aramaic, and French (to name a few), mixed with Venetian, Genoese, and other Italian dialects that created what "amounted to complex forms of mimicry" that blended the Venetian dialect with another language or languages, developing various personas which were then adopted by the *buffoni*.<sup>24</sup> Henke writes that the "Veneto [region] provided a felicitous mixture of oral performance traditions and a scripted comedy shaped by humanist principles but receptive to oral features ..." <sup>25</sup> indicating further that:

... the Venetian *buffoni*<sup>26</sup> are important ... because they combined orality and literature. They sustained oral performance tradition in the style of the fifteenth century *araldi* (heralds) and *cantastorie*<sup>27</sup> but they fully exploited the new medium of print, and freely appropriated literary motifs in their improvisations. ... Because of their improvisational skill, their representation of *arte*-style characters, and their sheer theatrical versatility, some scholars have considered the Venetian *buffoni* as evolutionary predecessors of the *commedia dell'arte*.<sup>28</sup>

Scott notes that by sixteenth century, the structure of *commedia*—which "required lovers, old men, and *zanni*, but not in any particular numbers or combinations"<sup>29</sup>—born out of the diversity found in Venice and "indistinguishable from the neo-Roman *commedia eudita*<sup>30</sup> became the model by which all *commedia dell'arte* plays were to be judged."<sup>31</sup> The popularity of *commedia* in Italy meant that it was not long before it began to extend throughout Europe in the early portion of the sixteenth century.

From Italy, *commedia* spread north into Germany and eventually to France, although it was not until the marriage of Italian Catherine di Medici to the French King

Henri II in 1548 that *commedia* began to establish a foothold in there. Henke indicates that a production of Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena's comedy *La Calandra* (1513) was included in the royal marriage festivities, the presence of which "demonstrates another link between merchant communities abroad and professional Italian actors" although it would be another twenty years, in 1571, until there is record of "sustained *commedia dell'arte* activity in Paris," most likely as a result of the efforts of Maria di Medici, niece of Catherine and second wife of Henri IV.<sup>32</sup> Armand Baschet's late nineteenth century research into *commedia* indicates similar findings: "*La Commedia dell' arte jouée par neuf ou dix personnages à caractère, était donc chose très en vogue alors en Italie; mais en France, en cette année 1571, elle était tout à fait une nouveauté, une chose non connue autrement que pour en avoir entendu parler.*"<sup>33</sup> Scott adds that during this time "commedia dell'arte held the stage in Italy and throughout Europe for more than two hundred years," but that in "France, after some ninety years of intermittent performances, a troupe established itself in Paris in 1662 and played there for thirty-five years,"<sup>34</sup> long enough for the Italian theatre form to become well assimilated into the French cultural consciousness, and long enough for the English aristocracy living there in exile during the Interregnum to develop a strong interest in seeing women on their own stages upon the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy in England.

In England prior to the Commonwealth, there is credible evidence that *commedia* and its female performers made an attempt to gain a foothold during the reign of Elizabeth I, due almost entirely to the diplomatic relationship between England and France. Henke records that on 4 March 1571, "Lord Buckhurst, the special English ambassador to Paris who had been sent by Queen Elizabeth to honor Charles IX marriage

to his Habsburgian bride,<sup>35</sup> attended a sumptuous entertainment ... [which] included ‘a Comedie of Italians that for the good mirth and handling therof deserved singular commendation’,<sup>36</sup> suggesting an introduction of the Italian performance to those English in attendance. Katherine Lea, in the second volume of her work *Italian Popular Comedy*, includes a vast number of excerpts of letters to England from various English aristocracy visiting the French court. Two such letters, dated 18 June 1592, from Edward Clinton, Earl of Lincoln, and Sir Thomas Smyth speak of watching “Italian players” while staying at the “Kyng’s howse theatre ... And after that he hadd us to another larger chamber, where there was an Italian playe, [and] dyvars vawters [and] leapers of dyvars sorts vearie excellent.”<sup>37</sup> Smyth wrote similarly, describing “... an Italian Comedie [which] eandid vaulting [with] notable supersaltes, [and] through hoopess, and last of all the Antiques, of carrying of men one upon another [which] som men call Labores Herculis ...”<sup>38</sup> Both Clinton and Smyth seemingly enjoyed these entertainments, and they, among other English lords visiting the French court, helped to establish the Italian-style entertainment within the English consciousness.

Henke theorizes that “[w]ith at least four records of English ambassadors or envoys viewing Italian professional actors in France in 1571 and 1572, ... it is highly probable that the rather dense period of *commedia dell’arte* activity in England during the 1570s passed through the conduit of the French court.”<sup>39</sup> However, due to the scandalous nature of the Italian inclusion of women performers with these touring troupes, for all its visibility in England during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I, *commedia*—and female performers—never quite caught on; indeed Thomas Nashe famously scorned the Italian actresses, referring to them as “whores and common Curtizens” while Ben Jonson

referred to them as “tumbling whores,” in *Volpone*,<sup>40</sup> sentiments that were most likely rooted—at least marginally—in the growing Puritan influence on English politics and cultural. For all its “activity” in England during the reign of Elizabeth I and James I, *commedia* fell out of favor in England, “and it seems plausible to assume that in a theatrical culture that did not allow women on stage the presence of Italian acrobat-actresses was enough to end the brief English experiment with *commedia dell’arte*”<sup>41</sup> for nearly one hundred years.

Back in France, just as early *commedia* in Venice made use of mimicry and gesture in concert with various foreign languages to be understood, the Italian players soon circumvented the language barrier through a heavier inclusion of segments of improvised physical comedy, already present due in part to the use of masks, that needed no words to convey meaning. Richard Andrews suggests, with regard to *commedia* in France, that:

... it is allegedly a non-verbal form of theatre, in which meaning is regularly entrusted to gesture, slapstick, even mime, more often than to words. This premiss [sic] can lead to an exclusive, fenced-off picture of the genre; and to attempts to identify ‘pure’ *commedia dell’arte*<sup>42</sup> as against more ‘hybrid’ forms ... It places on one side of the fence a professional Italian improvised theatre in which language is deemed to play a secondary role; and on the other side all more ‘literary’ forms of drama, including written comic playscripts composed in Italian.<sup>43</sup>

He continues, stating that “French audiences (as opposed perhaps to more knowledgeable French theatre practitioners) may still have perceived Italian comedy as more populist, less verbally sophisticated, and sometimes more knockabout, than French comic theatre.”<sup>44</sup> However, these Italian plays, the majority of which incorporated comic plots, taken first from the *commedia erudita*,<sup>45</sup> which then developed into *commedia dell’arte*, featured the familiar scenario of a father or guardian wishing to impose parental authority

over his charge (usually a son or daughter, but also niece or nephew) particularly in matters of the heart or of marriage. Andrews writes that “Such fathers are given speeches full of the commonplace topoi of a patriarchal society, no doubt based partly on what real fathers actually said and thought at the time” indicating a similarity between French and Italian cultures that would have resonated with the French audience. He concludes, saying “After more than a hundred years of such comedies, no [*commedia*] stage father [in France] could be heard by an audience without a (perhaps comfortable) sense of *déjà entendu* ...”<sup>46</sup> While this nod to a kind of superficial universality of plot premise contributed to the popularity of *commedia* in France, the broad gestures and physical comedy also integral to *commedia* speaks more toward the universality of humor than any other kind.

This new hybrid of French and Italian theatre during the latter portion of the seventeenth century “... no longer displayed the complex and inflexible forms and patterned rhetorical embellishments of the sixteenth-century *commedia dell'arte*,<sup>47</sup> nor was it shaped by any influence of the neoclassical categories that had been imposed on the French theatre. It was a creature of its own time and place ...”<sup>48</sup> offering the further explanation that “the Italians were under no aesthetic or moral obligation to the literary establishment [*Académie Française*]” and as such, the “combination of simplified structure and extravagant embellishment, the fascination with disguise and multiple identity, the conflation of reality and the imagined, and the delight in the exotic, the magical, and the marvelous”<sup>49</sup> found within this new theatre could “all be accounted for as part of that seventeenth-century pan-European tendency toward the excessive and the redundant we call the baroque.”<sup>50</sup>

The “delight in the exotic, the magical, and the marvelous” found within the French version of *commedia* was undoubtedly heavily influenced further by the explosion of scientific advances that occurred during the seventeenth century. Cressy indicates that by end of the seventeenth century, “the idea had become common among Christian rationalists that ‘the almighty and infinite power of the creator’ had created an infinite plurality of worlds that were at least accessible to the imagination” leading to the reversal of Church dogma that long-held that the geocentric theory of the universe might, indeed, be incorrect and that the “belief in an infinite number of worlds, made possible by the ‘inexhausted’ goodness of God.”<sup>51</sup> Where once nature was accepted as an act of God, the seventeenth century saw the emergence of a new kind of inquisitiveness:

Curiosity meant the desire to know, to look, listen, explore, and question when one should not, to pry into the secrets that were best kept hidden. One of the many curious features of the Renaissance and early modernity was the transformation of curiosity from a vice to virtue. A cultural movement spread of people eager to explore secrets of all kinds — secrets of art, secrets of the state, and secrets of nature.<sup>52</sup>

In 1660 England, Charles II granted the newly formed Royal Society a charter so that the natural world may be further explored. Michael Hunter writes that the “Royal Society represented a new type of institution, a public body devoted to the corporate pursuit of scientific research.”<sup>53</sup> But this curiosity, so newly evidence of virtue in men, was still effectively closed to female participation.<sup>54</sup>

Adding fuel to the scientific fervor, Guy Boquet notes that “*Le passage de la comète de Halles<sup>57</sup> et le renouveau de l’intérêt pour l’astronomie à l’heure de Bayle et de Fontenelle ... fournirent le prétexte à Arlequin Empereur dans la Lune ...*”<sup>58</sup> drawing on the interested in science and astronomy generated by the work of Pierre Bayle (1647 – 1706) and Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657 – 1757). Indeed, Fontenelle’s

*Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes*<sup>59</sup> (1686) was a highly popular French text that explored not only the possibility of extraterrestrial life, but was also written in such a way as to be accessible even to those without scientific knowledge. Al Coppola adds that when Behn's play was staged in 1687, both Fatouville's *Arlequin Empereur* and Fontenelle's *Entretiens* had been published, and both of which were extremely popular, to the point that Fontenelle's work in particular generated "rival translations" in England, "one of them undertaken by Aphra Behn herself."<sup>60</sup> Coppola goes on to suggest that the "widespread interest stimulated by this work, and the urgent need to 'English' it" indicates that Behn's translation in particular found its way into the readership of the general populous that was considerably less educated than the "cultured, gentlemanly virtuosi of the Royal Society and the Republic of Letters,"<sup>61</sup> and who most likely had already read Fontenelle and Bayle in their original formats.

### *The Emperor of the Moon*

*"Aye, this reading of books is a pernicious thing."*<sup>62</sup>

It was this interest in astronomical phenomenon that, at least in part, inspired Fatouville's play *Arlequin Empereur dans la Lune*, the oft-presumed source of Aphra Behn's *The Emperor of the Moon*. First performed in 1684, *Arlequin Empereur dans la Lune* was "according to Donneau de Visé, an enormous hit: 'Played without interruption for fifteen days until the Easter closing, it has made here an uproar which goes beyond everything that can be imagined. All Paris ran there and at every performance the place was found to be too small,'"<sup>63</sup> where what made Fatouville's play so popular was the appeal of *commedia* to the general public in concert with the numerous leaps in scientific discovery during the seventeenth century.



In her introduction to *The Rover and Other Plays* by Aphra Behn, Jasne Spencer notes that although Behn had probably seen Italian performers in England in the 1670s, it is also “likely” that Behn could have seen Fatouville’s *Arlequin Empereur dans la Lune* in Paris in 1684, even though there is “no documentary evidence” of Behn having made such a trip. Spencer continues suggesting that Behn could have possibly read an early version, but that “extant printed sources date from the 1690s,” after Behn’s death. She adds that “only the French scenes by Noland [sic] de Fatouville, developed for the sake of the Parisian audience, were published,”<sup>64</sup> and that the “players improvised a good deal” so it is “likely that many of the *commedia*’s effects have gone unrecorded.”<sup>65</sup> Spencer concludes that although much of the plot and characters that Behn used were adapted from the French,<sup>66</sup> the plot, which Spencer refers to as being “tightly structured,” was in actuality “uncharacteristic of *commedia dell’arte*,”<sup>67</sup> and thus could be considered an English contribution and variation on *commedia*.

In *Emperor*, the most obvious correlation between Behn’s play and *commedia dell’arte* as we know it is with her use of stock characters and moments of comedic improvisation. Specifically, her employment of the comedic trope of “star-crossed lovers” separated by the stern parent harkens directly back to its familiar use in *commedia erudite* and subsequently the French *commedia* of the sixteenth century. In this case, *innamorati* Elaria and Bellemante, daughter and niece to Doctor Baliardo, wish to marry the nephews of the Spanish Viceroy of Naples, Don Cinthio and Don Charmante. Because of Baliardo’s intransigence in his refusal, the lovers—with the aid of the clever servants (*zanni*) led by Scaramouch and Harlequin—stage a great deception upon Baliardo, convincing him that the fictional Emperor of the Moon and his princely cousin

have fallen in love with the girls, as a ruse to convince Baliardo to let them marry. And because Baliardo has been assiduously reading all of fictionalized travel narratives to the moon, he is convinced of the sincerity of the plot, and unknowingly grants his permission.

Backsheider says of *Emperor* that “[a]s in *commedia dell’arte* pieces, the servants Scaramouch and Harlequin lead the plots, which in this play are aimed at helping the daughter and niece marry their lovers.”<sup>68</sup> Behn also included many moments within her play complete open to interpretation by her actors, giving directions to the effect of “*They fight ridiculously*” (1.3) or “*An antic dance*” (2.1) following in the improvisational traditions of *commedia*. Specifics regarding such direction—like the *commedia* in France and Italy—is virtually impossible to record, as they are wholly dependent on the actor’s own sense of comedic timing and ability to improvise. Furthermore, it suggests that in England, like in France, *commedia*-esque performances had the tendency of changing from scene to scene and performance to performance, regardless of what was committed to paper.

Behn’s play perhaps served in part as an early template for the eventual *commedia* “rule” established during the eighteenth century, that required *commedia* to contain “two lovers, two old men, [and] two *zanni*,”<sup>69</sup> whereas *Emperor* makes use of two *sets* of lovers (Don Cinthio, Elaria, Don Charmante, Bellemante), one old man (Doctor Baliardo), and multiple *zanni* (Scaramouch, Harlequin, and Mopsophil). In this case, this *commedia* “rule” should again feel familiar to contemporary audiences, as it is still the rough basis for innumerable (romantic) comedies and television shows.<sup>70</sup> Jane Spencer, in her notes on the text, informs the reader of the Italian antecedents for Behn’s primary

characters: *il dottore*, *gli innamorati*, and *i buffoni*, tying *Emperor* specifically to *commedia*

As *il dottore*, Baliardo, takes his name from the Italian *balordo*, meaning “foolish,” a trope Spencer identifies as common to the pantheon of *commedia maestro*<sup>71</sup> stock characters and use of “speaking” nomenclature.<sup>72</sup> Roberto Delpiano offers the description going further to name *il dottore* character in *commedia* “*Dottore Baloardo*”<sup>73</sup> or “*Balanzone*,”<sup>74</sup> one that Behn clearly adapted. He describes Baloardo as a *commedia* stock character who:

... pretends to have a total knowledge, supported by his science, arrogance and ignorance.... [*Il dottore*] is rather fat (fat = rich), always dresses in black, is well groomed, rich looking, and talks and talks, a river of ostentatious useless science, teasing the current exaggerated belief in science and humanism.... The Doctor is member of every academy<sup>75</sup> (known or unknown) he knows everything and makes citations in cultivated Greek or Latin; too bad they are never right. On stage he is very seldom a medicine doctor for real, he more often impersonates a Lawyer, a Judge, or the Notary Public.<sup>76</sup>

It is this credulity and conceit in his own scholarship that allows Behn’s lovers and *buffoni* to effectively fool Baliardo into believing the romantic intentions of the fictional lunar aristocracy toward Elaria and Bellemante. Robert Henke defines *il Dottore* in similar terms, calling him a “fallen humanist who shores fragments of classical erudition against his ruin,” a *vecchi*<sup>77</sup> who appeared “dressed in [an] academic gown” and who “indiscriminately stitches together pieces of learning, both in Latin and in Bolognese dialect.”<sup>78</sup>

Baliardo, however, is Behn’s most direct link to the ‘traditional’ *commedia* stock characters. While she most certainly “borrowed” her lovers (*innamorati*) and clowns (*buffoni/zanni*)—in particular her decision to anglicize the names of Harlequin (from *Arlecchino*<sup>79</sup>) and Scaramouch (from *Scaramuccia*<sup>80</sup>)—from *commedia*, her

representation and use of these characters is more diffuse. Roberto Delpiano writes of *gli innamorati* that “The Lovers bring into the *Commedia dell'Arte* those little touches of soap opera and feuilleton around which the action may easily be developed. Important in their role as much as with a flat personality (they’re desperately in love ...) the *Innamorati* helped the public to identify and sink deep in the stories,” adding that the *Innamorati* of *commedia* essentially played the “straight” man to the ridiculous pedantry of the *Maestro* (of which *il dottore*, along with *Pantalone* and, to a lesser extent, *il Capitone* are a part<sup>81</sup>) and to the outlandish antics of *i buffoni*.<sup>82</sup> These *Innamorati*, are more likely to sigh and wring their hands, if they are female, or sigh and make grand romantic gestures, if they are male, than they are to have any kind of true agency or cleverness when it comes to thwarting the Machiavellian dictates of *il Maestro*. The overall *romantic* natures of the *innamorati* lends themselves to parody; in light of how very much in love they are, it is easy to satirize not only the Lovers trope, but the hormone-driven melodrama of teens and young adults, who seem to have perpetually had this tendency toward over-reaction when in the throes of romance.<sup>83</sup>

Conversely, Behn’s lovers are, if not as clever as the *zanni*, certainly not the insipid stock characters of *commedia* either. While the girls may succumb to the occasional bout of handwringing and sighing and the boys a propensity toward small jealousies, these moments are easily remedied by the interventions of Scaramouch and Harlequin. Where *The Rover* suggests Behn’s strong disapproval of property marriages, *Emperor* does not have the same thematic overtone. Both Elaria and Bellemante keep and retain a measure of agency; neither girl is being “forced” into an unwanted marriage—it is more the case of Baliardo refusing suitors on the basis that none are “good enough” to

court his wards. Each girl essentially makes her own marriage choice, and each refuses to passively accept Baliardo's ban on Cinthio and Charmante, instead scheming with Scaramouch, Harlequin, and Mopsophil ways to sneak around with their respective gentleman behind Baliardo's back. The girls are only slightly the social inferior, as wards of a (presumably wealthy) scholarly gentleman, to the boys, the suggestion here being that Elaria and Cinthio, and Bellemante and Charmante are meeting on relatively equal standing where money and social class are concerned. Although all of the lovers lack the same kind of wit and banter as Willmore and Hellena, they are still each imbued with clear romantic archetypal tropes: Elaria and Cinthio exist as a more "traditionally" romantic couple. They are clearly smitten with each other and *would* be rather insipid if not for Cinthio's ability to know when he's wrong and offer apologies (2.3.23), and Elaria's complete willingness to stand up for herself in the face of Cinthio's jealousy (1.3.195 – 197).

Bellemante and Charmante are more lustful than romantic and offer a nice counterpoint to Elaria and Cinthio's sweetness. When we are first introduced to Bellemante, she is recently come from church and exclaiming over all of the young men who were there:

BELLEMANTE: I have been at the chapel, and seen so many beaux, such a number of *plumés*, I could not tell which I should look on most; sometimes my heart was charmed the gay blonding, then with the melancholy *noir*, anon the amiable brunette; and sometimes the bashful, then again bold; the little now, anon the lovely tall! In fine, my dear, I was embarrassed on all sides, I did nothing but deal my heart to a *tout autour*. (1.1.132 – 138)

Bellemante is more flirtatious and more prone to innuendo than Elaria, putting her closer to the "female libertine" role. Surprisingly, *Emperor* does not include a "breeches part"; none of the women wear a disguise as a significant plot device other than the "masking

habits” the boys send to them in Act 2, scene 3, which Bellemante declares “*a la gothic*”<sup>84</sup> (2.3.2). Additionally, Behn’s lovers and servant-clowns, unlike the two-dimensional stock characters of *commedia*, are neither insipid nor cruel nor prone to anarchy for the sake of anarchy. Specifically, it is Bellemante and Elaria’s agency that makes them significant as feminist romantic heroines. Although they are seemingly unpermitted to leave the grounds of their home except for church, both women find remarkable ways of circumventing Baliardo’s rules by sneaking letters to their beloveds, demonstrating quick thinking when the lovers are caught where they shouldn’t be, and throwing “parties with boys” in the absence of their guardian. If these scenarios sound familiar, they should: in this case, these acts of young adult rebellion can themselves be viewed as acts of subversion as the lovers are actively destabilizing parental authority while also satirizing this self-same behavior in a way that is still recognizable even three centuries later.

Also, unlike Fatouville’s *Docteur*, who is the one beleaguered by his daughter, niece, and servants to the point where he seeks refuge with his telescope while *he* plots to marry all of *them* off,<sup>85</sup> it is the lovers and clowns in Behn’s play who are in collusion against the officious Baliardo, granting them a kind of agency that is absent in both the Italian *commedia* and French versions: It is Don Charmante, in the guise of a Rosicrucian and under the (presumed) direction of Don Cinthio, who assuages Baliardo’s voyeuristic desires of “observing” the chamber of the Emperor with his telescope in Act 1, and sets up the deception by telling Baliardo that the Emperor of the Moon is “in love with some fair mortal” (1.2.126). Charmante instructs Baliardo to look through the telescope, admonishing Baliardo that “If you be thoroughly purged from vice, the optics of your

sight will be so illuminated, that glancing through this telescope, you may behold one of those lovely creatures, that people the vast region of the air” (1.2.71 – 74). Charmante preys upon Baliardo’s hubris, displaying to the doctor an image of a “nymph” that he [Charmante] has placed against the far end of the telescope, thus further cementing Baliardo’s belief in the inhabitants of the moon. He later makes his appearance as Prince Thunderland when he and Don Cinthio, in disguise as the Emperor of the Moon, make their spectacular entrance at the end to claim their respective brides. Pierpaolo Polzonetti suggests that, “Behn assigned the role of the mastermind to the aristocratic *primo innamorato*, whose name, Cinthio ... refers to the moon not in scientific but in mythological terms, as Cinthia is the epithet of Artemis, the moon goddess,”<sup>86</sup> and so Behn’s Cinthio is crowned “Emperor,” while Charmante, in perhaps a bit of word-play, is “Prince (Charming)” Thunderland. Of course, the purpose of adopting these disguises wholly resides in Baliardo’s obsession with the moon, which in turn, was meant to reflect the overwhelming popularity of all things astronomical.

Elaria and Bellemante are equally complicit, hiding their lovers in closets (1.3.) and feigning sleep to fool Baliardo (2.4). Both Elaria and Bellemante are characterized beyond the rather flat and insipid *innamorati* of *commedia*, and the lustful Eularia and overly romantic Isabelle of Fatouville’s *Arlequin Empereur*.<sup>87</sup> Instead, Behn’s ladies, similar to the female characters in all her plays, are witty, charming, and clever. In other words, it is Behn’s feminist characterization of Elaria and Bellemante that sets these lovers apart from their Italian and French counterparts:

FLORINDA: If he be a man of honour, cousin, when a maid protests her innocence—

BELLEMANTE: Aye, but he’s a man of wit too, cousin, and knows when women protest most, they likely lie most.

ELARIA: Most commonly, for truth needs no asseveration.

BELLEMANTE: That's according to the disposition of your lover, for some believe you most, when you most abuse and cheat 'em; some are so obstinate, they would damn a woman with protesting, before she can convince 'em.

ELARIA: Such a one is not worth convincing; I would not make the world wise at the expense of a virtue. (2.3.10 – 20)

Elaria and Bellemante, while very conscious of the fragility of female virtue, are also aware of their own intrinsic value in relation to the sometimes-capricious nature of male *perception* of virtue. Consequently, their discussion shows that not only can they be considered clever for recognizing this, but that the overall unfairness of female commodification—a dramatic tension frequently repeated in Behn's work—was still very much part of Behn's own discourse. Elaria and Bellemante are treated as co-conspirators in Cinthio's plot, rather than unwilling victims of Baliardo's machinations.

The clowns (*zanni*), comprising of Harlequin, Mopsophil, and Scaramouch, that Behn employs, also diverge from the *commedia* tradition. In *commedia*, *Arlecchino* is frequently the instigator of great mischief through his wit, cunning, and agile physicality, although he is also depicted as lazy and gluttonous, and the mischief he makes is more in line with true anarchy, than anything with a purpose. In contrast, Behn's Harlequin, as the architect of Cinthio's plan to woo Elaria, only truly plagues Scaramouch—his romantic rival—and Baliardo over the course of the play. Similarly, the *commedia Scaramuccia*—who is a derivative of the Spanish *il Capitano*—is generally depicted as more of a womanizer than a soldier in the *commedia* tradition, “giving the idea of a soldier who doesn't involve himself too much in the battle, and this is his way of fighting too, a little touch here, a short attack there.”<sup>88</sup> Like *Arlecchino*, he is also depicted as witty and clever; Behn's transformation sets him up as an ideal rival to Harlequin, creating numerous verbal and physical skirmishes between the two over the clever Mopsophil:



SCARAMOUCHE: No more words, sir, no more words, I find it must come to action: draw. (*Draws [his sword]*)

HARLEQUIN: Draw, so I can draw, sir.

[*Harlequin*] draws [*his sword*]. *They make a ridiculous cowardly fight.* (3.2.239 – 241)

Additionally, all four lovers have help and support in their deception from the *buffoni*: Harlequin, who is servant to Cinthio; Mopsophil, ladies maid to Elaria and Bellemante; and, more interestingly, Scaramouch, who is servant to Baliardo, and as such, *should* owe his loyalty to the doctor. Instead, Scaramouch works with his rival, Harlequin, as well as Cinthio and Charmante to continue the fiction of the Emperor of the Moon, telling Baliardo:

SCARAMOUCHE: Confess, sir! What should I confess? I understand not your cabalistic language, but in mine, I confess that you have waked me from the rarest dream: where methought the emperor of the moon [sic] world was in our house, dancing and reveling; and methoughts his grace was fallen desperately in love with Mistress Elaria, and that his brother, the prince, sir, of Thunderland, was also in love with Mistress Bellemante; and methoughts they descend to court 'em in your absence. And that at last your surprised 'em, and that they transformed themselves into a suit of hangings to deceive you. But at last, methought you grew angry at something, and they all fled to heaven again; and after a deal of thunder and lightning, I waked, sir, and hearing human voices here, came to see what the matter was. (2.3.149 – 161)

This narrative, of course, gives the lovers and Harlequin time to escape Baliardo, and the clever Mopsophil the opportunity to eavesdrop so as to inform Elaria and Bellemante of this new information so “the frolic shall go round” (2.3.175 – 6).

Interestingly, it is Mopsophil who lacks the most agency in Behn’s play. Although he knows Scaramouch is in love with her, Baliardo casually tells him: “Set not thy heart on transitorie, mortal, there are better things in store: besides, I have promised her to a farmer for his son” (1.2.159 – 161); the implication here is that Baliardo is effectively deciding Mopsophil’s fate for her. In the end, Harlequin and Scaramouch, disguised as

“Knights of the sun” (3.3.175) stage a battle over her hand. Mopsophil sees through their ruse and makes the statement “... well, I had better take up with one of them, then lie alone tonight,” (3.3.178) suggesting an indifference to the outcome that seemingly negates all of her earlier displays of defiance and cleverness. Her last agency is seemingly stripped when she is presented as the literal “prize” to Scaramouch, to whom—as the victor of the “battle”—Baliardo “rewards” (3.3.186) with her hand in marriage. Mopsophil’s sudden turn of agency is evocative of Behn’s feelings toward forced marriage in *The Rover*, where Mopsophil’s indifference toward either Scaramouch or Harlequin as husband strikes an interesting counterpoint to Elaria and Bellemante’s own agencies when it comes to marriage. Whereas they both are left with the comedic “happily ever after,” Mopsophil’s ending is somewhat less satisfactory and strikes a similarly ambiguous tone as Hellena and Angellica’s endings do. However, this uncertainty can be used as a continuation of Behn’s interrogation of female commodification.

### Science, Satire, and Subversion

*“The lunary physicians, sir call it urinam vulcani, it calybeates everyone’s excrements more or less according to the gradus of the natural calor.”<sup>89</sup>*

As a satire, Behn’s play stands out, not only as a farce, but also as a mockery of public credulity and academic posturing and affectation. As a parallel to twenty-first century themes, *Emperor* highlights the liminality of credulity in the Information Age, where all manner of data is available via Google Search, and satire “news” sites such as *The Onion* (1988; 2007) and the *Borowitz Report* (2001) are often cited as “accurate” representations of fact, so much so that the *Borowitz Report*, at least, found it necessary

to change its tagline from “the news, reshuffled” to the forthright “not the news”<sup>90</sup> as a means of separating satire from fact. Furthermore, *Emperor* also echoes contemporary suspicion of academia, where the “town versus gown” paradigm that still stereotypes academics and scholars as being “out of touch with reality.”<sup>91</sup>

In adapting a play so heavily reliant on *commedia*, *Emperor*'s satire more than alludes to *commedia*'s use as a subversive form of performance. Paul Castagno makes the argument that it was subversive due to the “essentially improvisational nature of the early *commedia* troupes [which] allowed them to dodge the restricting powers of authorities, who were unable to proceed without the 'literary' text as incriminating evidence,”<sup>92</sup> while true for the forms of *commedia* performed in Italy and, more significantly, in France (who had to contend with the strict regulations set in place by the *Académie Française*) was less of a subversion in Restoration England:

While in the 16<sup>th</sup> century both verse and prose comedies were written and performed ... the comedians, taking pleasure in the use of common speech, enjoying the freedom of not being tied to a written text, and of being able to perform with less application, abandon verse completely ... Their predilection for prose was further enhanced by their marvelous ability at improvisation ... <sup>93</sup>

If *commedia* was acting subversively, then the form was a way of pushing back against the more rigid forms of *commedia erudite*, which had its origins in Latin or Italian, and tended to be based on scholarly pieces rather than on the popular. By rejecting the strictures imposed by the *commedia erudita*, *commedia dell'arte* developed into a theatrical form that was heavily based on improvisation and the physical rather than adherence to a written text. Noce, paraphrasing the early eighteenth-century scholar Pier Jacopo Martello, describes the selection process for the Teatro Filarmonico, as part of the desire to develop an Italian National Theatre, and subsequently, an Italian theatrical

identity. Hannibal Noce writes that Martello deliberately excluded any form that could be construed as *commedia* on the basis that:

(1) he [Martello] is incapable of handling the dialects it requires; (2) the *commedia* can be performed with pleasure, but it can only be read with nausea; (3) should one wish to print it, since its effects are mainly dependent on mime, one would have to devise some means to indicate the stage tricks and the curious, facetious, phallic and unbecoming gestures which it employs, an impossibility, as well as contrary to modesty and morals.<sup>94</sup>

It is Martello's third motive that provides the most logical reason for the lack of written *commedia* texts, over Castagno's assertion that such improvisations were developed as a way to avoid authoritative interference. Of course, the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive: the early *commedia* troupes could have, indeed, abandoned the written text for reasons of both artistic expression and a desire to eliminate "incriminating evidence" of subversive antics.

As a satire, Behn's farce calls upon *commedia*'s "subversive" use of improvisation and language as a way of commentary on what she saw as absurd, specifically the need to exercise critical thinking when it comes to learning. Here, the parallels are rather apparent: I frequently tell students that I see my job as an educator is to teach them *how* to think, as opposed to *what* to think, so that ultimately when presented with conflicting or spurious bits of information, they will have the necessary skill set to (hopefully) come to their own conclusions, where satire is *not* confused with actual news. As the pompous *dottore*, Baliardo parodies those in English society with pretensions of learning, but who, in actuality, understood extraordinarily little of the information. She sets her play in Naples, both as a nod to its Italian origin, as well suggesting of a form of *verfremdungseffekt*. Thus, Baliardo's ignorance and gullibility become *Italian* in nature, rather than *English*, leaving Behn free to obliquely ridicule

English pretensions of learning and the new science.

Behn's characters, although based in cultural stereotypes from the *commedia* tradition, are more about lambasting *social* identity than maligning *learning* itself: *il dottore* is filled to the brim with affectations of understanding and scholarly achievement, but lacks the actual substance, thereby being the ideal vessel in which Behn is able to place her ridicule of false learning. In this case, Baliardo then becomes representative of not only the gullible public, willing to believe anything in the name of "science," on the premise that "if it is in a book, it must be true";<sup>95</sup> but also of the masculine Academy, overly inflated with self-importance, and the kind of academic closed-mindedness unwilling to consider anything not thought up within its rarified membership.

When we are first introduced to Baliardo in Act 1 scene 2 with the stage directions indicating that he enters with "all manner of mathematical instruments hanging at his girdle" with Scaramouch following, "bearing a telescope twenty (or more) feet long," (2.1). Like any dilettante in a given field who is more eager than knowledgeable, Baliardo is conspicuously over-burdened with instruments that he most likely does not know how to use, and an overtly phallic telescope that suggests he may be over-compensating for his own physical—and scholarly—deficiencies, as it simultaneously alludes to the "boy's club" of the Royal Society and taking a jab at the expense of their combined masculinities.

As ridiculous as this initial scene is, the culmination of Baliardo's affectations of learning comes in Act 3 scene 2 during a conversation between Baliardo and Scaramouch, who is disguised as an apothecary in an effort to woo Mopsophil. Over the

course of the conversation, Scaramouch liberally sprinkles his dialogue with alchemical references, both “real” and fictitious:

SCARAMOUCH: Why sir, you must know—the tincture of this water, upon stagnation, ceruleates, and the crocus upon the stones flaveces; this he observes—to be, sir, the indication of a generous water ... Now sir, be pleased to observe the three regions: if they be bright, without a doubt Mars is powerful; if the middle region or camera be pallid, *Filia Solis* is breeding ... And then the third region: if the faeces be volatile, the birth will soon come in *Balneo*. This I observed also in the laboratory of that ingenious chemist Lysidono, and which much pleasure animadverted that mineral of the same zenith and nadir, of that now so famous water in England ... (3.2)

Jane Spencer, annotating the text offers the explanation that Scaramouch is (correctly) describing an alchemical process that is then liberally peppered with made up references (“Lysidono”) and scatological allusions (his reference to “generous water” is analogous to urine) to which Baliardo is oblivious.<sup>96</sup> However, Scaramouch, and by extension Behn, gleefully exposes Baliardo’s ignorance in a *coup de grace*:

SCARAMOUCH [aside]: The devil’s in my tongue ... [to Baliardo] For, sir, conceive me how he grew rich: since he drank those waters he never buys any iron, but hammers it out of *stercus proprius* ... Aye, sir, and if at any time nature be too infirm, and he prove costive, he has no more to do, but to apply a loadstone *ad anum*. (3.2.109; 118 – 120)

Baliardo, whether truly unknowing Latin, or ignorant, yet wishing to appear knowledgeable, nods and smiles and exclaims over Scaramouch’s assertions. The joke lies in what Scaramouch was telling the doctor in reality; in his (Baliardo’s) ignorance of actual learning, Scaramouch was able to convince the doctor that he (Scaramouch) was acquainted with a man who was able to extract iron from his excrement (*stercus*), and that when constipated (*costive*), he merely had to insert a magnet up his rectum (*ad anum*) to retrieve the ore, and thus the foundation of that gentleman’s wealth. Similarly, this may also be Behn’s own commentary on the Academy itself. Much in the way that

Baliardo's oversized telescope from 1.2 is a phallic representative of his ignorance, and the all-male Royal Society, Behn's scatological references seem to ridicule academic bloviation—including the suggestion that academics such as Baliardo, are in fact, full of excrement,<sup>97</sup> and thus (most likely) poking fun at the pomposity of the Royal Society.

By the end of the play, Baliardo, newly humbled by the revelation of the extent of the deception against him, proclaims:

DOCTOR: Burn all my books, and let my study blaze; Burn all to ashes, and be sure the wind scatter the vile contagious monstrous lies. . . . I see there is nothing in philosophy—Of all that writ, he was the wisest bard, who spoke this mighty truth:

He that knew all that ever learning writ,  
Knew only this: that he knew nothing yet (3.3.222 – 224; 230 – 234.)

His paraphrase of Socrates has long been held as a test of true wisdom; Baliardo has moved past the superficial knowledge into true learning and wisdom. However, what I find most problematic is his absolutist turn; in indicating his desire to burn his books, Baliardo seems to be rejecting not only his false learning, but the idea of learning itself, perhaps seeking a kind of willful ignorance. I have a difficult time believing that Behn was a proponent of such all-or-nothing methodologies when it comes to learning and can only speculate that this time of ending suggests a subtle twist of sorts where upon Baliardo transitions from a know-it-all blowhard to an equally dangerous case of living in perpetual denial. If this be the case, then Behn seems to be suggesting an additional dimension to her subtle critique of Royal Society, namely that while there is a definitive danger in wildly believing everything and in knowledge without understanding or wisdom, there is an equal danger in the critical rejection of all things and absolutist/binary thinking.

## 2017 University Theatre: Directing *Emperor of the Moon*

*“A farce, which shall be called The World in the Moon: wherein your father shall be so imposed on, as shall bring matters most magnificently about.”*<sup>98</sup>

I chose *The Emperor of the Moon* as my graduate directing project to satisfy my degree requirements within the University of Oregon Theatre Arts Department because:

- 1) *Emperor* coincided nicely within my own research interests in representations of gender and feminism in the plays of Aphra Behn; 2) It was written by a woman, and thus satisfied my own contribution within the “50/50 in 2020” initiative;<sup>99</sup> 3) As a playwright, Behn’s plays rarely get covered in standard theatre or English coursework, and even more rarely see full-scale productions. I found *Emperor* to not only be highly relevant to current discourse on the twenty-first century Information Age and apparent inability of the general public to engage in critical thinking, but also extremely funny in its own right. Her satires on young love and academia spoke volumes, particularly with regard to the division between “town and gown” that places academics in the proverbial “ivory tower” as stereotypical “absent-minded professors” who are out of touch with reality.<sup>100</sup>

Her inclusion of improvisation and use of the Restoration convention of the “aside,” in which characters speak directly to the audience, was also an opportunity to experiment with a less formal, more audience inclusive form of performance as a method in which to breakdown boundaries and prejudices about “classical” theatre that too often give theatre the reputation of being inaccessible. Not only is *Emperor* representative of the largely unfamiliar genre of Restoration theatre, it is a satirization, as opposed to a problematization, of behavior and affectation that many may find more palatable than the issues of sexual violence and female commodification raised in *The Rover*. The American



response to sex and sexuality is such that it is both a source of fascination as it is one of repudiation, thus making the sexual themes and tensions of *The Rover* as a potential site of discomfort and unease. While this should not be justification for lack of production, theatres seeking a more accessible entre to Restoration comedy would do well to look at *Emperor* as an eminently appropriate offering of the historical genre. As a farce based in *commedia* as well as a satire, *Emperor* presents a highly familiar comedic form and template that is immediately recognizable to contemporary audiences. This familiarity, then, serves as a necessary link between centuries, thus enabling the parallels between Behn's critique of seventeenth century institutions of inquiry and the twenty-first century Digital Age of Information to become self-evident.

It is my third objective that intersects with the idea of Performance as Research (PaR)—a research methodology that actively applies theory to performance in practice as a means of combining investigation with other forms of documentation<sup>101</sup>—and the notion of performance/production as a valuable method of historical play conservation. Joseph Roach notes that “texts may obscure what performance tends to reveal,”<sup>102</sup> a thought that is especially true of the so-called classical plays that were written to be performed rather than studied as “literature.” Jonathan Heron argues that “the temporal practices of embodied repetitions can be viewed as research methods in themselves ...”<sup>103</sup> especially with a play such as *Emperor* that is so steeped in the improvisational traditions of *commedia dell'arte* as to defy attempts to pin down action to specific words or stage directions. Thus, as Jensen writes, “the test of performance frequently brings out elements of the play that have been ignored—or misunderstood or undervalued—in the past,”<sup>104</sup> where, as stated by Baz Kershaw, “[p]lacing creativity at the heart of research

[implies] a paradigm shift, through which established ontologies and epistemologies of research in art-related disciplines, potentially, could be radically undone.”<sup>105</sup> In staging *Emperor*, the significance is in moving this play from the textual “epistemologies” of literary research and dramatic text into the physical, performative state of being.

Although *Emperor* is certainly capable of successful contemporary productions using the complete original texts, my concern was primarily with Behn’s usage of seventeenth century popular culture references, several of which no longer have any point of reference for a contemporary audience. By actively staging Behn’s play, I was able to determine thematic elements of the text by way of connecting seventeenth century popular culture references to several of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries that could successfully make the transition from the seventeenth century stage to one of today. In this case, some were as simple as transposing references to popular music—contemporary pop music and electronica in the place of baroque music and seventeenth century folk songs—and allusions to the US renewed interest in space and science fiction, resultant from the August 1969 first manned moon landing, through the inclusion of subtle references to twentieth century cultural icons like *Star Wars* (1977) where we transformed the large projection screen into the Death Star.

This deliberate melding of the anachronistic with the period costumes and language was consciously reminiscent of the many ways in which Shakespeare has also been adapted to modern tastes. Specifically, Baz Luhrmann’s 1996 film *Romeo + Juliet* that placed Shakespeare’s famous “star-crossed” lovers in a decidedly 1990s urban environment served, in part, as an inspiration. Although I chose not to set *Emperor* wholesale in a contemporary setting, by “updating” some of Behn’s seventeenth century

cultural references to the twenty-first century, I was able to gauge audience response to seventeenth century humor, customs, and ideologies, and thus ascertain for myself (at least to some degree) that this play indeed has a continued production viability in the same vein as Shakespeare. Just as Shakespeare's plays are known for their "universality of themes," *Emperor* also has the ability to transcend centuries, where humor and satire are the universal languages.

However, this concept of representing *modern* popular culture through classical plays does not justify a continued practice of staging them; after all, not everything has what amounts to a one to one correlation, nor do all customs or conventions necessarily "translate" well from one era to another, especially when the periods in question are divided by several centuries. Manon van de Water writes: "Theatre artists who choose to stage 'period pieces' usually delve into historical and archival research, but at the same time, it may be useful to take into account the theoretical questions of what 'period' means for a contemporary audience and engage with the idea of period itself as a monolithic concept,"<sup>106</sup> where the 'hurdle' to the contemporary audience is not just the language of the past, but also the social and cultural practices of the past as well.

So why is the production/performance of a play such as Behn's *Emperor of the Moon* so critical to play conservation? Recent years have seen a minor renaissance of this play, although currently these productions, like those of *The Rover*, have been limited to primarily various colleges and universities rather than at a regional/professional level. Regardless, I believe that, like *The Rover*, this play has enough resonance and relevance to make it both an example of late Restoration theatre as well as enough substance to appeal to a contemporary audience. In particular, the twenty-first century Information

Age and the ability to Google just about any topic and receive thousands of results, in conjunction with the surge of “news” websites that range from satire to outright biased, the task of filtering out reliable information from the unreliable grows ever more challenging, and thus makes the task of the theatre historian/practitioner that much more challenging. We, the current inhabitants of this Digital Age, are left mired in a veritable ocean of information to struggle with what is credible versus what is not. As such, *Emperor* provides a vehicle through which we can use to interrogate our own epistemological methodologies when it comes to essaying information. Baliardo serves as the negative example of intellectual absolutism: either everything he reads is right, or nothing is, a state of cognition that leaves little room for critical evaluation or a more intellectually relativistic approach to learning.

To further make the connection between *Emperor* and our contemporary Information Age, I attempted to bridge the perceived gap in the production I directed by lightly adapting the play from its original to heighten its relevance to the twenty-first century, while keeping faith with Behn’s original. Where Shakespeare is frequently “updated” (sometimes unnecessarily) as a means of illustrating his universality of themes, my personal aesthetic was to leave *Emperor* alone as a “period” piece, namely as an experiment to see *if Emperor* had the same ability to withstand significant modernization with regard to language and costumes.<sup>107</sup> Most of my excisions were changes to the pop culture references embedded within the play that the average twenty-first century audience would not necessarily understand: The original Prologue that makes reference to specific Restoration actors and includes STENTOR as a disarticulated head to which the actor speaks makes little to no sense in the twenty-first century, and so became the

“curtain speech” reminding the audience to turn off cell phones.<sup>108</sup> A reference to *Sir John Mandeville* (1.1.102), a sixteenth century text about the titular character’s fantastic travels that we know existed but is no longer extant, became an ad lib about Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight* series, or a sly dig at the popular *Norton Anthology of Drama* used within the department.

Other adaptations came in the purview of music and stage direction. Music is also a significant factor of the original text. However, none of the original sheet music remains, so I was presented with several choices: the opportunity for the development of new pieces, the elimination of music entirely, or the choice of replacing all the baroque music with more contemporary offerings.<sup>109</sup> While I had no doubts regarding the vocal abilities of my cast, I did not want to turn my production into a musical, thereby necessitating the need for a music director. Instead, I chose to update from the seventeenth century popular music to contemporary pop music: Act I changed from Elaria singing a ballad (1.1) to Elaria listening to “Fly Me to the Moon” by Astrud Gilberto; the 1.3 dance between Scaramouch and Harlequin, which gives the stage direction “*Scaramouch pulls out a flute doux, and falls to playing. Harlequin throws down his sword, and falls a-dancing*”<sup>110</sup> became a “dance-off” incorporating Michael Jackson’s “Beat It,” Psy’s “Gangnam Style,” and culminated with “(I’ve Had) The Time of My Life” from the 1987 film *Dirty Dancing*. The final significant musical transposition occurred in 2.5<sup>111</sup> in which Scaramouch serenades his ladylove Mopsophil underneath her window. Like Elaria’s song in 1.1, the music to the lyrics is no longer extant. However, it is safe to assume that this, like Elaria’s song were most likely based on popular tunes of the time.<sup>112</sup> Thus, this scene in my production became an homage to

Cameron Crowe's 1980s classic *Say Anything* (1989), continuing the trend of anachronism use through recognizable contemporary cultural references, that specifically echoed Behn's own usage of seventeenth century popular culture. My use of anachronism is by no means unique or original; this technique is one that is frequently applied to Shakespeare, Molière, and other early modern plays almost to the point of standardization, while these adaptations are unnecessary, for me, it provided a means of further drawing parallels between what Behn was satirizing in the seventeenth century and what I see as being still critical issues to address in the twenty-first century.

Alan Dessen, quoting the late Scott McMillan, says of Elizabethan directions, "‘Most Elizabethan playscripts,’ he notes, ‘composed not to be privately read but to be used in the theatre, used practitioners who knew the stage and could be trusted to understand the implied visual design’,"<sup>113</sup> meaning that the contemporary theatre practitioner has little choice but to interpret and thus extrapolate meaning. Where stage directions allude to *commedia lazzi*, I found that my actors were very much engaged with their ability to exercise significant latitude in acting choice and character development. For example, where *commedia* tradition dictates *gli innamorati* (the lovers) as "[i]mportant in their role as much as with a flat personality (they're desperately in love ...),"<sup>114</sup> Behn imbues her lovers with more verve and character, allowing for a broader range (in this case comedy) of action for Elaria, Bellemante, Cinthio, and Charmante. The final scene references oblique directions on "*The two lovers make all the signs of love in a dumb show to the ladies*,"<sup>115</sup> which was most likely rehearsed, but not specifically scripted per se, allowing for the actors to be a serious or comedic as the case may be. Where I had established Elaria and Cinthio as a more "traditional" romantic

pairing (although not without their own comedic moments such as Elaria’s overdramatic response to Scaramouch’s recounting of Cinthio’s “wounding” in 1.1. and the “Gog Magog” *lazzi* in 1.3), in this case I chose Bellemante and Charmante as the comic response. Where Elaria (Samantha Lee) and Cinthio (Sam Bridgnell) share a chaste kiss, I staged Bellemante (Lily Smith), after seeing Elaria and Cinthio kiss, to take a running leap at Charmante (Simon Griffin) where upon he catches her as they kiss more passionately.

I also made minor adjustments with regard to Behn’s original *dramatis personae*. Where Behn has several extremely minor characters that only appear for a scene, I collapsed them into two, assigning the multiple roles to two actors, essentially allowing the minor characters of Florinda (Dani Rosales) and Pedro<sup>116</sup> (Christian Mitchell) to participate in the grand reveal (3.3) as KEPLER and GALILEUS (respectively). They also took on the additional roles of CLERK and OFFICER for a scene (3.1) made famous in Anne Mauduit de Fatouville’s *Arlequin Empereur dans la Lune* (1684), the play that Behn adapted into *Emperor of the Moon*, that also has its basis in pure *commedia*. By condensing several characters into two, I was not only able to expand the roles assigned to two actors, but I was also able to address some of the confusion I had when first reading this play, namely where the characters of the CLERK and OFFICER only appear in one scene, and where KEPLER is Baliardo’s physician Ferdinand—a character who is never referenced until the final “reveal”—makes his appearance (3.3.201).<sup>117</sup>

Perhaps the most justified casting decision was to completely remove all of Behn’s references to “negroes” throughout the text. Its usage is arguably such a trivial aspect of the play, and yet current understanding of critical race theory as well as my own

work in aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion in theatre practices demanded it be addressed (without fanfare) in my production. In *Emperor*, they are not named, only listed in the list of *dramatis personae* as “Negroes, and persons that dance.” However, the ethical problems presented by the presence of Behn’s “eight or ten negroes” are completely avoidable in the contemporary context. For my own production of this play, I chose to completely eliminate this aspect of the production, not only because of the racial implications, but also because, unlike Behn, I was significantly restricted by my venue size, so a distillation of necessary *dramatis personae* was required regardless.

From a scenic perspective, when it was first performed in 1687, Behn’s play was housed in Dorset Garden, a theatre then known for its elaborate and lavish opera productions. As such, Behn had access to all kinds of stage machinery and contraptions such as flying rigs, trap doors, wing space, and a proscenium arch to name a few. These elements allowed for the grand effects of the Emperor and his entourage appearing from the Moon World at the end of the play, as well as providing the necessary space for the large cast to assemble. The final scene lists directions such as:

*A chariot appears, made like a half moon, in which is Cinthio for the Emperor, richly dressed, and Charmante for the prince, rich with a good many heroes attending. Cinthio’s train is borne by four cupids. The song continues while they descend and land.*<sup>118</sup>

Cinthio and Charmante’s court is described by KEPPLER (Dani Rosales), “See, sir, the cloud of foreigners appearance: French, English, Spaniards, Danes, Turks, Russians, Indians, and the nearer climes of Christendom ...” (3.3.134 – 136). There is no mention of the precise number of people used for this scene, but presumably Behn was able to utilize a significant crowd to look suitably impressive on the stage. That Cinthio and Charmante were able to “descend” indicates the use of some kind of flying rig, which is



always visually impressive, even by today's production standards. In this case, Behn refers back to a different Italian tradition: the court masque. Cinthio and Charmante's descent as the Emperor and Prince contains all of the requisite elements, namely singing, dancing, and elaborate costuming and staging. However, where original masques were restricted to the company of kings and queens, Behn's usage effectively allowed her audience to witness at least a representation of such an elaborate event and the theatre to stage one at a (presumably) fraction of the cost.<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, (current) theatre production trends toward spectacle, and as such *Emperor* provides ample opportunity for judicious application of more recent theatre technologies such as video projection, intelligent lighting, fog/smoke effects, and the like particularly with this scene where their inclusion is virtually demanded by Behn's use of the court masque as the climax of the play.

For my production, I was given the Hope Theater in the Miller Theater Complex on the University of Oregon campus in Eugene, Oregon as my venue. Unlike Dorset Garden, the Hope is a 120-seat black box theatre that is completely without a fly system, trap door, or any of the "standard" accoutrements of a proscenium stage. However, it was always my intention to use this space rather than the larger proscenium Robinson theatre space, as part of my own directorial interest lays in the concept of Richard Schechner's "immersive" or environmental theatre of the 1960s. Furthermore, designer Jerry Hooker<sup>120</sup> and I collaborated on developing a "steampunk" feel as the general aesthetic I used for the overall look, where this already anachronistic genre is based on heavily mechanicalized steam-powered technology with its basis in science fiction. In this case, my use alluded not only the stage machinery Behn had access to at Dorset Garden, but

also as a subtle reference to Baliardo's (and by extension, the Royal Society) obsession with the new scientific instrumentation being developed at this time, as well as our own current obsession with tech gadgets and appliances such as smart phones and Bluetooth everything.

By transposing this play into a black box from a proscenium setting, it was my intention to create a more wholly engaging theatre experience for the audience through the removal of the fourth wall, and more reminiscent of Restoration staging, where audiences were frequently seated on stage and had interaction with the actors by way of the use of asides. By making the audience active, if silent, participants in the action of the play via the intimacy of a black box experience, I wanted to try drawing the audience into the world of the play as an additional aspect of *commedia*, making this seventeenth century text accessible to the contemporary audience, once again putting learned theory into practice.

The first step in creating an environmental theatre space was an unscripted pre-show where the cast mingled with the audience in character establishing relationships and creating a rapport with the spectators to encourage moments of audience participation that occurred throughout the performance. Actors were encouraged to talk about their characters' "lives" or romantic situations as the case may be as a way of establishing the overall tone of the play to come. The exception to this was Baliardo (Aimee Hamilton), who I had appear shortly prior to the prologue, pistols in hand, to "chase away" Cinthio and Charmante, "drag" Elaria and Bellemante "home," and subtly create the context for Elaria's opening exposition:

ELARIA: Cinthio came with music last night under my window, which my [mother] hearing, sallied out with [her] myrmidons upon [her]; and clashing of

swords I heard, but what hurt was done, or whether Cinthio was discovered to [her], I know not ... (1.1.25 – 28)

Additionally, all character asides were given directly to the audience, with permission to ad lib and engage with them in the tradition of *commedia*. Lastly, the cast was given permission to leave the area prescribed by the stage and move about the seating freely, sometimes sitting with the audience, other times crawling on or around them, or even handing them props to hold. The final engagement occurred at the end of the play, when masks were given to twelve members seated in the front rows, to represent the twelve signs of the zodiac. Logistically, this was done to eliminate the need for twelve actors who would have only appeared in the final scene for a very limited amount of time. This inclusion would have bumped my cast of ten up to twenty-two—far more than the small confines of the space would allow or would have necessitated the actors in my cast to play multiple roles—another impossibility as all, with the exceptions of Cinthio and Charmante, are on stage. It also enabled me to continue to draw the audience in as active participants of the production, and thus also hopefully reducing wandering attention spans and difficulty understanding the plot.

Perhaps the most significant alteration I made to Behn's original text, however, was the transposition of Doctor Baliardo<sup>121</sup> from male to female. Although certainly not unique to my production, given current and past performance histories of other early modern plays featuring female actors in "traditionally" male roles, my decision was primarily based on the reasoning that there are no longer restrictions placed on academic learning as there were in Behn's time, when gaining a formal education was limited to men, and as such, there was no reason not to cast Baliardo as female should the right actor present herself (as it did with Aimee Hamilton). As a woman, Hamilton brought a

different kind of sensitivity and negotiation of information to the role of Baliardo that seemed to recommend a feminist lens: Instead of the pretentious (male) academic sure of his primacy in the universe, Hamilton's Baliardo was a woman striving to navigate through a milieu of male instrumentation and limited access to information.

Likewise, the "experiment" of producing a Restoration farce extended beyond the audience to the undergraduates that comprised the cast of my production. UO undergraduate and cast member Samantha Lee (Elaria) writes of her experience:

This whole production was so unique, but something in particular was the staging of the finale. The anachronisms and references were all chosen by our director, along with a sort of Star Wars vibe. What made the production even more unique was the fact that the rest of the production was so classical by comparison. The production blended in so many subtle references to modern media, along with a sort of steampunk feel that I've never been able to help create before. ... To be honest, I was nervous at first [regarding the use of anachronism]. But since it's a staple of Restoration comedy, I decided my director knew better than me, and waited to see how they worked when the whole production came together. Personally, I was happy with the result. (personal communication, 6 March 2017)

My own intention behind this was to give this production a deliberate anachronistic feel; Behn's play is arguably one of the earliest examples of science fiction on stage, and as such, elements of *Star Wars* (1977) and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) were incorporated into the ambience of the production as a subtle homage to other science fiction forerunners. Lee continues, stating:

I definitely learned much more about Restoration theatre than I began the show with. While participating in this show, I was actually learning about the Restoration period in my theatre history class, and discussions related to character archetypes, time, place, and plot layout were easily answered. Restoration theatre is about bringing brash sexuality and bawdy humor back to the stage, to bring real humor back to audiences. (personal communication, 6 March 2017)

Lee's statement echoes what Heron says about PaR, "Specifically, the theatre practitioners [explore] the uses of embodiment within philosophical inquiry, enactment in

relation to academic study ...”<sup>122</sup> where Lee’s own participation in this production coincided with her course work as a UO student in Theatre History II, in which the Restoration is (briefly) covered. Because of how the theatre history course and the production timed out, Lee was able to put theory in to practice and practice into historical context with regard to this production, thereby emphasizing Sullivan’s statement that “... practice-led research is circumscribed by an equally important emphasis placed on the artist-practitioner, the creative product and the critical process”<sup>123</sup> that is arguably found in the classroom, and that combine to help to make “theatre and performance visible by contesting the general notion of performance as mere entertainment and ascribing cultural, social, political, and academic value to it.”<sup>124</sup> In this case, my audience was exposed to Restoration comedy, *commedia dell’Arte*, and late seventeenth century history in addition to also (hopefully) being entertained. A review of my nearly sold-out production in the *Daily Emerald* remarked:

There were intentional anachronisms here and there, such as red Solo cups in a party scene, but those moments didn’t feel too gimmicky or tacked on.

Despite these modern influences, the timeliness of the costumes and setting was perfect for the show’s origins. The women were dressed in gowns and corsets that had intricate beading and designs, while the men’s costumes featured wigs and velvety, textured fabric.

Director J.K. Rodgers’ [sic] vision for the show was specific and well-thought out. Laughter rang throughout the theater as the show progressed to its final moments, providing a comforting and wild world to exist in if only for two hours.<sup>125</sup>

As a text, *Emperor* offers an additional context to Restoration plays that uses direct humor and farce to critique seventeenth century culture, where said analyses also remain relevant to the twenty-first century. From a production angle, *Emperor* offers an entertaining fable with ample opportunities to be extravagant or minimalist or anywhere

in between. Given its lack of overtly controversial subject matter as well as its easily adaptable language and potential for gorgeous costuming and scenic elements, it is somewhat surprising that *Emperor* hasn't already experienced its own production renaissance. It is important for theatre practitioners to connect with an audience when seeking to perform classical theatre pieces, and, for me, it is also important to keep the integrity of the piece itself as a "living" piece of history. Given the nature of *commedia* and Behn's own use of popular culture, I believe my production of *The Emperor of the Moon* was faithful to the original text, a relevant production of a classical play for the twenty-first century, and that my personal objective to stage an historical play for a contemporary audience was ultimately successful.<sup>126</sup>

## Page and Stage

*"Long, and at vast expense, the industrious stage/  
Has strove to please a dull ungrateful  
age ..."*<sup>127</sup>

Behn's 1688 translation of Fontenelle's *Entretiens*, called *A Discovery of New Worlds*, lends itself to the discourse regarding the inclusion of women in science, and could be viewed as a capstone to *The Emperor of the Moon*, which premiered the year previous. Sarah Goodfellow, writing on Behn's work as a translator, states that "... Behn's preface to and translation of Bernard de Fontenelle's *A Discovery of New Worlds* (1688) bring together several aspects of Behn's intellectual and literary life in a single text. It is a translation, a popularization, and also a vehicle through which she argued not only for the adoption of Copernicanism, but also for the inclusion of women in scientific discourse ... Behn saw herself as a proponent for the general, educated public unable to understand astronomy, for learned women doubly excluded from natural philosophy, for

Christians in a disbelieving world, and for Copernican in a Ptolemaic universe.”<sup>128</sup> She suggests that *The Emperor of the Moon* “represents in part a similar attempt on [Behn’s] part to popularize astronomy and to criticize the practitioners of science,” where Behn “satirizes the isolated natural philosopher, immersed in traditional Renaissance naturalism and closed to new ideas.”<sup>129</sup> Spencer ties this desire for scientific discourse and Behn’s satire into the characterization of Doctor Baliardo, writing:

For the doctor’s delusions, Behn draws on a wide range of current intellectual trends. The new science of astronomy, alluded to by the huge telescope, is obviously a main theme, and Behn ... uses recent books of fantastic voyages for the idea of an inhabited moon-world which can communicate with the earth ... [She] unites these themes through a controlling metaphor of vision and blindness. ... all of the doctor’s ‘scopes’ don’t allow him to see what is going on around him.<sup>130</sup>

Just as *Emperor* serves as Behn’s critique of the Academy, where Baliardo’s “scopes” induce a kind of blindness in the seventeenth century, this play certainly has the ability to transcend centuries to also critique use of digital media of today, where it is an unusual sight anymore, seeing people in public actively engaged with their surroundings rather than completely absorbed with smartphones, Instagram filters, or other electronic devices.

As a text, *Emperor* is not one generally found in the classroom. However, as a clear representation of *commedia dell’arte* in its English permutation, *Emperor* has the ability of providing theatre history students with a highly successful example of the form, where as previously noted, there are few extant *commedia* texts available prior to the mid-eighteenth century and the work of Carlo Gozzi. Behn’s distinct use of *commedia* stock characters and *lazzi* also speaks to *commedia*’s own migration pattern through early modern Europe, also giving a sense of how performance *ideas* also spread. Interestingly, there are suggestions that Behn’s play eventually made its way back to Italy, where

Joseph Hayden based his *opera buffa Il Mondo della Luna*<sup>131</sup> (1777) on Carlo Goldoni's 1750 libretto of the same name. Pierpaolo Polzonetti writes that "Behn's moon displays utopian aspects that would later appear in Goldoni's libretto, even though it is unlikely that Goldoni had access to Aphra Behn's comedy: unlikely,<sup>132</sup> but not inconceivable. ..."<sup>133</sup> Regardless of Goldoni's attempts to quash its popularity, *commedia* is still extremely relevant for students to know as the basis for a substantial number of comedic tropes and character archetypes still in use today.

Furthermore, it is this overall recognizability of stock characters and situation that makes *Emperor* one of the more easily "accessible" early modern plays for a twenty-first century audience. In performance, Behn's skillful use of stagecraft create multiple spectacles for Baliardo as the lovers and servants plot their deceptions, before culminating in the grand finale at the end where all is revealed. Spencer observes that the spectacle that is put on for Baliardo is effectively a double spectacle for the audience, who are witness to not only the play's "visual tricks," but also the inevitable spectacle Baliardo makes of himself as he falls over himself in his belief in the Emperor of the Moon.<sup>134</sup> Given this combination of scenic and comedic elements, both textually and in performance, *Emperor* is a play deserving of more attention, not only as part of Behn's feminist approach to the Restoration via the theatre and performance, but also based on its strengths as *commedia*, its particular relevance to the twenty-first century Information Age, and the unique ways in which popular culture influences public thought and opinion.

#### *Notes to Chapter V*

<sup>1</sup> Aphra Behn, *The Emperor of the Moon* (London: R. Holt, 1687).



<sup>2</sup> Paula R. Backscheider, “From *The Emperor of the Moon* to the Sultan’s Prison,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 43 (2014) 1 – 26, doi: 10.1353/sec.2014.0023, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Cavendish had a serious interest in “natural philosophy, but as a woman, was barred from Royal Society membership. However, she was granted permission to attend several Society meetings as an observer. Denise Tillery writes that not only did Cavendish actively participate in the workings of the newly formed Royal Society, “her contributions ... were closely connected to her scientific practices ... which explicitly and implicitly challenged the practices of the Royal Society.” Her *Observations on Experimental Natural Philosophy* (1666) were “an extended critique of Robert Hooke’s *Micrographia* (1665)” that, in turn, concerned Hooke’s own observations with the newly developed microscope.

Denise Tillery, “‘English Them in the Easiest Manner You Can’: Margaret Cavendish on the Discourse and Practice of Natural Philosophy,” *Rhetoric Review* 26, no. 3 (2007), [www.jstor.org/stable/20176791](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20176791), 268.

<sup>5</sup> J.K. Rogers, “Director’s Note,” *The Emperor of the Moon*, by Aphra Behn, adapted and directed by J.K. Rogers, Hope Theatre, University of Oregon, January 26 – February 5, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> David Cressy, “Early Modern Space Travel,” *Historical Review* 111, no. 4 (2006), [www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/ahr.111.4.961](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/ahr.111.4.961), 962.

<sup>7</sup> See Behn’s novel *Oroonoko* (1688). See also Margaret Cavendish, *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World and Other Writings* (London, 1666) as one of the first examples of the science fiction novel.

<sup>8</sup> From *The Ladies Calling* by Richard Allestree, “a chapbook published in 1673 to help mothers inculcate ‘modesty and obedience’ and teach ... proper female decorum.” Qtd by Doris Tishkoff, *Madonna/Whore: The Myth of the Two Marys*, (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2006), 95.

<sup>9</sup> J.K. Rogers, *Bodies for Sale: Prostitution and Marriage in Restoration Comedy*, Master’s thesis, (University of Nebraska Omaha, 2011), 46; Qtd. Tishkoff, *Madonna/Whore*, 95.

<sup>10</sup> The assumption here is that women were also reading these books; however, it seems that *women* were specifically thought to be in “danger” from novel reading.

Interestingly, statistics published by the Romance Writers of America in 2006 indicated that as a genre, “Romance fiction comprise[d] 33.8% of all popular fiction sold,” where few of the primarily female readership seem to have a problem conflating what they read with reality.

[http://www.electricka.com/etaf/muses/literature/prizes\\_for\\_literature/rita/rita\\_popups/RWA\\_statistics.htm](http://www.electricka.com/etaf/muses/literature/prizes_for_literature/rita/rita_popups/RWA_statistics.htm).

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Heron, “Shakespearean Laboratories and Performance-as-Research,” in *Shakespeare on the University Stage*, edited by A. J. Hartley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 245.

<sup>12</sup> An example of such would be the Athenian Sophocles most notably setting *Oedipus Rex* in rival city-state Thebes.

<sup>13</sup> Meaning possibly “distancing,” “alienation,” or “estrangement effect.” Translation of this word is also the source of some controversy (much like Aristotle’s meaning of *katharsis* from Chapter II of this dissertation). Many scholars simply refer to it as the “V-effekt” and/or leave it untranslated.

Fredric Jameson, *Brecht and Method* (London: Verso, 1998).

<sup>14</sup> Aphra Behn, Dedication to *The Emperor of the Moon*, In Spencer, *The Rover and Other Plays*, 274.

<sup>15</sup> Backscheider, “From *The Emperor of the Moon* to the Sultan’s Prison,” 6.

<sup>16</sup> Aphra Behn, *The Emperor of the Moon* in *The Rover and Other Plays*, ed. Jane Spencer, 271 – 335 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). Text references are to act, scene, and line of this edition; 1.3.15 – 17.

<sup>17</sup> As an example, Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) fits within *commedia* character representations: *Innamorati* (Lovers) – Belle and Beast/Prince Adam

*Il Capitano* (The Captain) – Gaston (vain, boastful)

*Il Dottore* (The Doctor) – Maurice (absent minded professor type; father to one of the lovers)

*Pulcinella* (*zanni*) – LeFou (ugly and stupid servant to *Capitano*)

*Arlecchino* (*zanni*) – Lumiere (smart, confident, and flirty leader of the lover's servants)

*Pierrot* (*zanni*) – Cogsworth (not quite the “hopeless lover,” but still the “wet blanket” to *Arlecchino*)

*Colombina* (Little Dove) – Mrs. Potts/Fifi (clever and wise (Mrs. Potts) and love interest to *Arlecchino* (Fifi))

*Brighella* (Brawler) – Monsieur D'Arque (cruel, mercenary, minor villain)

<https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/CommediaDellArte>.

18 Emphasis mine.

19 Emphasis mine.

20 Virginia Scott, *The Commedia dell'Arte in Paris 1644 – 1697* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 123.

21 *Ibid.*, 444 – 445.

22 Robert Henke, “Border Crossing in the *Commedia dell'Arte*,” In *Transnational Exchange in Early Modern Theater*, eds. Robert Henke and Eric Nicholson (Farnum: Ashgate, 2008), 19.

23 Henceforth all references to *commedia degli zanni/commedia all'improvviso* will be referred to as *commedia dell'arte* (unless specified otherwise) for reasons of simplification.

24 Trans.: “buffoons”; Henke, “Border Crossing,” 20.

25 Robert Henke, *Performance and Literature in the Commedia dell'Arte* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 50.

26 Emphasis mine.

27 Literally: “history singers”

28 Emphasis mine; Henke, *Performance and Literature*, 50, 52.

29 Scott, *The Commedia dell'Arte in Paris*, 122.

30 Emphasis mine.; trans.: “high comedy”

31 Scott, *The Commedia dell'Arte in Paris*, 123.

32 Henke, “Border Crossing,” 27.

33 Armand Baschet, *Les Comédiens Italiens a la Cour de France* (Paris: s.n., 1882), 14. Trans.: The *Commedia dell'arte*, performed by nine or ten actors in character, was very much in vogue in Italy; but in France, in the year 1571, it was quite a novelty, an unknown thing other than to have been spoken of.

34 Scott, *The Commedia dell'Arte in Paris*, 3.

35 Elisabeth Hapsburg of Austria.

36 Henke, “Border Crossing,” 26.

37 Katherine M. Lea, *Italian Popular Comedy*. Vols. 1 & 2. (Russell & Russell, Inc: Oxford, 1962), 348. Qtd by Lea; From Edward Clinton to William Cecil, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Burghley.

38 *Ibid.*; Qtd by Lea; From Thomas Smyth to Burghley.

39 Henke, “Border Crossing,” 30.

<sup>40</sup> M. A. Katritzky, "Reading the Actress in Commedia Imagery." In Brown and Parolin, *Women Players in England*, 24; Nashe and Jonson quoted by Katritzky.

<sup>41</sup> Henke, "Border Crossing," 32.

<sup>42</sup> Emphasis mine.

<sup>43</sup> Richard Andrews, "Molière, Commedia dell'Arte, and the Question of Influence in Early Modern European Theatre," *The Modern Language Review* 100, no. 2 (2005), <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.uoregon.edu/stable/3737608>, 445.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 447.

<sup>45</sup> Literally: "learnéd comedy"

<sup>46</sup> Emphasis mine.; trans.: "already understood"; *Ibid.*, 449.

<sup>47</sup> Emphasis mine.

<sup>48</sup> Scott, *The Commedia dell'Arte in Paris*, 220.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Cressy, "Early Modern Space Travel," 976.

<sup>52</sup> Vera Keller, *Knowledge and the Public Interest* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 13.

<sup>53</sup> Michael Cyril William Hunter, *Establishing the New Science* (Suffolk: Woodbridge, 1989), 1.

<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, although the original Charter signed by Charles II continuously refers to the "President, Council, and Fellows of the Royal Society" as "persons,"<sup>55</sup> it also lists all of the afore mentioned positions as filled by men, and makes repeated use of the "he/him/his" pronouns, with the *assumption* of an all-male fellowship. However, Queen Elizabeth II signed into action a Supplemental Charter in 2012 to "take account of developments in governance and administration" where language has been updated to the use of both male and female pronouns.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Charles II, *First Royal Charter*, 1662, <https://royalsociety.org/about-us/governance/charters/>.

<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth II, *Supplemental Charter of 2012*, 2012, <https://royalsociety.org/about-us/governance/charters/>.

<sup>57</sup> Halley's Comet made appearances in 1607 and again, more significantly, in 1682

<sup>58</sup> Trans.: The passage of Halley's Comet and the renewed interest for astronomy at the hour of Bayle and of Fontenelle ... furnished the pretext for *Harlequin Emperor from the Moon* ...; Guy Boquet, "Le come Italiens a Paris au temp de Louis XIV," *Revue d'histoire modern et contemporaine* (1954-) 26e, no. 3, (1979), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20528534>, 431.

<sup>59</sup> Trans.: "Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds"

<sup>60</sup> Al Coppola, "Retraining the Virtuoso's Gaze: Behn's *Emperor of the Moon*, The Royal Society, and the Spectacles of Science and Politics," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 41, no. 4 (2008), [www.jstor.org/stable/25161238](http://www.jstor.org/stable/25161238), 484.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Behn, *Emperor* (Spencer), 1.1.101.

<sup>63</sup> Mercure gallant, March 1684; qtd. by Scott, *The Commedia dell'Arte in Paris*, 293.

<sup>64</sup> Jane Spencer, Introduction to *The Rover and Other Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), xviii.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> It is significant to note that while many scholars have made a clear connection between Behn's *The Emperor of the Moon* and Fatouville's *Arlequin Empeur dans la Lune* due to the strong resemblance

between the two, Behn herself never formally acknowledged Fatouville's play as being the basis for her own.

<sup>67</sup> Spencer, Introduction to *The Rover*, xviii.

<sup>68</sup> Backscheider, "From *The Emperor of the Moon* to the Sultan's Prison," 13.

<sup>69</sup> Emphasis mine; Vanessa Shana Coloura, *Spectacles of Kingship in Aphra Behn's Dramas, 1677 – 1689*, Diss. University of California Santa Barbara, 2007 (Ann Arbor: ProQuest Dissertations), 123.

<sup>70</sup> Modern variations on this theme may play with gender and number of character representations (i.e. two women instead of "old men" (*Sabrina, the Teenage Witch* (1996)) and children instead of servants/*zanni* (*Modern Family* (2013)) for the comic relief, but the *commedia* template is still there.

<sup>71</sup> *Commedia* stock characters were frequently divided into three categories: *il Maestro* (the Master) usually representations of the merchant or similar class, *gli Innamorati* (the Lovers) young men and/or women placed under *il Maestro*'s guardianship, and *gli zanni* or *i buffoni* (the clowns) servants to *il Maestro* and/or *gli Innamorati*.

<sup>72</sup> Jane Spencer, Notes to *The Emperor of the Moon*, in *The Rover and Other Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 378.

<sup>73</sup> Literally: "Foolish"

<sup>74</sup> Literally: "Great Liar"

<sup>75</sup> *Il Dottore*'s Bolognese origins are pertinent: the Università di Bologna (1088) is the oldest university in the world, predating Oxford University (1096) by nearly a decade. As such Bologna has been recognized as center of higher learning for over a millennia, thus also serving as the basis for *il dottore*'s scholarly pretensions.

<sup>76</sup> Roberto Delpiano, "Commedia dell'Arte – Dottori" *Carnival*. s.n., 2012, accessed September 8, 2016. <http://www.delpiano.com/carnival/html/commedia.html>, n.p.

<sup>77</sup> *Vecchi* were the old men in *commedia*

<sup>78</sup> Henke, "Border Crossing," 19.

<sup>79</sup> It should be noted that the name "*Arlecchino*" most likely derives from the Old French "*herelequin*" or "*hellequin*," meaning "demon" or "devil."

<sup>80</sup> *Scaramuccia*, means "little skirmish," indicating his propensity to engage his opponents with quick jabs, physical or verbal, only to dart away.

<sup>81</sup> Because neither *Pantalone* nor *il Capitano* are represented in Behn's *Emperor*, I will not be discussing their characteristics as they are not relevant to my discourse on interculturality within Behn's play.

<sup>82</sup> Delpiano, "Commedia dell'Arte – Innamorati," n.p.

<sup>83</sup> Consider Jaques' speech in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1599):

And then the lover,  
Sighing like furnace,  
With a woeful ballad  
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. (2.7.146 – 148)

Jaques takes the cynical approach to romance by satirizing the Lovers' penchant for rhapsodizing over every bit of minutia related to the beloved.

Consider also: my roommate freshman year of college, who had innumerable telephone conversations with her long-distance boyfriend consisting mostly of telling each other "I love you," and then insisting that the other be the first to hang up.

<sup>84</sup> "Gothic" here refers to medieval.

<sup>85</sup> Scott, *The Commedia dell'Arte in Paris*, 294.

- 86 Pierpaolo Polzonetti, *Italian Opera in the Age of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 44.
- 87 Scott, *The Commedia dell'Arte in Paris*, 294.
- 88 Delpiano, "Commedia dell'Arte – Scaramuccia," n.p.
- 89 Behn, *Emperor* (Spencer), 3.2.102 – 104.
- 90 Kara, Bloomgarden-Smoke, "The *New Yorker* Clarifies: The Borowitz Report is 'Not the News,'" *WWD*, Pense Media Corporation, 2019, December 13, 2016, accessed September 13, 2019, <https://wwd.com/business-news/media/the-new-yorker-clarifies-the-borowitz-report-is-not-the-news-fake-news-10726721/>.
- 91 See Pew Research Center, "Public and Scientists' Views on Science and Society," *Pew Research Center*, 2019, January 29, 2015, accessed September 13, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2015/01/29/public-and-scientists-views-on-science-and-society/>.
- 92 Paul C. Castagno, *The Early Commedia dell'Arte (1550 – 1621)* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1994), 10.
- 93 *Ibid.*, 79.
- 94 Hannibal S. Noce, "Aspirations for an Italian National Theatre," *The Science of Buffoonery: Theory and History of the Commedia dell'Arte*, ed. Dominico Pietropaolo (Toronto: Dovehouse Editions, 1989), 80 – 81.
- 95 Much in the way that people today are so willing to believe anything on the internet, and become overnight "experts" on any given topic.
- 96 Spencer, Notes to *The Emperor of the Moon*, 390.
- 97 I recognize the irony that mandates a more "academic" approach to *stercus*, which can colloquially be translated as "shit."
- 98 Behn, *Emperor* (Spencer), 1.1.107 – 109.
- 99 See 50-50in200.org
- 100 At the time of writing, I have spent a cumulative 14.5 years in "academia" as an undergraduate or graduate student—roughly 60% of my adult life (marked from age 18).
- 101 See PARTake: The Journal of Performance as Research, <https://www.partakejournal.org/about>.
- 102 Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead* (New York: Columbia University Press), 286.
- 103 Heron, "Shakespearean Laboratories and Performance-as-Research," 232.
- 104 Jensen, *Ben Jonson's Comedies on the Modern Stage*, 2.
- 105 Baz Kershaw, "Practice as Research Through Performance," in Smith and Dean, *Practice-led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts*, 105.
- 106 Manon van de Water, "Approaching Theory: Scholar and Practitioner," In *Playing with Theory in Theatre Practice*, eds. M. Alrutz, J. Listengarten and M. Van Duyn Wood (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 40.
- 107 While doing supplementary dramaturgical research into past production of *Emperor*, I noticed that, as with Shakespeare, productions have run the gamut from pure period piece to completely modernized to variations that combined aesthetics, such as my own. However, directorial visions for these productions were not stated, so their artistic objectives remain unknown.
- 108 I wrote this Prologue with help from Dr. Dianne Dugaw as my advisor on seventeenth century literary form. See Appendix D.2 for the rewritten Prologue.
- 109 Over the course of this production, we made the discovery that "Baroque dubstep" is a thriving sub-genre of contemporary music, and so we included it into this production.

110 Behn, *The Emperor of the Moon* (Spencer), 293.

111 In the original text. For my production, I re-assigned scenes, creating two acts: Act I contained six scenes (original: 1.1 – 3; 2.1 – 4) and Act II contained four scenes (original: 2.5; 3.1 – 3).

112 Spencer offers the following annotation:

“[*Elaria sings*] previous editions do not specify the singer, but it is likely that Elaria both plays the lute and sings.

“*A curse ... maid*: this song, with music by Purcell, was printed as a song sheet by Thomas Cross in 1700, and said to be “song by Mrs. Cross.” See *British union-catalog of early music*, ed. Edith Snapper (London, 1975) ... This was probably the actress, singer, and dancer Leticia Cross, who was on the stage in the 1690s.”

Spencer, Notes to Pages 277 – 80, 380.

113 Dessen, “The Theatre Historian as Director,” 136.

114 Roberto Delpiano, “Carnival – Gli Innamorati,” *Carnival*. s.n., 2012, accessed August 19, 2019, <http://www.delpiano.com/carnival/html/innamorati.html>.

115 Ibid.

116 This character is referred to as both “Pedro” and “Peter” throughout Spencer’s (and the original) texts. To prevent confusion, I made the call to stick with “Pedro” for my production.

117 In the original text, GALILEUS only has one line (3.3.27 – 28), and his identity is never actually revealed. For my production, I divided KEPLER’s lines between them and established that Florinda (who otherwise only appears at the end of 2.1 and in 2.3) and Pedro are also participants in the deception.

118 Behn, *The Emperor of the Moon* (Spencer), 331.

119 See Andrew R. Walking, “Masque and Politics at the Restoration Court: John Crowne’s *Calisto*,” *Early Music* 24, no. 1, Music in Purcell’s London II (February 1996), 27 – 38; 41 – 52; 55 – 56; 59 – 62, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3128449> for some specifics regarding Restoration court masque.

120 See Appendix D.3 for production credits.

121 I made the deliberate choice not to feminize “Baliardo” to “Baliarda,” determining that as a surname, no such change was necessary. Additionally, during the audition process, I also had several female-identifying actors express interest in the roles of Harlequin and Scaramouch, but those characters, unlike Baliardo, were engaged in the love triangle with Mopsophil, and while I have no objection of looking at Behn’s own “queerness,” it was not a conversation I felt was necessary to have with this production at this time.

122 Heron, “Shakespearean Laboratories and Performance-as-Research,” 233.

123 Sullivan, “Making Space,” 47.

124 van de Water, “Approaching Theory: Scholar and Practitioner,” 38.

125 Sararosa Davies, “University Theatre’s *Emperor of the Moon* Generates Laughter and Whimsy at the Hope Theatre,” *Daily Emerald*, February 7, 2017, accessed September 13, 2019, [https://www.dailyemerald.com/arts-culture/university-theatre-s-emperor-of-the-moon-generates-laughter-and/article\\_941c5fb9-dd7d-5295-9b80-0cd4995618a7.html](https://www.dailyemerald.com/arts-culture/university-theatre-s-emperor-of-the-moon-generates-laughter-and/article_941c5fb9-dd7d-5295-9b80-0cd4995618a7.html).

126 Out of seven performances, four sold out and three were within five to seven seats of selling out of the 120-seat capacity of the Hope Theater.

127 Behn, *Emperor* (Spencer), Prologue.1 – 2.

128 Sarah Goodfellow, “‘Such Masculine Strokes’: Aphra Behn as Translator of ‘A Discovery of New Worlds,’” *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 28, no. 2 (Summer, 1996), doi:10.2307/4052460, 230 & 250.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>130</sup> Spencer, Introduction to *The Rover*, xviii – xix.

<sup>131</sup> Trans.: *The World of the Moon*.

<sup>132</sup> Polzonetti refers to the famous feud between Carlo Goldoni and Carlo Gozzi over *commedia dell'arte* in the mid-eighteenth century. Where Gozzi was a proponent of *commedia*, Goldoni believed Italian theatre should be developed more in the “realistic” style of Molière, and away from the fantasy of *commedia*. As such, there is some irony in Goldoni’s *Il Mondo dell Luna*, with its remarkably similar plots and *lazzi* found in Behn’s play with clear *commedia* antecedents.

<sup>133</sup> Pierpaolo Polzonetti, *Italian Opera in the Age of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 41.

<sup>134</sup> Spencer, Introduction to *The Rover*, xix.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Once again, we ask the question, “*Why feminist theatre history?*” Brander Matthews’s 1916 book provides us with an answer with his spurious claims “that women are likely to have only a definitely limited knowledge of life, and ... that [women] are likely also to be more or less deficient in the faculty of construction”<sup>1</sup> regarding reasons for the continued invisibility of female playwrights prior to 1900 both in the classroom and on the stage. Matthews’s claim perpetuates an assumption of *female inferiority* largely predicated on the hypothesis that the seventeenth century woman writer was writing for a *private* audience about *domestic* matters. Indeed, Sophie Treadwell’s 1916 play *Trifles*, addresses Matthews’s assertion of female inferiority and male tendency to dismiss the domestic (private) as inconsequential. As such, the traditional emphasis placed on *public* performance as a de facto standard of “quality,” means that the so-called closet drama continues to be dismissed as insignificant contributions to dramatic literature and dramaturgy. We are now at the point where the original trivialization of these plays has more or less been replaced by general ignorance: closet dramas and manuscript plays that were designated as trivial by early generations of theatre critics and scholars and were therefore not taught. This lack of attention meant that *successive* generations of critics, scholars, and students were unfamiliar with the genre through lack of exposure, where upon the cycle repeated until their exclusion is now mostly predicated on theatre scholars simply being unaware of the potential contributions these early women writers have to offer pedagogical and performance discourses. Those female



dramatists that seemingly broke from the stamp of insignificance through publication and *public* performance, give the impression that they are the anomalies, and as such, are perhaps worth some minor inclusion as indication of their exceptionality. This is only exacerbated by the continued reductive approaches to the dramatic contributions of these women in the majority of theatre history textbooks currently in use in classrooms across the United States.<sup>2</sup>

The immense scope of theatre history covered in general undergraduate survey-style classes, “must necessarily be selective and its choice of materials and in its presentation”;<sup>3</sup> however, for a complete picture of history as we are able, the “principles of selection and exclusion”<sup>4</sup> must also be re-evaluated for that image to appear. The continued exclusion of women, based largely on the misleading assumptions that women writing and publishing prior to 1700 were as transgressive as they were anomalous, needs to be assessed as a casualty of past selection processes, as do the current institutional separations of dramatic literature from dramatic performance. Where present theatre students frequently have access to advanced coursework on topics and themes in *contemporary* theatre studies, few such options tend to exist in theatre departments for those wanting to expand their study of *historical* plays, aside from Shakespeare. Again, we see a similarity in pattern: Shakespeare is taught, learned, and produced in (largely) western schools and theatres, and is therefore *familiar*, and as a recognizable playwright/genre, Shakespeare *continues* to be taught, learned, and produced almost to the exclusion of everything else.

As such, the feminist theatre historiography seeks not to challenge Shakespeare as an excellent playwright; rather the point is to challenge how he is presented as THE early

modern playwright through a conscious inclusion of early modern female writers into the pedagogical and production dialogue. From a textual perspective, the attention given to early modern women writers over the past several decades is as admirable as it is useful to redressing Virginia Woolf's myth of Judith Shakespeare. However, as beneficial as this is, the emphasis of these classes remains on the literary (as one would assume from a course offered by an English department), and while the performative aspect of any examined work may be touched upon, it is rarely the focal point, and consequently can get lost in the rest of the disseminated course material.

Furthermore, it *should* fall on theatre departments to offer more substantial history-based courses, particularly given the overall influence these women writers had (have) on successive playwrights. After Aphra Behn stepped through the door to public performance—a door unlocked by Elizabeth Cary and opened by Margaret Cavendish—the end of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century saw a cluster of female playwrights actively writing, publishing, and being produced on the stage with enormous success. Sue-Ellen Case documents that “[d]uring the period from 1660 – 1720, over sixty plays by women were produced on the London stage – more than from 1920 – 1980,”<sup>5</sup> with Behn and Susanna Centlivre as the foremost female playwrights during that time in question, but also including plays by Mary Pix, Delarivier Manley, and Catherine Trotter. Given their popularity, it continually begs the question of why these women, then, are not habitually included in theatre history pedagogical canon and more regularly produced by contemporary theatre companies. The answer seems to be in the scholarly consensus that as audiences and critics grew more and more squeamish toward Behn's open approach to sex and sexuality in her writings, she fell out of disfavor as too

“smutty,” and as such, *all* subsequent early modern female dramatists were also categorized and demonized along with Behn where their only “crime” was guilt by association.

Where twenty-first century female playwrights are ostensibly no longer subject the same stigma of obscenity,<sup>7</sup> recent reports by the Dramatists Guild and the Asian American Performers Action Coalition (AAPAC) still indicate a significant lack of gender parity, at least on American stages.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, twenty-first century theatre programming trends have seen an emphasis on new or commissioned work as an integral part of season selection. Theatre organizations such as Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago, Illinois; The Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Oregon; and South Coast Repertory in Costa Mesa, California place great prominence on the number of such works that they produce. Moreover, the statistics compiled by the Dramatists Guild at least, “did not count [plays by] dramatists who died more than 50 years before the revival”<sup>9</sup> as part of their study, thereby excluding all early modern plays. However, it is my belief that while this attention to world premieres is admirable, it is only part of the equation of season programming. Equally important is an acknowledgement of theatre’s past, in the production and staging of what has been termed “classic” or “language-based” plays outside of the aforementioned male-dominated performance repertoire that still preserves Shakespeare’s primacy.

Alan Dessen asks the question: “How far is the practice of the theatre historian from practice of today’s hands-on director?”<sup>10</sup> which I believe is one of the first questions that must be answered when approaching theatre performance as both research and conservation of “classical” plays. The answer is both simple and problematic: While new

or “contemporary” plays may need less attention in terms of dramaturgy, plays (and theatre) are very much a product of their time, so understanding context—historical or otherwise—is a critical component for any director, thus bringing the idea of “history” into any given play production. Of course, the concept of “contemporary” is also fluid; the mid-twentieth century plays of Arthur Miller, Edward Albee, and Tennessee Williams are frequently considered to be “contemporary” examples of American Realism, although they were written a half century ago. However, when a production concerns an older work, pre-1950 plays in general, and certainly early modern plays specifically, notions of regarding conservation and Performance as Research (PaR) become more critical.

There is a rich history of plays and genres that are frequently ignored or labeled “problematic” for one reason or another that have failed to be included in the literary canon, and yet many of these still deserve production consideration. Even after more than 400 years, it is unlikely that Shakespeare will fade into obscurity, although even his plays rarely get equal attention amongst themselves, with his more popular works such as *Hamlet* or *Romeo and Juliet*, seeing more attention than a play such as *Cymbeline* or *King John*. Aside from Shakespeare’s lesser known works (which still see more production than plays by Aphra Behn), when proposing an early modern play that falls into the category of “relatively obscure,” the director and production staff must ask “What is the *value* in producing such a play?” as there are numerous historical plays that simply do not make programming sense to produce in the twenty-first century due to drastic changes in style, content, and ideologies.<sup>11</sup> However, as discussed in previous chapters, this only means that *producing* these plays for a contemporary audience is viewed as challenging and does not negate their value from a theatre history point of view. Plays may have

significant historical value as primary sources, and yet shifting principles, outdated customs, obscure references and language, or archaic play construction may render some impractical for modern staging.

While Dessen's article proposes ways in which contemporary theatre can incorporate "'original practices' (OP)" into historically accurate recreations of plays (notably Shakespeare) via the inclusion of "some combination 1) universal lighting; 2) period costume; 3) period and/or acoustic music; no sets; 5) rapid pace in speaking and scene continuity; 6) emphasis on poetry-language; and 7) all-male casts,"<sup>12</sup> noting that some theatres have gone so far with Shakespeare as to incorporate the other OP—'original pronunciation' of early modern English<sup>13</sup>—into their productions. Alternately, re-imaginings of 'historic' plays are also prolific—again most notably Shakespeare, but also ancient Greek, Molière, and Chekov, to name a few—where the playwrights in question are almost unilaterally male. The literary strides made in uncovering/recovering pre-1700 dramatic texts means that theatre programs and companies have already been provided with an impressive selection of little-known plays by women from which to work—many of which have been the subjects of robust fields of study—thus rendering a separate need to "unearth" more dramatic works by women less like needing to reinvent the wheel. However, I would also advocate strongly for more institutional and academic collaboration between theatre and literature departments when it comes to further research into the rediscovery of "lost" works. Marc Bloch stated that "those texts or archaeological documents which see the clearest and the most accommodating will speak only when they are *properly*<sup>14</sup> questioned,"<sup>15</sup> where plays can best "speak" when looked

at *both* textually *and* performatively, hence the need for better communication and collaboration between disciplines

The issue, then, becomes how to successfully produce playwrights such as Cary, Cavendish, and Behn for a twenty-first century audience so that their works retain a *production* vitality that resonates with in the twenty-first century and substantiates their presence as valid inclusions in the repertoire of American theatre companies. The trend of continuing to dismiss the dramatic works of Cary and Cavendish as inconsequential to theatre history pedagogy through their continual classification as “closet dramatists” and therefore inherently lacking in performability effectively negates their work and implies a continued prejudice in favor *public* performance. And although she is the first acknowledged professional English female playwright, Behn’s infrequent inclusion in the theatre repertoires, tokenizes her skillful stagecraft and wordplay that mark her plays as not only eminently stageable, but also rejects her continued relevance to the twenty-first century popular culture with her application of readily identifiable themes and implied social commentary. As one of the earliest *publicly* produced early modern female dramatists, Behn should be introduced not as the “token” woman, but as an extremely accomplished playwright who happened to be female. Her work also needs to re-examined in both the classroom and on the stage as A feminist approach to seventeenth century theatre as opposed to THE feminist approach, particularly if framed against Cary and Cavendish as predecessors.

Once again, it becomes important to examine feminisms as we know it. However, Margaret Ezell reminds us that “[the] belief in a uniform female response ... results ... in a lamentable tendency to judge the ‘feminism’ of earlier generations to meet our

standards.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, when looking at Cary and Cavendish, it is less about the ways in which they were “‘good’ feminists,” given that the seventeenth century is a “particularly troublesome [period],”<sup>17</sup> with Ezell noting that many of these women who occupy “ambiguous slot[s] in twentieth-century feminism” do so with qualifiers that negate as they supposedly advocate for women. Ezell notes in particular Katherine Phillips (1632 – 1664),<sup>18</sup> quoting Jacqueline Pearson’s opinion that as writer, Phillips was “fortunate enough to find favor with the male establishment” in part because she “seemed unthreatening to men and thus retained their respect,”<sup>19</sup> where Pearson’s description of Phillips is measured against the twentieth century precepts of feminism. Ezell suggests that critical women’s literary history studies emphasize the idea of the pre-1700 woman writer as frustrated and repressed by her society, noting Virginia Woolf’s Judith Shakespeare as the icon for the silenced woman, driven mad and “characteristically infused their writings with bitterness and anger.”<sup>20</sup> Given these “standards” for pre-1700 female writing, Pearson’s restrictive description of Phillips makes more sense. However, Ezell specifies that this “image of the angry and alienated female artist” has its origins in a “nineteenth-century male image of authorship,” citing Sandra Gilbert’s analogy that compared women writers to the “alienated Romantic figure ... like Byron’s heroes ...”<sup>21</sup> as the basis for the disaffected female writer.

Additionally, Ezell recommends a re-examination of *public* and *private*, specifying that classifying letters and diaries as “private” is “the product of nineteenth- and twentieth-century experiences,” where letters were an “established literary form” in the seventeenth century as a form of public address,<sup>22</sup> and evidenced in this study by the references to the numerous Epistle Dedicatories regularly included as part of the front

matter of published materials, and diaries were used to “not only to enable the author to examine his or her own life, but also to provide examples to other Christians; thus, [diaries] became one of the most widely published of all literary forms during the period.”<sup>23</sup> Given Ezell’s definitions, the already subjective line between *public* and *private* becomes even more slender: where she states that “to except [manuscript] as a legitimate common form of literary outlet for women before 1700, as it was for men, however, would mean dropping the image of the ‘maverick’ female writer,”<sup>24</sup> and as such, making necessary a re-evaluation of what seventeenth century feminism looked like by its own standards, rather than by those imposed on it from a nineteenth and twentieth century understanding.

With all this in mind, although Cary’s contribution of *The Tragedy of Miriam* (1613) to the Jacobean play milieu sets her against the debatably more polished works of Shakespeare and Johnson, where the comparison is a false equivalency given Shakespeare and Johnson’s respective ages and theatrical expertise in comparison to Cary’s youth and inexperience at the assumed time of *Miriam*’s writing. Given the ubiquity and ultimate primacy of the Renaissance *male* playwright in theatre pedagogy and performance, *Miriam* offers a compelling *female* look into the domestic sphere that questions the then accepted role of women within the household. Cary arguably does not fit the mold of the “angry and alienated female artist” paradigm implied by Judith Shakespeare; however, her characterization of Salome still stands as an instance evocative of resistance against Renaissance and Jacobean social order. As the “villain,” Salome is an intriguing variation of the Machiavellian archetype, not only because of her



boldness and self-proclaimed intention to challenge Talmudic (and Renaissance) divorce law, but specifically because she does so with apparent impunity. She demands to know:

Why should such privilege to man be given?  
Or given to them, why barr'd from women then?  
Are men than we in greater grace with Heaven?  
Or cannot women hate as well as men? (1.4.297 – 308)<sup>25</sup>

When there is no answer, she proclaims:

I'll be the custom-breaker: and begin  
To shew my Sex the way to freedoms door. (1.4.309 – 310)

In this instance, the rage is Salome's and not necessarily Cary's, and yet that also does not mean that Cary did not feel frustrated or trapped by her circumstances. Cary's play seems to point to an interpretation that advocates (through Salome) for equal marital rights along with an active interrogation of the preeminence of male privilege in her time. That Salome so destructively transgresses against Herod and Miriam and yet escapes the play unscathed and unpunished by early modern standards, is suggestive of Cary's feminist challenge to the patriarchal status quo. Furthermore, Cary's ability or inability to change her circumstance is moot; where students often conflate "good" feminism with the power to impose change, we must keep in mind what seventeenth century feminism looked like *without* feeling the need to add qualifiers like "unthreatening" to Cary's feminist representations.

Just as Ezell calls for a re-examination of feminism and notions of public/private in seventeenth century (and Renaissance) literature, given that *Miriam* is a *play*, a re-examination of her performability is also necessary. The generally accepted *private* nature of the closet drama means that *Miriam* is accepted as "unperformable,"<sup>26</sup> where the opposite is most likely the case. Elizabeth Schafer examined Rebecca McCutcheon's

performance-studies approach to *Miriam* in 2013,<sup>27</sup> along with Ramona Wray, citing the various ‘action’ stage direction in *Miriam*, in addition to Cary’s specificity with regard to scenic elements<sup>28</sup> as indicative of Cary’s intention it should be performed. Wray concludes,

The play is excitingly compatible with different kinds of theatrical space, both traditional and experimental, and such is the nature of *Miriam* that it can appear as much about the Middle East as about Middle England. For Cary’s creation runs the gamut of theatrical interpretations, alternately taking domestic and political complexions according to cuts and adjustments in focus. It offers consistently engaging contrasts in characterization, including the potential for differently rendered versions of *Miriam* herself.

*Miriam* can no longer remain the construct promulgated in previous critical imaginaries. The text enfolds not only multiple performance possibilities but also a plurality of readings ...<sup>29</sup>

But in spite of this, Cary’s play is still a stranger to theatre departments instead of being used as an example of a female dramatic work contemporaneous to Shakespeare. Her continued omission in theatre history curricula leaves gaps in Renaissance /Jacobean understanding that many students, scholars, and audiences are completely unaware of, where her *inclusion* has the exciting potential of adding dimensionality and depth to perhaps the way in which we approach Shakespeare.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, Cavendish’s play *Bell in Campo* (1662) tends to be rejected not only because of her own assertions that “the printing of my Playes spoils them for ever to be Acted”<sup>31</sup> is taken at face value, but also because of the “private” nature of her plays, where the assumption is that because her plays were written during a time when public theatre in *England* was prohibited, her works never saw performance in private on the Continent while she was in exile. Once again, the emphasis is mistakenly placed on the importance of *public performance*. As such, Cavendish’s works, in spite of her depictions

moving women out of the domestic sphere and into the public combined with her own impressive body of writing that spans a multitude of genres, continue to be underestimated as the scribbles of a woman now recognized more for her eccentricities than for her dramatic and literary contributions. Furthermore, just as Cary provides additional context for the Jacobean theatre scene, Cavendish's plays impart further framework for playwriting during the Interregnum, a period usually glossed over in theatre history as a time *without* theatre (i.e. public performance) in England. Where Marta Straznicky notes that the Interregnum saw an "unprecedented growth in the writing of closet plays and the publication of stage drama,"<sup>32</sup> theatre history still disregards this kind of "unprecedented growth" where instead a deeper inquiry into playwriting and reading during the Interregnum is warranted from a dramaturgical standpoint in addition to the already extant literary one.

John Shanahan's 2008 review of *Bell in Campo* in performance as part of the 2007 Seventh Biennial International Conference of the Margaret Cavendish Society at Bolsover Castle in Derbyshire, England, marks one of the select few times one of Cavendish's plays have been produced in any way. Shanahan notes that although scholars and critics have no current way of ascertaining whether Cavendish ever saw her plays staged during her life time, "many of her plays are capable of holding the boards as aesthetic objects in their own right in addition to being important documents of mid-century royalist culture,"<sup>33</sup> again noting the overall performability of Cavendish as well as the play's innate feminism. In this production, Shanahan notes that

The gender trouble created by Victoria's response to war is at first the subject of amused disdain, but by the midpoint of the play the army of glory-seeking "heroickesses" has made itself indispensable in the war. In a hilarious scene from the play's second part, [Director Ian] Gledhill made a fortuitous rearrangement in

speaking parts that highlighted how radical is the structuring fantasy of the play, namely, that women might make themselves equal to men through martial-cum-political action.<sup>34</sup>

Specifically, Shanahan seems to suggest that in staging *Bell in Campo*, Cavendish's feminism is made more evident: "Lady Victoria and the women have unleashed in the course of the plot is scarcely to be re-contained ... [where the] ideologically destabilizing effects of the cross-dressing in [Gledhill's staging] will not be undone so easily."<sup>35</sup> Lady Victoria's decisive transition from domestic to public sphere, and from *feminine* to *masculine*, suggests a continuation of the conversation begun by Cary's Salome that alludes to an interrogation of assumed female gender roles. Yet despite the overall performability of Cary and Cavendish, the most significant stumbling block to their inclusion in a feminist theatre historiography remains the persistent assumption that their (centuries-old) intentions were that their plays should remain unproduced.

As a more frequently studied *and* produced playwright, Aphra Behn nonetheless is still deserving of more dramaturgical attention that she currently sees in theatre history pedagogy and performance. Her plays retain a viability that is certainly still extremely relevant to feminist issues of the twenty-first century. Although the concepts of forced and acquisitional marriage may no longer be common in most western cultures,<sup>36</sup> her representations of female commodification and objectification are still very evident in contemporary popular culture. Behn's multi-layered approach to female salability through her characterizations of Florinda, Hellena, and Angellica Bianca, where her critique and censure of the upper-class practice of acquisitional and/or forced marriages as evident in Florinda and Hellena's circumstances question the efficacy of "appropriate" female behavior, and Hellena's refusal to accept their futures preordained by their father

suggest Behn's interrogation of prescribed gender roles, while conversely Behn's justification and exoneration of Angellica Bianca's financial need and capitalistic attitudes toward prostitution is met with clemency and compassion. In each representation, what Behn seems to object most to is the female *lack* of agency: Florinda and Hellena's commodification is *involuntary* and imposed on them by (literally) the patriarchy, whereas Angellica Bianca is engaged in deliberate and *voluntary* acts of self-sale, where there is no recrimination necessary because she was able to choose.

Additionally, Behn's play challenges accepted gender roles by satirically manipulating character behavior against generally accepted normative archetypes, pushing the boundaries of gender representation through Behn's stagecraft and use of Restoration dramatic convention. As the virgin, Florinda's chaste naivety is escalated to dangerous proportions, leaving her in repeated danger as a representation of passive femininity. Hellena is simultaneously the play's *heroine* and *hero*: her metaphoric androgyny is represented not only with her example as the "cavalier woman," but also with regard to the wit with which she successfully pursues, woos, and wins Willmore as the "breeches" role. Conversely, Angellica Bianca, as the tragic hero to Hellena's comedic one, defies her prescribed archetype as the "whore" through her own nobility in action as Willmore's jilted lover as well as through her use of heroic couplets as the literary convention through which she articulates her most profound emotions.

Furthermore, her critique and problematization of male entitlement in *The Rover* is still an ongoing concern, particularly in light of allegations of sexual misconduct by both Brett Kavanaugh and Donald Trump, whose current public positions are viewed as similarly "heroic" by the public, and yet are currently filled by persons who bring that

very standard into serious question. However, when the play is placed within the framework of Behn's active problematization of male entitlement and mock-heroic behavior, students and audiences can be led to the understanding that it is *supposed* to be disquieting; Willmore's marriage to Hellena suggests that not only is masculine (bad) behavior the focal point, but also calls into question Hellena's previous demonstrations of common sense, suggesting that Behn's intentionality is also an interrogation of dramatic convention as well as of marriage as an institution that suggests women *need* to get married in the first place.

Behn's other popular play, *The Emperor of the Moon*, is a departure from the tragicomedy of *The Rover*, and yet is equally pointed in its satirization of cultural problems and events. As a fantasy, *Emperor* is not only a comedic romp through *commedia dell'arte*, audiences and students cannot fail to grasp its relevance to the current Information Age and public obsession with new technologies. Her use of *commedia* stock character archetypes, most of which are still recognizable (if not recognized as *commedia*) to twenty-first century audiences creates a bond of familiarity that makes *Emperor* an "accessible" play to modern readership and audiences, in spite of Behn's lack of recognition by the general public as a noted early modern playwright, or the play's own unfamiliarity in dramatic circles. Similarly, the contemporary audience's (unknowing) familiarity with *commedia lazzi* and scenarios thanks to twentieth and twenty-first century cartoons, movies, and television that make use of *commedia*-esque running gags, physical comedy, farce, and situational comedy, establishes a double-bond with *Emperor*, making it wholly recognizable as a comedy.

Furthermore, it is a somewhat astonishing revelation to learn that “science fiction” as a genre has existed for far longer than generally assumed, dating back to Lucian’s *Diary of Icaromenipus* (2<sup>nd</sup> century CE), where Jules Verne and H. G. Wells writing in the late nineteenth century generally occupy the positions of primacy. Given this common belief, *Emperor*, therefore, also exists as an ethnographic study of Restoration popular culture, where lines between “science” and fantasy were blurred. Lest we believe that ideology is restricted to the “backward” thinking of the seventeenth century, current popularity of television shows such as *Black Mirror* (2011), where alternate technological realities are often used as a darkly satirical means of reflecting a critique of western culture back at the audience. *Emperor* satirizes the seventeenth century bastions of learning by implying both naive credulity and grandiose academic pomposity in her characterization of Doctor Baliardo, while suggesting that his reliance on “scientific” gadgetry, is critical of this apparent outward manifestation of physical masculinity as a means of mechanizing and thus “taming” the natural world. However, where *Black Mirror* is specifically meant to disquiet, if not horrify, audiences with its satiric propositions of dystopian representations of a near future, Behn’s play accomplishes the same satire on technology and “science” as institutions, where comedy is the vehicle of interrogation rather than horror.

Taking into consideration Behn’s irrefutable relevance to twenty-first century topics and themes, the point becomes the general absence of attention given to Behn as a significant playwright of the seventeenth century that goes beyond her position as the first professional female playwright. Again, I acknowledge the challenges when it comes to curating theatre history courses, where the sheer breadth of the timeline can be

overwhelming. However, many theatre departments are so weighted in focus to either contemporary works or Shakespeare, just as theatre companies trend toward either new works or the “standard” classics, that theatre history as a subgenre remains neglected, and the female contribution is tokenized or dismissed. Students seeking more information about historical subsets of theatre are effectively forced to do so outside of the department, usually in the direction of English literature, where the emphasis is almost entirely text-based and not on performance.

While this is certainly an acceptable alternative, as dramatic literature as text is a significant contribution to understanding these playwrights as literary genre, it still leaves a substantial gap with regard to performance in theatre historiography. Furthermore, because this area is so neglected in theatre studies, it effectively perpetuates a circular argument that presents as a general *lack* of theatre-specific historians who are sufficiently able to educate students in the subject of early modern female playwrights as *both* literary and performative: There are few who are familiar enough with these women to teach, so these playwrights continue to be overlooked, which in turn leads to a lack of production; lack of production then feeds back into the general absence of recognition, meaning few theatre-specific scholars and practitioners specialize in theatre history, and consequently, there are few who are able to teach, and so on.

As such, Cary, Cavendish, and Behn are more or less restricted to study as *dramatic literature*, and not seen as the provenance of *both* English literary studies *and* theatre history/performance, exacerbated through the continued misattribution of “inferiority” to early female playwrights as *private*. As elucidated in this study, the discipline of theatre history has been consistently ignoring works that can provide



significant contextual insight in early modern theatre and performance and can no longer do so in the name of developing a *truly* feminist theatre historiography. Susan Jonas's "Other Canon,"<sup>37</sup> while an excellent point of introduction to female playwrights, still approaches the idea of a feminist canon as something continuously *separate* from "regular" theatre history pedagogy, where the necessary next step is to fully integrate her millennium of female playwrights into the current canon so as to help build a more complete picture of theatre historiography as *already* feminist.

The strengths of Elizabeth Cary, Margaret Cavendish, and Aphra Behn as early modern feminist playwrights studied against the background of seventeenth century theatre playwriting and performance dramaturgy in conjunction with the proposed performability of their plays—as adaptations or as “restagings”—means that theatre historiography, pedagogy, and performance would do well to follow the example set by sister discipline English literature with an overall more robust inclusion of these early modern female playwrights within the current dramatic literary canon in the classroom and on the stage. Where Matthews's question of “Why is it that there are so few women playwrights?”<sup>38</sup> is asked, Marc Bloch offers the response, that the job of the historian is “... to discover the reasons ... [because] in history ... the causes cannot be assumed. They are to be looked for ...”<sup>39</sup> And where the answer is unsatisfactory, it becomes the artist-historian's imperative to help initiate change.

### *Notes to Conclusion*

<sup>1</sup> Brander Matthews, “Women Dramatists,” *A Book About the Theater* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), 124 – 125.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter II of this dissertation.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History*, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Sue-Ellen Case, *Feminism & Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 38 – 39.

Conversely, a recent study conducted by the Dramatists Guild documents that although on a national scale, the presence of female playwrights in production on US professional stage increased 8.5% from 2011 to 2017, plays by female dramatists still fall short of 30% of all evaluated theatre seasons.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Julia Jordan, “The Count 2.0: Who’s getting Produced in the US,” *Dramatists Guild*, 2018, accessed September 17, 2019, <https://www.dramatistsguild.com/advocacy/the-count-2-2/>. See also: AAPAC, “Ethnic Representations on New York Stages 2016 – 2017,” *Asian American Performance Action Coalition*, 2018, accessed September 17, 2019, <http://www.aapacnyc.org/>.

<sup>7</sup> More specifically, obscenity itself no longer has the same connotations and stigmatizations in the new millennium as it did in from the eighteenth century on.

<sup>8</sup> An article in *American Theatre Magazine* on September 18, 2019 listing the top twenty most-produced playwrights of the 2019 – 2020 American theatre season lists indicates that 60% are women (12/22), with Lauren Gunderson and Lauren Yee occupying the top two spots.

Diep Tran, “The Top 20\* Most-Produced Playwrights of the 2019 – 20 Season,” *American Theatre Magazine*, TCG, 2017, September 18, 2019, accessed October 14, 2019, <https://www.americantheatre.org/2019/09/18/the-top-20-most-produced-playwrights-of-the-2019-20-season/>.

<sup>9</sup> Jordan, “The Count 2.0,” n.p.

<sup>10</sup> Alan C. Dessen, “The Theatre Historian as Director,” *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 24 (2011), [www.jstor.org/stable/24322776](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24322776), 131.

<sup>11</sup> Plays that come to mind that fall under this category would be *Metamora: The Last of the Wampanoags* (1829) by John Augustus Stone, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by George Aiken, and *The Children’s Hour* (1934) by Lillian Hellman. These plays could be considered problematic to produce due to respective overtones of colonialism, racism, and homophobia.

<sup>12</sup> Dessen, “The Theatre Historian as Director,” 131.

<sup>13</sup> Studies and videos in OP are readily available online and feature linguist David Crystal and his son, Ben. As noted by Laura A. Lodewick, OP was 2004 “experiment” in early modern linguistics conducted by David Crystal and The Globe for three performances of *Romeo and Juliet*.

See Laura A. Lodewick, “Look with Thine Ears”: Puns, Wordplay, and Original Pronunciation in Performance,” *Shakespeare Bulletin* 31, no. 1 (March 2013), 41 – 61, doi: 10.1353/shb.2013.0017.

<sup>14</sup> Emphasis mine.

<sup>15</sup> Marc Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft*, trans. Peter Putnam (New York: Vintage, 1953), 64.

<sup>16</sup> Ezell, *Writing Women’s Literary History*, 27.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Katherine Phillips, also known as “The Matchless Orinda,” was a seventeenth century poet and translator. She is often compared to Aphra Behn, with Behn coming out for the worse, as Phillips was considered a representation of the “ideal” woman writer: chaste, virtuous, and proper.

See Kamille Stone Stanton, “‘Capable of Being Kings’: The Influence of the Cult of King Charles I on the Early Modern Women’s Literary Canon,” *New Perspectives on the Eighteenth Century* 5, no.1 (Spring, 2008) 20–29. <http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/essays/67201178/>.

<sup>19</sup> Jacqueline Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women and Women Dramatists 1642—1737*, (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988), 8; Qtd in Ezell, *Writing Women’s Literary History*, 27.

<sup>20</sup> Ezell, *Writing Women’s Literary History*, 25.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 26.

22 Ibid., 34.

23 Ibid., 35.

24 Ibid., 37.

25 Elizabeth Cary, *The Tragedy of Miriam*, eds. Barry Weller and Margaret W. Ferguson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). Text references are to act, scene, and line of this edition.

26 Ramona Wray, "Performing *The Tragedy of Mariam* and Constructing Stage History." *Early Theatre* 18, no. 2 (2015), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44122669>, 149.

27 Elizabeth Schafer, "Introduction: Attending to Early Modern Women as Theatre Makers," *Early Theatre* 18, no. 2 (2015), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44122667>, 125.

28 Wray, "Performing *The Tragedy of Mariam*," 153.

29 Ibid., 163 – 164.

30 Tangential to this, I would very much like the opportunity to produce a season consisting of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, followed by Cary's *Miriam*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1966) by Tom Stoppard, and concluding with Caridad Svich's 2004 play *Twelve Ophelias*, where the purpose of said season is placing Shakespeare in context and conversation within the Jacobean milieu (*Miriam*) and as contemporary iterations (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* and *Twelve Ophelias*).

31 Margaret Cavendish, *Playes* (London: A. Warren, 1662), A3v; also qtd. in Bennett, Appendix B, 210.

32 Marta Straznicky, *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama, 1550 – 1700*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 15.

33 John Shanahan, "Bell in Campo (review)," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 26, no. 2 (Summer, 2008), doi:10.1353/shb.0.0003, 192.

34 Ibid., 194.

35 Ibid., 197.

36 This is not to say that they never happen; rather, instances are more diffuse and/or obfuscated in today's culture.

37 Susan Jonas, "The Other Canon: 10 Centuries of Plays by Women," TCG, *American Theatre*, January 6, 2017, Accessed July 8, 2019, <https://www.americantheatre.org/2015/09/21/the-other-canon-10-centuries-of-plays-by-women/>. See Appendix A.1 to see Jonas's full proposed list of plays by women.

38 Matthews, "Women Dramatists," 124.

39 Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, 197.

## APPENDIX A (CHAPTER II)

### *A.1: The "Other" Canon*

Female Playwright List from Jonas, Susan. "The Other Canon: 10 Centuries of Plays by Women." TCG. *American Theatre*. January 6, 2017. Accessed July 8, 2019.

<https://www.americantheatre.org/2015/09/21/the-other-canon-10-centuries-of-plays-by-women/>.

NB: Notes are copied verbatim from Jonas's article. I have inserted Susanna Centlivre into this list since her omission was an acknowledged error on the part of the author, as well as Aphra Behn's *The Emperor of the Moon* given its significance to this study

• **Hrotsvitha** (c. 930–c. 1002), the first known playwright since antiquity

*Dulcitius* (late 10th century)

*Paphnutius* (late 10th century), later adapted to *Thais*

• **Abbess Hildegard of Bingen** (1098–1179)

*Ordo Virtutum* (c.1151)

• **Elizabeth Cary** (1585–1639)

*Tragedy of Mariam* (1602–1604, published 1613)

• **Margaret Cavendish** (1661–1717)

*Bell in Campo* (1662)

*Convent of Pleasure* (1668)

• **Aphra Behn** (1640–1689)

*The Rover, Parts One & Two* (1677 and 1681)

*The Lucky Chance* (1686)

*The Emperor of the Moon* (1687)

• **Mary Pix** (1666–1709)

*The Spanish Wives* (1696)

[• **Susanna Centlivre** (1667–1723)

*The Basset Table* (1705)

*The Busie Body* (1709)]

• **Hannah Cowley** (1743–1809)

*The Belle's Strategem* (1780)

• **Elizabeth Inchbald** (1753–1821)

*I'll Tell You What* (1785)

• **Frances Burney** (1776–1828)

*The Witlings* (1789)

• **Joanna Baillie** (1762–1851)

*De Monfort* (1798)

• **Anna Cora Mowatt Ritchie** (1819–1870)

*Fashion* (1845)

- **Harriet Beecher Stowe** (1811–1896)

*The Christian Slave* (1855)

- Edith Wharton

**Edith Wharton** (1862–1937)

*House of Mirth*, adapted from Wharton’s novel by Wharton and Clyde Fitch (1906)

**NOTE:** In 1998, the Mint’s Jonathan Bank did an excellent adaptation, published in *Worthy but Neglected: Plays of the Mint Theater Company*.

- **Elizabeth Robins** (1862–1952)

*Votes for Women* (1907)

- **Cicely Hamilton** (1872–1952)

*Diana of Dobson’s* (1908)

*How the Vote Was Won: A Play in One Act* (1910), cowritten with Christopher St. John

- **Rachel Crothers** (1878–1958)

*A Man’s World* (1909)

*A Little Journey* (1919)

**NOTE:** Though *A Little Journey* was nominated for the Pulitzer in 1918, it was quite forgotten until Jackson Gay directed a splendid production of this strange, almost expressionist play at the Mint in 2011.

- **Lady Augusta Gregory** (1852–1932)

*Grania* (1912)

- **Githa Sowerby** (1876–1970)

*Rutherford and Son* (1912)

- **Susan Glaspell** (1876–1948)

*Trifles* (1916)

*The Inheritors* (1921)

*The Verge* (1921)

- **Angelina Weld Grimke** (1880–1958)

*Rachel* (1916)

- **Zona Gale** (1874–1938)

*Miss Lulu Bett* (1920)

- **Georgia Douglas Johnson** (1880–1966)

*A Sunday Morning in the South* (1925)

*Blue Blood* (1926)

*Safe* (1929)

- **Mae West** (1893–1980)

*Sex* (1926)

**NOTE:** In 1999, Elyse Singer directed a delightful production of the play for Hourglass Theater.

- **Maurine Dallas Watkins** (1896–1969)

*Chicago* (1926)

*So Help Me God* (1929)

- **Edna Ferber** (1885–1968),

with George S. Kaufman

*The Royal Family* (1927)

*Dinner at Eight* (1932)

- **Eulalie Spence** (1894–1981)

*Undertow* (1927)

Sophie Treadwell

- **Sophie Treadwell** (1885–1970)

*Machinal* (1928)

**NOTE:** The Roundabout produced the play two seasons ago, and it's slated for Echo Theatre in Dallas next year.

- **Marita Bonner** (1899–1971)

*The Purple Flower* (1928)

- **May Miller** (1899–1995)

*Stragglers in the Dust* (1930)

- **Hallie Flanagan** (1889–1969)

*Can You Hear Their Voices?* (1931)

- **Dawn Powell** (1896–1965)

*Walking Down Broadway* (1931)

- **Lillian Hellman** (1905–1984)

*The Children's Hour* (1934)

*The Little Foxes* (1939)

- **Teresa Deevy** (1894–1963)

*Katie Roche* (1936)

**NOTE:** New York's Mint Theater revived three of Deevy's works in the past five years, including *Katie Roche*, *Wife to James Whelan*, and *Temporal Powers*.

- **Gertrude Stein** (1874–1946)

*Three Sisters Who Are Not Sisters* (1943)

*Mother of Us All* (1947)

- **Rose Franken** (1895–1988)

*Soldier's Wife* (1945)

- **Daphne de Maurier** (1907–1989)

*The Years Between* (1946)

- **Martha Gellhorn** (1908–1998) and **Virginia Cowles** (1912–1983)

*Love Goes to Press* (1946)

- **Carson McCullers** (1917–1967)

*Member of the Wedding* (1950)

- **Alice Childress** (1920–1967)

*Trouble in Mind* (1955)

*Wedding Band* (1962)

- **Shelagh Delaney** (1939–)

*A Taste of Honey* (1958)

- Lorraine Hansberry

**Lorraine Hansberry** (1930–1965)

*A Raisin in the Sun* (1959)

*Les Blancs* (written before her death in 1965, first produced in 1970)

• **Adrienne Kennedy** (1931–)

*Funnyhouse of the Negro* (1964)

• **María Irene Fornés** (1930–)

*Fefu and her Friends* (1977)

*Abingdon Square* (1987)

*And What of the Night?* (1999)

A.2: *Preface to The Lucky Chance*

Aphra Behn, *The Lucky Chance* (London: R.H. for W. Canning, 1686).

The little Obligation I have to some of the witty Sparks and Poets of the Town, has put me on a Vindication of this Comedy from those Censures that Malice, and ill Nature have thrown upon it, tho in vain: The Poets I heartily excuse, since there is a sort of Self-Interest in their Malice, which I shou'd rather call a witty Way they have in this Age, of Railing at everything they find with pain successful, and never to shew good Nature and speak well of anything; but when they are sure 'tis damn'd, then they afford it that worse Scandal, their Pity. And nothing makes them so through-stitcht an Enemy as a full Third Day, that's Crime enough to load it with all manner of Infamy; and when they can no other way prevail with the Town, they charge it with the old never failing Scandal—That 'tis not fit for the Ladys: As if (if it were as they falsly give it out) the Ladys were oblig'd to hear Indecencys only from their Pens and Plays and some of them have ventur'd to treat 'em as Coursely as 'twas possible, without the least Reproach from them; and in some of their most Celebrated Plays have entertained 'em with things, that if I should here strip from their Wit and Occasion that conducts 'em in and makes them proper, their fair Cheeks would perhaps wear a natural Colour at the reading them: yet are never taken Notice of, because a Man writ them, and they may hear that from them they blush at from a Woman—But I make a Challenge to any Person of common Sense and Reason—that is not wilfully bent on ill Nature, and will in spight of Sense wrest a double Entendre from everything, lying upon the Catch for a Jest or a Quibble, like a Rook for a Cully; but any unprejudic'd Person that knows not the Author, to read any of my Comedys and compare 'em with others of this Age, and if they find one Word that can offend the chastest Ear, I will submit to all their peevish Cavills; but Right or Wrong they must be Criminal because a Woman's; condemning them without having the Christian Charity, to examine whether it be guilty or not, with reading, comparing, or thinking; the Ladies taking up any Scandal on Trust from some conceited Sparks, who will in spight of Nature be Wits and Beaus; then scatter it for Authentick all over the Town and Court, poysoning of others Judgment with their false Notions, condemning it to worse than Death, Loss of Fame. And to fortfy their Detraction, charge me with all the Plays that



have ever been offensive; though I wish with all their Faults I had been the Author of some of those they have honour'd me with.

For the farther Justification of this Play; it being a Comedy of Intrigue, Dr. Davenant out of Respect to the Commands he had from Court, to take great Care that no Indecency should be in Plays, sent for it and nicely look't it over, putting out anything he but imagin'd the Criticks would play with. After that, Sir Roger L'Estrange read it and licens'd it, and found no such Faults as 'tis charg'd with: Then Mr. Killigrew, who more severe than any, from the strict Order he had, perus'd it with great Circumspection; and lastly the Master Players, who you will I hope in some Measure esteem Judges of Decency and their own interest, having been so many Years Prentice to the Trade of Judging.

I say, after all these Supervisors the Ladys may be convinc'd, they left nothing that cou'd offend, and the Men of their unjust Reflections on so many Judges of Wit and Decencys. When it happens that I challenge any one, to point me out the least Expression of what some have made their Discourse, they cry, That Mr. Leigh opens his Night Gown, when he comes into the Bride-chamber; if he do, which is a Jest of his own making, and which I never saw, I hope he has his Cloaths on underneath? And if so, where is the Indecency? I have seen in that admirable Play of Oedipus, the Gown open'd wide, and the Man shown in his Drawers and Wastecoat, and never thought it an Offence before. Another cries, Why me know not what they mean, when the Man takes a Woman off the Stage, and another is thereby cuckolded; is that any more than you see in the most Celebrated of your Plays? as the City Politicks, the Lady Mayoress, and the Old Lawyers Wife, who goes with a Man she never saw before, and comes out again the joyfull'st Woman alive, for having made her Husband a Cuckold with such Dexterity, and yet I see nothing unnatural nor obscene: tis proper for the Characters. So in that lucky Play of the London Cuckolds, not to recite Particulars. And in that good Comedy of Sir Cour•••y Nice, the Taylor to the young Lady—in the fam'd Sir Fopling Dorimont and Bellinda, see the very Words—In Valentinian, see the Scene between the Court Bastards. And Valentinian all loose and rusl'd a Moment after the Rape, and all this you see without scandal, and a thousand others The Moor of Venice in many places. The Maids Tragedy—see the Scene of undressing the Bride, and between the King and Amintor, and

after between the King and Evadne—All these I Name as some of the best Plays I know; If I should repeat the Words express in these scenes I mention, I might justly be charg'd with course ill Manners, and very little Modesty, and yet they so naturally fall into the places they are designed for, and so are proper for the Business, that there is not the least Fault to be found with them; though I say those things in any of mine wou'd damn the whole Peice, and alarm the Town. Had I a Day or two's time, as I have scarce so many Hours to write this in (the Play, being all printed off and the Press waiting,) I would sum up all your Beloved Plays, and all the things in them that are past with such Silence by; because written by Men: such Masculine Strokes in me, must not be allow'd. I must conclude those Women (if there be any such) greater Criticks in that sort of Conversation than myself, who find any of that sort in mine, or anything that can justly be reproach't. But 'tis in vain by dint of Reason or Comparison to convince the obstinate Criticks, whose Business is to find Fault, if not by a loose and gross Imagination to create them, for they must either find the Jest, or make it; and those of this sort fall to my share, they find Faults of another kind for the Men Writers. And this one thing I will venture to say, though against my Nature, because it has a Vanity in it: That had the Plays I have writ come forth under any Mans Name, and never known to have been mine; I appeal to all unbyast Judges of Sense, if they had not said that Person had made as many good Comedies, as any one Man that has writ in our Age; but a Devil on't the Woman damns the Poet.

Ladies, for its further Justification to you, be pleas'd to know, that the first Copy of this Play was read by several Ladys of very great Quality, and unquestioned Fame, and received their most favourable Opinion, not one charging it with the Crime, that some have been pleas'd to find in the Acting. Other Ladys who saw it more than once, whose Quality and Vertue can sufficiently justifie any thing they design to favour, were pleas'd to say, they found an Entertainment in it very far from scandalous; and for the Generality of the Town, I found by my Receipts it was not thought so Criminal. However, that shall not be an Incouragement to me to trouble the Criticks with new Occasion of affronting me for endeavouring at least to divert; and at this rate, both the few poets that are left, and the Players who toil in vain, will be weary of their Trade.

I cannot omit to tell you, that a Wit of the Town, a Friend of mine at Wills Coffee House, the first Night of the Play, cry'd it down as much as in him lay, who before had read it and assured me he never saw a prettier Comedy. So complaisant one pestilent Wit will be to another, and in the full Cry make his Noise too; but since 'tis to the witty Few I speak, I hope the better Judges will take no Offence, to whom I am oblig'd for better Judgments; and those I hope will be so kind to me, knowing my Conversation not at all addicted to the Indecencys alledged, that I would much less practice it in a Play, that must stand the Test of the censuring World. And I must want common Sense, and all the Degrees of good Manners, renouncing my Fame, all Modesty and Interest for a silly Sawcy fruitless jest to make Fools laugh, and Women blush, and wise Men asham'd; My self all the while, if I had been guilty of this Crime charg'd to me, remaining the only stupid, insensible. Is this likely, is this reasonable to be believ'd by any body, but the wilfully blind? All I ask, is the Priviledge for my Masculine Part the Poet in me, (if any such you will allow me) to tread in those successful Paths my Predecessors have so long thriv'd in, to take those Measures that both the Ancient and Modern Writers have set me, and by which they have pleas'd the World so well. If I must not, because of my Sex, have this Freedom, but that-you will usurp all to your selves I lay down my Quill, and you shall hear no more of me, no not so much as to make Comparisons, because I will be kinder to my brothers of the Pen, than they have been to a defenseless Woman; for I am not content to write for a Third day only. I value Fame as much as if I had been born a Hero; and if you rob me of that, I can retire from the ungrateful World, and scorn its sickle Favours.

## APPENDIX B (CHAPTER III)

### *B. 1: Davies Dedicatory Poem*

John Davies, *The Muses Sacrifice* (London, 1612).

TO THE MOST NOBLE, and no lesse deservedly-renowned Ladyes, as well Darlings, as Patronesses, of the Muses; *LVCY*, Countesse of Bedford; *MARY*, Countesse-Dowager of Pembroke; and, *ELIZABETH*, *Lady Cary*, (Wife of Sr. *Henry Cary*;) Glories of Women.

THE *Muses*, *sacrifice*; I, *consecrate*;  
They, unto *Heav'n*; I, to *you*, heav'nly *THREE*:  
They, my poore *Heart*; I, my *Loves* rich *Estate*,  
together with my *Rimes*, that rarer be.

But what can be more rare than richest *Loue*,  
sith so rich *Loue* is, now, so rarely found?  
*Yes*; measur'd-words, that, out of measure, moue  
the Soule to Heav'n, from Hel that's most profound!

A vexed *Soule* for *Follies*, that betray  
the *Soule* to *Death*, some call the nether *Hell*:  
Thence moue my *Measures*; and, doe make such way,  
that they all *Lets* to give way, doe compell.

These *Rarities*, which my poore *Soule* confines,  
her treble-*Zeale* to you (three *Graces*) brings  
For *Grace*, as glorious as the *Sunne* that shines  
(as *bright*, as *chearefull*) on inferiour *Things*.

Such *Grace* you have, by *Vertue*, and by *Fate*,  
as makes you *Three*, the *Glory* of these *Times*;

The *MUSES Darlings*, and their *Chaires* of *STATE*;  
*Shapers*, and *Soules* of all Soule-charming *Rimes*!  
*BEDFORD*, the beaming-glory of thy *HOUSE*  
that makes it *Heav'n* on *Earth*, thy *Worths* are such,  
As all our *WITS* make most miraculous,  
because thy *WIT* and *WORTH* doe worke *so much*.

For, *WIT* and *SP'RIT*, in *Beauties* Livery,  
doe still attend thine all-commanding *EYES*;  
And, in th' *Achivements* of thine *Ingenie*,  
the *glosse* thereof, like *Orr*, on *Sable* lies.

The *Wombe* that bare *thee*, made thy noble *Breast*  
abound with *Bountie*, yer thou knew'st thy *Fate*;  
Where furnisht was that *Bountie* with the best  
of *Honors* Humors, giving Her the *Mate*.

For which, all *Poets* Plowes (their *Pennes*) doe plow  
the fertil'st Grounds of *ART*; and, in the same,  
Thy still-increasing *Praises* (thicke) doe sow,  
to yeeld *Aeternitie* thy *Crop* of Fame!

*PEMBROKE*, (a *Paragon* of *Princely PARTS*,  
and, of that *Part* that most commends the *Muse*,  
Great Mistresse of her *Greatnesse*, and the *ARTS*,)  
*Phoebus* and *Fate* makes *great*, and *glorious*!

A *Worke* of *Art* and *Grace* (from *Head* and *Heart*  
that makes a *Worke* of *Wonder*) thou hast *done*;  
Where *Art*, seemes *Nature*; *Nature*, seemeth *Art*;  
and, *Grace*, in *both*, makes *all* out-shine the *Sunne*.

So sweet a *Descant* on so sacred *Ground*  
no *Time* shall cease to sing to Heav'nly *Lyres*:  
For, when the *Spheares* shall cease their gyring sound,  
the *Angels* then, shall chaunt it in their *Quires*.

No *Time* can vaunt that ere it did produce  
from feminine *Perfections*, so sweet *Straines*  
As still shall serve for *Men* and *Angels* use;  
then both, past *Time*, shall sing thy *Praise & Paines*.

My *Hand* once sought that glorious *WORKE* to grace;  
and writ, in *Gold*, what thou, in *Incke*, hadst writ:  
But *Gold* and highest *Art* are both too base  
to Character the *glory* of thy *Wit*!

And didst thou thirst for *Fame*. (as all *Men* doe)  
thou would'st, by all meanes, let it come to *light*;  
But though thou *cloud* it, as doth *Envy* too,  
yet through both *Clouds* it *shines*, it is so bright!

Where bright *DESERT* fore-goes; a spurre is *Praise*  
to make it runne to *all* that *glorifies*:  
Of such *Desert*, is ought eclipse the *Rayes*,  
it ever shames *FAMES* publicke-*Notaries*.

*CARY* (of whom *Minerva* stands in feare,  
lest she, from her, should get *ARTS* *Regencie*)  
Of *ART* so moves the great-all-moving *Spheare*,  
that ev'ry *Orbe* of *Science* moves thereby.

Thou mak'st *Melpomen* proud, and my *Heart* great  
of such a *Pupill*, who, in *Buskin* fine,  
With *Feete* of *State*, dost make thy *Muse* to mete  
the *Scenes* of *Syracuse* and *Palestine*.

*Art, Language*; yea; abstruse and holy *Tongues*,  
thy *Wit* and *Grace* acquir'd thy *Fame* to raise;  
And still to fill thine *owne*, and *others* *Songs*;  
*thine*, with thy *Parts*, and *others*, with thy *praise*.

Such nervy *Limbes* of *Art*, and *Straines* of *Wit*  
*Times* past ne'er knew the weaker *Sexe* to have;  
And *Times* to come, will hardly credit it,  
if thus thou give thy *Workes* both *Birth* and *Grave*.

Yee Heav'nly *Trinary*, that swayes the *State*  
of *ARTS* whole *Monarchie*, and *WITS* *Empire*,  
Live long your *Likes* (unlike) to animate  
(for all *Times* light) to blow at your *Arts* *Fire*.

For, *Time* now swels, (as with some poysonous *Weede*)  
with *Paper-Quelkchose*, never *smelt* in *Scholes*;  
So, made for *Follies* *Excesse*; for, they *feede*  
but *fatten* not; if *fatten*, tis but *Fooles*.

What strange *Chime* *aes* *Wit*, (nay *Folly*) frames  
in these much stranger *Times*, weake *Wits* t'affright  
Besides themselves! for, *Wits* *Ceestiall* *Flames*,  
now *spend* much *Oyle*, yet *lend* but little *Light*!

And what they lend, is (oft) as *false*, as *small*;

so (to *small* purpose) they *great* Paines doe take  
But to be *scorn'd*, or *curst*, or *loth'd* of *all*  
that, by their *false-light*, foulely doe mistake.

For, to give *Light* that leads light *Men* awry,  
is *Light* that leades to *Darknesse*; then such, *Light*  
Were better *out*, than still *be* in the *Eye*  
of Men, that (so) doe, lightly, runne from *RIGHT*.

For, while such *Light* doth shine, the Multitude  
(like *Moates* in *Sunne*) with their Confusion plaies;  
Not weighing, o'er their *Heads*, how *Errors* Cloud  
the while, doth threat, t'o'er-whelme them many waies.

By pouring downe the Haile of *hard Conceits*  
gainst *God* and *Goodnesse*, that doe batter both:  
Or else, by saddest *Showres* of darke *Deceits*,  
borne as the fickle *Winde* of *Fancy* blowth:

By *Lightning*; that doth still more *hurt* than *good*;  
while Errors Thunder-claps make *sowre* the *sweet*  
(Yea, sweetest) drinke of *Nature* (our best *Bloud*)  
that doth with *Melancholy-madnesse* meet.

By *all* that may (at least) give *some* offence  
to complete *Vertue*, *Wisedome*, *Wit*, and *Art*:  
For, *Ignorance*, hath oft more *Insolence*,  
than puffing *Knowledge* to take *Errors* part.

Disease of *Times*, of *Mindes*, *Men*, *Arts*, and *Fame*,  
vaine *Selfe-conceit*, how dost thou ply the *Presse*



Of *People* and the *Printer*, with thy *shame*,  
clad in the *Coate* of *Fustian-foolishnesse*?

For, all that but pretend t'have *Art* or *Wit*,  
so travell with *Conceit*, amisse conceiv'd,  
That, till the *Presse* deliver them of *It*,  
their *Throwes* are such as make them *Wit-bereav'd*!

Yet, if the *Issue* of their crazed *Braines*  
doe chance (though monstrously) to come to light;  
Lord! how they hugge it, like the *Ape* that straines  
her young so hard, in love, as kills it quite.

What *Piles* of *Pamphlets*, and more *wordy Bookes*,  
now farse the World! wherein, if *Wisdomes* look ,  
She shall see nothing worthy of her *Lookes*,  
unlesse the idle *Likenesse* of a *Booke*!

But *WIT's* most wrong'd by priviledge of *Schoole*:  
for, *Learnings* Drunkards now so ply the *Pot*  
(Of *Incke* I meane) *Posteritie* to foole,  
as shames *Wits Name*, although they *touch* him not.

Some that but looke into *Divinitie*  
with their left *Eye*, with their left *Hand* do write  
What they observe, to wrong *Posteritie*,  
that by this *Ignis fatuis* roame by *Night*.

Some search the *Corpes* of all *Philosophie*,  
and ev'ry *Nerve* and *Veyne* so scribe on,  
That where it should be *Truths Anatomie*,

they make it *Errors* rightest *Scheleton*.

Some others on some other *Faculties*,  
still (fondly) labour, but to be in *Print*:  
(O poore *Ambition!*) so, their *Folly* flies  
abroad the *World*, like *Slips*, that shame their *Mint*.

But *Poesie* (dismall *Poesie*) thou art  
most subject to this sou'raigne *Sottishnesse*;  
So, there's good Cause thou shouldst be out of heart,  
sith all, almost, now put thee under *Presse*.

And Wit lies shrowded so in *Paper-sheetes*,  
bound *Hand* and *Foot*e with *Cords* of *Vanities*:  
That (first) with all *Obscuritie* it meetes;  
so, tis impossible it ere should rise.

But you Three *Graces*, (whom our *Muse* would grace,  
had she that *glory*, that our *Philip* had,  
That was the *Beautie* of *Arts Soule* and *Face*)  
you presse the *Presse* with little you have made.

No; you well know the *Presse* so much is wrong'd,  
by abject *Rimers* that great Hearts doe scorne  
To haue their *Measures* with such *Nombres* throng'd.  
as are so basely *got*, *conceiv'd*, and *borne*.

And, did my *Fortunes* not expose me to  
contempt of *Greatnesse*, sith so *meane* I am,  
I should, with *Greatnesse*, greatly scorne it too,  
sith *Fame* for Versing, now, is held but *Shame*.

But, in that *Veyne* lies not that *Maladie*;  
no, *It* is *sound*, and holds *Arts* purest *Bloud*,  
Which therein flowes to each *Extremitie*  
of *Arts* whole *Body*, for the *publike-good*.

Here-hence it came, that divine *Oracles*  
(*Apollos* Dialect, great *God* of *Art*)  
Were still exprest in measur'd *Sillables*,  
sith *squarest* Thoughts most *roundly* they impart.

In which respect it's meet'st to make *Records*  
of memorable *Accidents* of *Time*:  
Of *Princes* Lives, and Actions of great *Lords*:  
which *Poets*, first, did Chronicle in Rime.

Nay, they were first that *Natures* Workes observ'd,  
and Bookt it out for young *Philosophers*:  
Yea, they were first, by whom, is still conserv'd  
the knowledge of *Heav'ns motions*, and the *Starres*.

Who sought to finde each *Substance separate*,  
and, in their curious *Search*, sound what they were;  
And, to the *Life*, did them delineate  
on *Arts* faire *Front*, that *there*, more faire, appeare!

Then, *Poets* were the first *Philosophers*;  
first *State-observers*, and *Historians*:  
First *Metaphickes*, and *Astronomers*,  
yea, first *Great-clarks*, and *Astrologians*.

And, therefore, were they, in the *Worlds* first Age,  
pow'rfull'st Perswaders; whose sweet *Eloquence*:  
(That ever, staidly, ranne from holy Rage)  
was the first *Rethoricke* sprung from *Sapience*.  
For, should we give this *Empresse* but her *due*,  
(Empresse of *speech* that Monarchizeth *Eares*)  
We must confesse, she can all *Soules* subdue,  
to *Passions* causing *Joy*, or forcing *Teares*.

It is a *Speech* of most Majesticke state,  
that makes *Reas'ns* Forces not to be with-stood:  
The *Tethys*, that doth still predominate  
th'outrageous *Ocean* of our boyling *bloud*!

For, it doth flow more fluent from the *Tongue*.  
and, in the flowing, carries all with it,  
Which but attempts the *Torrent* to impugne  
and *Rokes* of *Art* removes, to Seas of *Wit*!

Succinct it is, and easier to retaine  
(which with our *Wits* and *Wils* doth hest agree)  
Than *Prose*, lesse subject to just *Measures* Raigne:  
for, *Prose* from *Measures* Rule is (loosely) free.

And, for its offer us'd, it cloyes the *Eare*;  
nor so compos'd of *Measures* Musicall;  
And not allow'd that Beautie *Verse* must beare,  
nor yet the *Cadence* so Harmonicall.

It's not adornd with choise of such rich *Words*,  
which heav'nly *Poesi* gracefully doth heare;

Nor licens'd that fine *phrase Art Verse* affords,  
then, to divinest *Spirits* it should be deare:

For, tis the *Honie* of all *Rethoricks Flow'ers*,  
the *Quintessence of Art*, and *Soule of Wit*;  
Right *spirit of Words*, true *phrase of Heav'nly Pow'rs*;  
and, in a *Word*; for Heav'n, *all-onely*, fit.

But *Time* these *Times*, it seemes, in *Malice* chose,  
to mischief *Poets*; for, it ne'er brought forth  
To this wilde World (mad-merry still in *Prose*)  
such worthy *Poets*, yet so little worth.

And, how should they be otherwise? for, they  
can twist no *Lines*, that hold eternall *Rime*,  
On *Rockes of Art*; but much *Time* turnes away;  
so, get but *Fame* and *Famine* in that *Time*.

For, *Time* they spend in that which none regards,  
but such as *would*, but *can* no *Larges* give:  
While other *Arts*, more poore, get rich *Rewards*:  
so, *Phoebus Sonnes*, by *Luster*, onely, live!

The *Painter*, that is *Master* of his *Skill*,  
and but with Earthly *Coulores* paints (alone)  
Meere *Formes of Beasts*, hath oft *Reward* at Will;  
but, *Poets Paintings*, though *divine*, have none.

But *Painters*, sith to *Poets* they draw nye,  
(save that they draw inne *Gold* (unlike them) still)  
And, paint so lively in dumbe *Poesie*,

I wish their *gaine* as great as is their *Skill*.

For, *Pictures* speake, although they still be dumbe;  
and what they cannot speake, they recompence  
With Demonstration; so, can *Soules* o'er-come,  
as soone by silence, as by *Eloquence*.

But *Trades* (that doe but Case the *Corps* aright  
with our owne *Cost*, (which oft they *tei h*, at least)  
But *aske* and have: when they that clothe the *Sp'rit*  
in *Vertues* Robes, are paid but with a *Ieast*.

Which *Jesters Memories* I wish may be  
'mong *Trencher-Bustons*, *Fooles*, and *Naturals*,  
Preserv'd by *Poets* for Posteritie  
to *weepe* or *laugh* at, as the *Humor* fals.

For, *Poets* best preserve the *fame* or *shame*  
of *good* or *bad* sith with their pow'rfull *Penne*,  
They give the *Vertuous* an immortall *Names*;  
but, make the *vicious* live, still loth'd of *Men*.

No earthly *Matter* (howsoever wrought,  
though it (withall) be rais'd above the *Clouds*)  
Can *Fame* uphold, but it will fall to nought:  
for, *Earth*, in *Time*, her bravest *Buildings* shrouds.

Those *Threatners* of the *Skye*, proud *Ilium*,  
*Byrza* of *Carthage*, *Towre* of *Babilon*,  
Where are they now, with all their state, become?  
are they not all, to all Confusion gone?

Where's *Neroes* golden-Palace, that drew drye  
(had it been liquid) freest Founts of *Gold*?  
*Asinius Pollio's Court of Liberty*,  
so rare for state, are now turn'd both to Molde.

Nay, that proud *Pyramed* is come to *nought*,  
that, pight neere *Memphis*, seem'd to prope the *Skie*,  
Whereon, three-hundred-threescore-thousand wrought  
full twenty Yeeres, before it rought so hie!

Some *Authors* say, the *Ground-worke* of the same  
tooke up an hundred *Furlongs* in the *Round*:  
Which higher rose, aspiring, like a *Flame*,  
yet now, of this, no Sparke is to be found.

Much lesse doth any *Author* testifie  
what King (of *Fame* desirous) rais'd the same:  
A most just plague to checke their vanitie,  
that so-in *Lime* and *Stone*, entombe their *Name*.

What rests of *Scaurus* Amphitheater,  
than which, I wot not whether all the *Cost*  
*Caligula* and *Nero* did conferre  
on all their *Buildings*, most admir'd, were most!

The *Scene* whereof, three *Stages* did containe,  
whereon three hundred *Collumnes* and threescore  
Of rarest *Marble* (deckt with many a Veyne  
of orient *Coulors*) held up eyther *Floore*.

Which *Pillers*, eight and thirty *Foot* in height,  
were each but of one *Piece*, in each *Degree*;  
Wherein an hundred thousand people might  
be plac'd, secure, the *Spectacles* to see.

And (in the midst) the *Stage* was all of *Glasse*,  
made thicke, to beare the *Actors* waight thereon;  
Three Thousand *Copper-statues* all did grace;  
besides some *Gold*, and some refulgent *Stone*!

And onely for a *Month* (no longer then  
the *Playes* were playing) was it to endure:  
Yet, being but a *Romane Cittizen*  
that made it such, his *Fame* still sutes his pow'r.

The rather sith he, to adorne the *Muse*,  
this *Cost* bestow'd; or else (perhaps) his *Fame*  
Had beene, with *Neroes*, *much*, but *monstrous*;  
the *Muse* alone then, well renownes a *Name*.

Yet, now her *Agents* are so poore become  
in *Minde* and *state*, that, for an abject *Fee*,  
They'l *honor* (to their *shame*) but HONORS skum;  
yea, Deifie a *Diu'll*, if he be free.

But, strong *Necessitie* constraines the same,  
(as *Israels Singer* did the *Shew-bread* eat  
By like constraint) yet, they are *Lords* of FAME;  
and, where they charge with it, there's no retreat.

For, though *Time-present* see it mis-bestow'd,



yet if Wits *Engine* it doe rarely raise,  
Of *Times to come*, It shall be so allow'd,  
that both the *prais'd* and *praiser*, they will praise!

Yet, speake a Language *ew* doe apprehend;  
so *few* affect it: for, wee nought affect,  
But what our Understandings comprehend;  
no marvell then the most this *Art* neglect.

Nay, were't but so, yet *Poesie* still should finde  
some *grace* with some, whom *Art* makes great, of vile:  
But now such thinke, it but distracts the *Minde*;  
for, *broken-Brains* such great-Ones *Poets* stile.

Unfit for serious use, unfit for all  
that tends to perfect *Mans* Felicitie;  
*Light, idle, vaine*, and what we *worse* may call,  
yea, though it were the *Skumme* of *Vanitie*.

And would these *Truths* were all true *Falacies*,  
(though *Poets* used to none of these incline:  
For, personall *faults* are not the *Faculties*,  
that is not onely *faultlesse*, but *divine*.)

But tis too true in many that professe  
the *Art*; though *Leaden Lumpes*: for, none can swim  
In *Helicon* without that *Happinesse*,  
which, from his *Mothers* Wombe, he brought with him.

And, tis as true if *Grace* and *Government*,  
doe not containe the *Minde*, in Raptures high,

But it, of Wit, may make so large extent,  
as it may cracke the strongest *Ingenie*.

So may it doe in other *Mysteries*,  
and that which we most praise, may most impeach:  
*Divinitie* it selfe may soon'st doe *this*,  
if *Grace* with-hold not from too high a Reach.

Then, let this *Arte* (which is the *Angels* speech)  
(for, to the *High'st* they speake in nought but *Hymnes*,  
Which, in the *Wombe*, they doe true *Poets* teach)  
be freed from speech, that but her *glory* dimmes.

Then let the ignorant-great-highly base  
revile her ne'er so much, they but bewray  
Their owne *Defects* therby, and give but grace  
to *Folly*, darkned with *Arts* glorious *Raie*.

But no great *Spirit* (whose *temper* is divine,  
and dwels in reall-*GREATNES*) but adores  
The Heav'nly *MUSE*, that in *Arts* Heav'n doth shine  
like *Phoebus*, lending *Light* to other *Lores*.

To you therefore (that *Arte* predominate  
great in your *Vertue*, *Skill*, and *Fortunes* too)  
My *Muse* held meet'st these Flights to consecrate,  
sith you most grace the *Muse* in most you doe.

And as the *Sunne* doth glorifie each *Thing*  
(how ever base) on which he deignes to smile:  
So, your cleare *Eyes* doe give *resplendishing*

to all their *Objects* be they ne'er so vile:

Then, looke on *These* and *Me*, with such a *Glance*,

That both may shine through your bright *Countenance*.

*The unfained* lover, honorer, *and* admirer of your rare Perfections, *John Davies* of  
*Hereford*.

*B.2: Cavendish Epistle Dedicatory*

Margaret Cavendish, *Playes* (London: A. Warren, 1662). Front matter

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

MY LORD,

MY resolution was, that when I had done writing, to have dedicated all my works in gross to your Lordship; and I did verily believe that this would have been my last work: but I find it will not, unless I dye before I have writ my other intended piece. And as for this Book of Playes, I believe I should never have writ them, nor have had the Capacity nor Ingenuity to have writ Playes, had not you read to me some Playes which your Lordship had writ, and lye by for a good time to be Acted, wherein your Wit did Create a desire in my Mind to write Playes also, although my Playes are very unlike those you have writ, for your Lordships Playes have as it were a natural life, and a quick spirit in them, whereas mine are like dull dead statues, which is the reason I send them forth to be printed, rather than keep them concealed in hopes to have them first Acted; and this advantage I have, that is, I am out of the fear of having them hissed off from the Stage, for they are not like to come thereon; but were they such as might deserve applause, yet if Envy did make a faction against them, they would have had a publick Condemnation; and though I am not such a Coward, as to be affraid of the hissing Serpents, or stinged Tongues of Envy, yet it would have made me a little Melancholy to have my harmless and innocent Playes go weeping from the Stage, and whipt by malicious and hard-hearted censors; but the truth is, I am careless, for so I have your applause I desire no more, for your Lordships approvement is a sufficient satisfaction to me.

My Lord, Your Lordships honest Wife, and faithfull Servant, *M. N.*

*B.3: Cavendish Playes Front Matter*

Margaret Cavendish, *Playes* (London: A. Warren, 1662).

*NOBLE READERS,*

The reason why I put out my Playes in print, before they are Acted, is, first, that I know not when they will be Acted, by reason they are in English, and *England* doth not permit, I will not say, of Wit, yet not of Playes; and if they should, yet by reason all those that have been bred and brought up to Act, are dead, or dispersed, and it would be an Act of some time, not only to breed and teach some Youths to Act, but it will require some time to prove whether they be good Actors or no; for if they are not bred to it whilst they be young, they will never be good Actors when they are grown up to be men; for although some one by chance may have naturally, a facility to Action, and a Volubility of Speech, and a good memory to learn, and get the Parts by heart, or wrote, yet it is very unlikely, or indeed impossible, to get a whole Company of good Actors without being taught and brought up thereto; the other reason is, that most of my Playes would seem tedious upon the Stage, by reason they are somewhat long, although most are divided into first and second Parts; for having much variety in them, I could not possibly make them shorter, and being long, it might tire the Spectators, who are forced, or bound by the rules of Civility to sit out a Play, if they be not sick; for to go away before a Play is ended, is a kind of an affront, both to the Poet and the Players; yet, I believe none of my Playes are so long as *Ben. Johnson's* Fox, or Alchymist, which in truth, are somewhat too long; but for the Readers, the length of the Playes can be no trouble, nor inconveniency, because they may read as short or as long a time as they please, without any disrespect to the Writer; but some of my Playes are short enough; but the printing of my Playes spoils them for ever to be Acted; for what men are acquainted with, is despised, at lest neglected; for the newness of Playes, most commonly, takes the Spectators, more than the Wit, Scenes, or Plot, so that my Playes would seem lame or tired in action, and dull to hearing on the Stage, for which reason, I shall never desire they should be Acted; but if they delight or please the Readers, I shall have as much satisfaction as if I had the hands of applause from the Spectators.

M. N.

*NOBLE READERS,*

Although I expect my Playes will be found fault with, by reason I have not drawn the several persons presented in a Circular line, or to a Trianglar point, making all the Actors to meet at the latter end upon the Stage in a flock together; likewise, that I have not made my Comedies of one dayes actions or passages; yet I have adventured to publish them to the World: But to plead in my Playes behalf, first, I do not perceive any reason why that the several persons presented should be all of an acquaintance, or that there is a necessity to have them of one Fraternity, or to have a relation to each other, or linck'd in alliance as one Family; when as Playes are to present the general Follies, Vanities, Vices, Humours, Dispositions, Passions, Affections, Fashions, Customs, Manners, and practices of the whole World of Mankind, as in several persons; also particular Follies, Vanities, Vices, Humours, Passions, Affections, Fashions, Customs, Fortunes, and the like, in particular persons; also the Sympathy and Antipathy of Dispositions, Humours, Passions, Customs, and Fashions of several persons; also the particular Virtues and Graces in several persons, and several Virtues and Graces in particular persons, and all these Varieties to be drawn at the latter end into one piece, as into one Company, which in my opinion shews neither Usual, Probable, nor Natural. For since the World is wide and populated, and their various actions dispersed, and spread about by each particular, and Playes are to present them severally, I perceive no reason they should force them together in the last Act, as in one Community, bringing them in as I may say by Head and Shoulders, making the persons of each Humour, good Fortunes, Misfortunes, Nations and Ages, to have relations to each other; but in this I have not followed the steps of precedent Poets, for in my opinion, I think it as well, if not better, if a Play ends but with two persons, or one person upon the Stage; besides, I would have my Playes to be like the Natural course of all things in the World, as some dye sooner, some live longer, and some are newly born, when some are newly dead, and not all to continue to the last day of Judgment; so my Scenes, some last longer than othersome, and some are ended when others are begun; likewise some of my Scenes have no acquaintance or relation to the rest of the Scenes, although in one and the same Play, which is the reason many of my Playes will not end as other Playes do, especially Comedies, for in Tragi-Comedies I think Poets do not always

make all lye bleeding together; but I think for the most part they do; but the want of this swarm in the last Act and Scene, may make my Playes seem dull and vacant, but I love ease so well, as I hate constraint even in my works; for I had rather have a dull easy life, than be forced to active gayeties, so I had rather my Playes should end dully than unnecessarily be forced into one Company, but some of my Playes are gathered into one sheaf or bundel in the latter end. Likewise my Playes may be Condemned, because they follow not the Antient Custome, as the learned sayes, which is, that all Comedies should be so ordered and composed, as nothing should be presented therein, but what may be naturally, or usually practiced or Acted in the World in the compass of one day; truly in my opinion those Comedies would be very flat and dull, and neither profitable nor pleasant, that should only present the actions of one day; for though *Ben. Johnson* as I have heard was of that opinion, that a Comedy cannot be good, nor is a natural or true Comedy, if it should present more than one dayes action, yet his Comedies that he hath published, could never be the actions of one day; for could any rational person think that the whole Play of the Fox could be the action of one day? or can any rational person think that the Alchymist could be the action of one day? as that so many several Cozenings could be Acted in one day, by Captain *Face* and *Doll Common*; and could the Alchymist make any believe they could make gold in one day? could they burn so many Coals, and draw the purses of so many, or so often from one person, in one day? and the like is in all his Playes, not any of them presents the actions of one day, although it were a day at the Poles, but of many dayes, nay I may say some years. But to my reason, I do not perceive a necessity that Comedies should be so closely packt or thrust up together; for if Comedies are either to delight, or to profit, or to both, they must follow no other rule or example, but to put them into Scenes and Acts, and to order their several discources in a Comedy, so as Physicians do their Cordials, wherein they mix many several Ingrediencies together into one Electuary, as sharp, bitter, salt, and sweet, and mix them so, as they are both pleasing to the Taste, and comfortable to the Stomach; so Poets should order the several Humours, Passions, Customs, Manners, Fashions, and practice of Mankind, as to intermix them so, as to be both delightfull to the Mind and Senses, and profitable to the Life; also Poets should do as Physicians or Apothecaries, which put not only several sorts, but several kinds of Drugs into one Medicine, as Minerals and Vegetables together,

which are very different; also they will mix several Druggs and Simples out of several Climates and Countries, gathered out from all the parts of the World, and upon occasion they will mix new and old Simples together, although of one and the same sort and kind; so Poets both in their Comedies and Tragedies, must, or at leastwise may, represent several Nations, Governments, People, Customs, Fashions, Manners, Natures, Fortunes, Accidents, Actions, in one Play; as also several times of Ages to one person if occasion requires, as from Childhood to Manhood in one Play; for Poets are to describe in Playes the several Ages, Times, Actions, Fortunes, Accidents and Humours in Nature, and the several Customs, Manners, Fashions and Speeches of men: thus Playes are to present the natural dispositions and practices of Mankind; also they are to point at Vanity, laugh at Follies, disgrace Baseness, and persecute Vice; likewise they are to extol Virtue, and to honour Merit, and to praise the Graces, all which makes a Poet Divine, their works edifying to the Mind or Soul, profitable to the Life, delightfull to the Senses, and recreative to Time; but Poets are like Preachers, some are more learned than others, and some are better Orators than others, yet from the worst there may be some good gained by them, and I do not despair, although but a Poetress, but that my works may be some wayes or other serviceable to my Readers, which if they be, my time in writing them is not lost, nor my Muse unprofitable.

M. N.



NOBLE READERS,

I Know there are many Scholastical and Pedantical persons that will condemn my writings, because I do not keep strictly to the Masculine and Feminine Genders, as they call them as for example, a Lock and a Key, the one is the Masculine Gender, the other the Feminine Gender, so Love is the Masculine Gender, Hate the Feminine Gender, and the Furies are shees, and the Graces are shees, the Virtues are shees, and the seven deadly Sins are shees, which I am sorry for; but I know no reason but that I may as well make them Hees for my use, as others did Shees, or Shees as others did Hees. But some will say, if I did do so, there would be no forms or rules of Speech to be understood by; I answer, that we may as well understand the meaning or sense of a Speaker or Writer by the names of Love or Hate, as by the names of he or she, and better: for the division of Masculine and Feminine Genders doth confound a Scholar more, and takes up more time to learn them, than they have time to spend; besides, where one doth rightly understand the difference, a hundred, nay a thousand do not, and yet they are understood, and to be understood is the end of all Speakers and Writers; so that if my writings be understood, I desire no more; and as for the nicities of Rules, Forms, and Terms, I renounce, and profess, that if I did understand and know them strictly, as I do not, I would not follow them: and if any dislike my writings for want of those Rules, Forms, and Terms, let them not read them, for I had rather my writings should be unread than be read by such Pedantical Scholastical persons.

M. N.

*NOBLE READERS.*

Tis likely you will condemn my Playes at being dull and flat, by reason they have not the high seasoning of Poetical Salt; but Sugar is more commonly used amongst our Sex than Salt. But I fear my Wit is tastless, which I am sorry for; for though a Satyirical Speaker is discommendable, being for the most part abusive; for Bitter reproofs only are fit for rigid Pedants, Censuring and backbiting sit for pot Companions, and sharp replies is a wit for mean persons, being in a degree of scolding; a Ralery Wit, for Bussions and Ieslers which abuse under the Veil of Mirth, Familiarity, and Freedome; whereas a generous discoursitive Wit, although it be free, yet it is sweet and pleasing: thus as I said Satyirical Speakers are discommendable, yet Satyirical Writers are highly to be praised, as most profitable, because those reprove only the generality, as the general Vices, Follies, and errors of Mankind, poiming at no particular; and the sharpest Writers are most commonly the sweetest Speakers. But I have observed one general Folly amongst many which is, that it is expected by most Readers that the Writers should speak as they write, which would be very ridiculous; as for example, a Lyrick Poet should speak nothing but Sonnets, a Comedian or Tragedian Poet should speak nothing but set Speeches, or blanck Verse, or such Speeches which are only prover to present such and such humours, which in ordinary discourse would be improper; and though *Virgil* whose greatest praise is Language, yet I do verily believe he did not speak in his ordinary Conversation in such a stile, forms and Speeches, nor in such high, sine, and choice Latin, nor in such high and lofty expressions, nor apt similitudes, nor the sence of his discourse wrapt in such Metaphors, as in his writings; nay Eloquent Speakers or Orators do not alwayes speak Orations, but upon an occasion, and at set times, but their ordinary Conversation is with ordinary discourses; for I do verily believe, the greatest and most Eloquents Orators that ever were in the World, in their ordinary Conversation, converst and spoke but as other men. Besides, in Common and ordinary Conversations, the most Wittiest, Learneelst, and Eloquentest Men, are forced to speak according to the Wit, Learning, Language, and Capacities of those they are in Company and Conversation with, unless they will speak all themselves, which will be no Conversation: for in Conversation every particular person must have his turn and time of speaking as well as hearing; yet such is the folly of

the World, as to despise the Authors of Witty, Learned and Eloquent Writings, if their Conversations be as other mens, and yet would laugh at them, or account them mad, if they should speak otherwise, as out of this ordinary way; but the greatest talkers are not the best writers, which is the cause women cannot be good Writers; for we for fear of being thought Fools, make our selves Fools, in striving to express some Wit, whereas if we had but that power over our selves as to keep silence, we perchance might be thought Wits, although we were Fools, but to keep silence is impossible for us to do, so long as we have Speech we shall talk, although to no purpose, for nothing but Death can force us to silence, for we often talk in our Sleep; but to speak without partiality, I do not perceive that men are free from this imperfection, nor from condemning us, although they are guilty of the same fault; but we have this advantage of men, which is, that we know this imperfection in our selves, although we do not indeavour to mend it; but men are so Partial to themselves, as not to perceive this imperfection in themselves, and so they cannot mend it; but in this, will not or cannot is as one; but this discourse hath brought me to this, that if I have spoke at any time to any person or persons impertinently, improperly, untimely, or tediously, I ask their pardon: but lest I should be impertinently tedious in this Epistle, and so commit a fault in asking pardon, I leave my Readers to what may be more pleasing to them.

M. N.

To The Reader

I Must trouble my Noble Readers to write of one thing more, which is concerning the Reading of Playes; for Playes must be read to the nature of those several humours, or passions, as are exprest by Writing: for they must not read a Scene as they would read a Chapter; for Scenes must be read as if they were spoke or Acted. Indeed Comedies should be read a Mimick way, and the sound of their Voice must be according to the sense of the Scene; and as for Tragedies, or Tragick Scenes, they must not be read in a pueling whining Voice, but a sad serious Voice, as deploring or complaining: but the truth is there are as few good Readers as good Writers; indeed an ill Reader is, as great a disadvantage to wit as wit can have, unless it be ill Acted, for then it 'tis doubly

disgraced, both in the Voice and Action, whereas in Reading only the voice is imploied; but when as a Play is well and skillfully read, the very sound of the Voice that enters through the Ears, doth present the Actions to the Eyes of the Fancy as lively as if it were really Acted; but howsoever Writings must take their Chance, and I leave my Playes to Chance and Fortune, as well as to Censure and Reading.

*M. N.*

*B.4: Cavendish Plays Never Before Printed Front Matter*

Margaret Cavendish, *Plays Never before Printed* (London: A. Maxwell, 1668). Front matter

**TO THE READERS.**

It is most certain, That those that perform Publick Actions, expose themselves to Publick Censures, and so do Writers, live they never so privately and retir'd, as soon as they commit their Works to the Press, Which should perswade wise Persons to be very cautious what they publish; especially in a malicious, and envious Age. I do not say this is so; but if it be, I can truly say, that I am sorry of it, meerly for the Age's sake, and not in relation to my Self, or my Books; which I write and disperse abroad, only for my own pleasure, and not to please others: being very indifferent, whether any body reads them or not; or being read, how they are esteem'd. For none but poor and mean spirits will think themselves concern'd in Spightful Censures.

Having observ'd, that the most Worthy and most Meritorious Persons have the most envious Detractors, it would be a presumptuous opinion in me to imagine my Self in danger to have any: but however, their malice cannot hinder me from Writing, wherein consists my chiefest delight and greatest pastime; nor from Printing what I write, since I regard not so much the present as future Ages, for which I intend all by Books.

When I call this new one, Plays, I do not believe to have given it a very proper Title: for it would be too great a fondness to my Works to think such Plays as these suitable to ancient Rules, in which I pretend no skill; or agreeable to the modern Humor, to which I dare acknowledge my aversion: But having pleased by Fancy in writing many Dialogues upon sever Subjects, and having afterwards order'd them into Acts and Scenes, I will venture, in spight of the Criticks, to call them Plays; and if you like them so, well and good; if not, there is no harm done: And so Farewell

B.5: Cavendish Poems and Fancies Front Matter

Margaret Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies* (London: s.n., 1653). Front matter

TO ALL NOBLE, AND WORTHY LADIES.

Noble, Worthy Ladies,

Condemne not as a *dishonour* of your *Sex*, for setting forth this *Work*; for it is *harmelesse* and *free* from all *dishonesty*; I will not say from *Vanity*: for that is so *naturall* to our *Sex*, as it were unnaturall, not to be so. Besides, *Poetry*, which is built upon *Fancy*, *Women* may claime, as a *worke* belonging most properly to themselves: for I have observ'd, that their *Brains* work usually in a *Fantasticall motion*: as in their *severall*, and *various dresses* in their many and singular choices of *Cloaths*, and *Ribbons*, and the like; in their *curious shadowing*, and *mixing of Colours*, in their *Wrought workes*, and divers sorts of *Stitches* they employ their *Needle*, and many *Curious* things they make, as *Flowers*, *Boxes*, *Baskets* with *Beads*, *Shells*, *Silke*, *Scraps*, or any thing else; besides all manner of *Meats* to cure: and thus their *Thoughts* are employed perpetually with *Fancies*. For *Fancy* goeth not so much by *Rule*, & *Method*, as by *Choice*: and if I have chosen my *silke* with *fresh colours*, and *matcht* them in *good shadows*, although the *riches* be not very true, yet it will please the *Eye*; so if my *Writing* please the *Readers*, though not the *Learned*, it will satisfie me; for I had rather be praised in this, by the *most*, although not the *best*. For all I desire, is *Fame*, and *Fame* is nothing but a *great noise*, and *noise* lives most in a *Multitude*; wherefore I wish my *Book* may set a worke every *Tongue*. But I imagine I shall be censur'd by my owne *Sex*; and *Men* will cast a *smile* of *scorne* upon my *Book*, because they think thereby, *Women* incroach too much upon their *Prerogatives*; for they hold *Books* as their *Crowne*, and the *Sword* as their *Scepter*, by which they rule, and governe. And very like they will say to me, as to the *Lady* that wrote the *Romancy*,

Work *Lady*, work, let writing *Books* alone,

For surely *wiser Women* nere wrote one.

But those that say so, shall give me leave to wish, that those of nearest Relation, as *Wives*, *Sisters*, & *Daughters*, may employ their time no worse then in *honest*, *Innocent*, and *harmelesse Fancies*; which if they do, *Men* shall have no cause to feare, that when they go abroad in their absence, they shall receive an *Iniury* by their *loose Carriages*.

Neither will *Women* be desirous to *Gossip* abroad, when their *Thoughts* are well employed at home. But if they do throw scorne, I shall intreat you, (as the *Woman* did in the *Play* of the *Wife*, for a *Month*, which caused many of the *Effeminate Sex*) to help her, to keep their *Right*, and *Priviledges*, making it their owne *Case*. Therefore pray strengthen my *Side*, in defending my *Book*; for I know *Womens Tougns* are as *sharp*, as two-edged *Swords*, and wound as much, when they are anger'd. And in this *Battell* may your *Wit* be *quick*, and your *Speech* *ready*, and your *Arguments* so *strong*, as to beat them out of the *Feild* of *Dispute*. So shall I get *Honour*, and *Reputation* by your *Favours*; otherwise I may chance to be cast into the *Fire*. But if I burn, I desire to die your *Martyr*; if I live, to be

*Your humble* Servant, M. N.

#### AN EPISTLE TO MISTRIS TOPPE.

SOME may think an *Imperfection* of *wit* may be a *blemish* to the *Family* from whence I sprung: But *Solomon* sayes, *A wise man may get a Fool*. Yet there are as few *meer Fools*, as *wise men*: for *Understanding* runs in a *levell course*, that is, to know in *generall*, as of the *Effects* but to know the *Cause* of any one thing of *Natures* workes, *Nature* never gave us a *Capacity* thereto. Shee hath given us *Thoughts* which run wildly about, and if by *chance* they light on *Truth*, they do not know it for a *Truth*. But among it many *Errours*, there are *huge Mountaines* of *Follies*; and though I add to the *Bulke* of one of them yet I make not a *Mountaine* alone, and am the more *excusable*, because I have an *Opinion*, which troubles me like a *conscience*, that tis a part of *Honour* to aspire towards a *Fame*. For it cannot be an *Effeminacy* to seek, or run after *Glory*, to love *Perfection*, to desire *Praise*; and though I want *Merit* to make me worthy of *it*, yet I make some satisfaction in desiring it. But had I broken the *Chaines* of *Modesty*, or behav'd my selfe in *dishonourable* and *loose carriage*, or had run the *wayes* of *Vice*, as to *Periure* my self, or betray my *Freinds*, or denyed a *Truth*, or had lov'd *deceit*: Then I might have prov'd a *Greife* to the *Family* I came from, and a *dishonour* to the *Family* I am link't to, raised *Blushes* in their *cheeks* being mentioned, or to turne *Pale* when I were published. But I

hope, I shall neither *greive*, nor *shame* them, or give them cause to wish I were not a *Branch* thereof. For though my *Ambition's* great, my *designes* are harmeslesse, and my wayes are *plaine Honesty*: and if I stumble at *Folly*, yet will I never fall on *Vice*. Tis true, the *World* may wonder at my *Confidence*, how I dare put out a *Book*, especially in these *ensorious times*; but why should I be ashamed, or affraid, where no *Evill* is, and not please my selfe in the *satisfaction* of *innocent desires*? For a *smile* of *neglect* cannot dishearten me, no more can a *Frowne* of *dislike* affright me; not but I should be well pleased, and delight to have my *Booke* commended. But the *Worlds dispraises* cannot make me a *mourning garment*: my mind's too big, and I had rather venture an *indiscretion*, then loose the *hopes* of a *Fame*. Neither am I ashamed of my *simplicity* for Nature tempers not every *Braine* alike; but tis a *shame* to deny the *Principles* of their *Religion*, to break the *Lawes* of a *well-governed Kingdome*, to disturbe *Peace*, to be unnaturall, to break the *Union* and *Amity* of *honest Freinds*, for a *Man* to be a *Coward*, for a *Woman* to be a *Whore*, and by these *Actions*, they are not onely to be cast out of all *Civill society*, but to be blotted out of the *Roll* of *Mankinde*. And the reason why I summon up these *Vices*, is, to let my *Friends* know, or rather to remember them, that my *Book* is none of them: yet in this *Action* of setting out of a *Booke*, I am not clear without fault, because I have not asked leave of any *Freind* thereto; for the *feare* of being denied, made me silent: and there is an *Old saying*; That it is easier to aske *Pardon*, then *Leave*: for a *fault* will sooner be forgiven, then a *suite* granted: and as I have taken the *One*, so I am very confident they will give me the *Other*. For their *Affection* is such, as it doth as easily obscure all *infirmity* and *blemishes*, as it is *fearfull* and *quick-sighted* in spying the *Vices* of those they *love*; and they doe with as much kindnesse pardon the *One*, as with grieffe reprove the *Other*. But I thought it an *Honour* to aime at *Excellencies*, and though I cannot attaine thereto, yet an *Endeavour* shews a *good will*, and a *good will* ought not to be turned out of *Noble mindes*, nor be whipt with *dispraises*, but to be cherished with *Commendations*. Besides, I Print this *Book*, to give an *Account* to my *Freinds*, how I spend the *idle Time* of my *life*, and how I busie my *Thoughts*, when I thinke upon the *Obiects* of the *World*. For the truth is, our *Sex* hath so much waste *Time*, having but little imployments, which makes our *Thoughts* run wildly about, having nothing to fix them upon, which *wilde thoughts* do not onely produce unprofitable, but indiscreet *Actions*;



winding up the *Thread* of our *lives* in *snarles* on *unsound bottoms*. And since all times must be spent either *ill*, or *well*, or *indifferent*; I thought this was the *harmlessest Pastime*: for *lure* this *Worke* is better then to sit still, and censure my *Neighbours actions*, which nothing concernes me; or to condemne their *Humours*, because they do not *sympathize* with *mine*, or their *lawfull Recreations*, because they are not agreeable to my *delight*; or ridiculously to laugh at my *Neighbours Cloaths*, if they are not of the *Mode*, *Colour*, or *Cut*, or the *Ribbon* tyed with a *Mode Knot*, or to busie my selfe out of the *Sphear* of our *Sex*, as in *Politicks* of *State*, or to Preach *false Doctrine* in a *Tub*, or to entertaine my selfe in hearking to *vaine Flatteries*, or to the *incitements* of evill *perswasions*; where all these *Follies*, and many more may be cut off by such innocent worke as this. I write not this onely to satisfie you, which my *Love* makes me desire so to doe; but to defend my *Book* from spightfull Invaders, knowing *Truth* and *Innocence* are two good *Champions* against *Malice* and *Falshood*: and which is my *defence*, I am very confident is a great satisfaction to you. For being bred with me, your *Love* is twisted to my *Good*, which shall never be undone by any *unkinde Action* of Mine, but will always remaine

Your loving Freind, M. N.

## TO THE AUTHOR

Madam,

You are not onely the first *English Poet* of your *Sex*, but the first that ever wrote this way: therefore whosoever that writes afterwards, must own you for their *Pattern*, from whence they take their *Sample*; and a *Line* by which they measure their *Conceits* and *Fancies*. For whatsoever is written afterwards, it will be but a *Copy* of your *Originall*, which can be no more Honour to them, then to *Labouring Men*, that draw *Water* from another mans *Spring*, for their *owne* use: neither can there be anything writ, that your *Honour* have not employed your *Pen* in: As there is *Poeticall Fictions*, *Morall instructions*, *Philosophicall Opinions*, *Dialogues*, *Discourses*, *Poeticall Romances*. But truely, *Madam*, this *Book* is not the onely *occasion* to Admire you; for having been brought up from my *Childhood* in

your *Honourable Family*, and alwayes in your *Ladyships company*; seeing the course of your life, and *honouring* your *Ladyships disposition*, I have admired *Nature* more, in your *Ladiship*, then in any other Works besides. First, in the course of your *Life*, you were alwayes *Circumspect*, by *Nature*, not by *Art*; for naturally your *Honour* did hate to do any thing that was *mean* and *unworthy*, or anything that your *Honour* might not *owne* to all the *World* with *confidence*; & yet your *Ladiship* is naturally bashful, & apt to be out of Countenance, that your *Ladiship* could not oblige all the *World* But truly, *Madam*, *Fortune* hath not so much in her *power* to give, as your *Honour* hath to bestow; which apparently shineth in all *Places*, especially where your *Ladyship* hath been, as *France*, *Flanders*, *Holland*, &c. to your everlasting *Honour* and *Fame*; which will manifest this *Relation* to be the *Truth*, as well as I, who am,

Madam, Your Honours most humble and obedient Servant, E. Toppe.

## APPENDIX C (CHAPTER IV)

*C. 1: Prologue to The Debauchee*

Aphra Behn, *The Debauchee, or, The Credible Cuckold* (London: s.n., 1677).

PROLOGUE.

Spoken by a *WOMAN*.

Who can enough the Stages Fate deplore?  
From men of sence, (our Patrons heretofore,)  
By whom, (because all was well understood,  
In our worst Plays, something was still thought good,)  
To you the tastless judging Tribe we fly,  
Who treat our best with that severity,  
You never know, where 'tis the Wit does ly;  
Poets do justly your dull Censures scorn,  
Men of your parts, for us alone were born,  
Your Natural parts, which ne're would fail to Charm,  
Did not your Damn'd acquir'd ones do you harm;  
To please our Sex, you question all that's writ,  
You Sham, Clinch, Quibble, Cant, and Counterfit,  
And something fain you'd shew, might pass for wit,  
While folly can alone our wishes hit.  
Half Fools 'tis true, like half Wits, aukward prove,  
But a good thorough Fool, all Women love.  
Mark but the use of Fools, which is't you want?  
A quiet Husband? or a free Gallant?  
You have him, but a Wit is such a Tool!  
Fit to make nothing, till he's made a Fool,  
And that's about the Bush, which to prevent,  
We'll kindly take you such as God has sent;  
*Then be advis'd.---*

And this dull strife for wittiness give ore,  
Ground your small merit on a juster score,  
Less of ill Witt, and of good Breeding more,  
From *France* you bring us Noise, instead of Sence.  
Instead of Courage, saucy Confidence;  
With antique Dresses, and Impertinence.  
One eminent Grace does in that Land abound,  
Manners, which you sweet Sparks have never found.  
Manners, in these refin'd, though ill-bred Times,  
Like Christian Charity amongst Divines,  
Would make Attonement for a world of Crimes.  
You'd be so welcome here, would you but sit  
Like Cyphers, as you are, and grace the Pit,  
Well drest, well bred, we'd never look for Wit.  
But you come bawling in with broken *French*,  
Roaring out Oaths aloud, from Bench to Bench,  
And bellowing Bawdy to the Orange-wench;  
Quarrel with Masques, and to be brisk, and free,  
You sell 'em Bargains for a Repartee,  
And then cry Damn 'em Whores, who ere they be.  
For shame from these Barbarities remove;  
If you'l be rude, in War your roughness prove,  
Or at some hours 'twill be allow'd in Love;  
But you with all wrong qualities endu'd,  
Are too too civil, when you should be rude.  
Written by a Person of Quality.

C.2: Prologue to *The False Count*

Aphra Behn, *The False Count, or, A New Way to Play an Old Game*, (London: s.n., 1682), n.p.

PROLOGUE

Spoken by Mr. *Smith*.

Know all the Whiggs and Tories of the Pit,  
(Ye furious Guelfs and Gibelines of Wit,  
Who for the Cause, and crimes of Forty one  
So furiously maintain the Quarrel on.)  
Our Author as you'll find it writ in story,  
Has hitherto been a most wicked Tory;  
But now to th' joy o' th' Brethren be it spoken,  
Our Sisters vain mistaking eyes are open;  
And wisely valling her dear interest now,  
All powerfull Whiggs, converted is to you.  
'Twas long she did maintain the Royal Cause,  
Argu'd, disputed, rail'd with great applause;  
Writ Madrigals and Dogerel on the times,  
And charg'd you all with your fore-fathers crimes;  
Nay confidently swore no plot was true,  
But that so slyly carri'd on by you.  
Rais'd horrid scandals on you, hellish stories,  
In Conventicles how you eat young Tories;  
As *Jew* did heretofore eat *Christian* suckling;  
And brought an *Odium* on your pious gutling:  
When this is all malice it self can say,  
You for the good old Cause devoutly eat and pray:  
Though this one Text were able to convert ye,  
Ye needy tribe of scriblers to the Party;  
Yet there are more advantages than these,

For write, invent, and make what Plots you please,  
The Wicked Party keeps your Witnesses;  
Like frugal cuckold-makers you beget  
Bratts that, secur'd, by others fires shall sit.  
Your Conventicling miracles out doe  
All that the Whore of *Babylon* e'er knew:  
By wondrous art you make Rogues honest men,  
And when you please transform 'em Rogues again.  
To day a Saint, if he but hang a Papist,  
Peach a true Protestant, your Saint's turn'd Atheist:  
And dying Sacraments do less prevail,  
Than living ones though took in Lamb's-Wool-Ale.  
Who wou'd not then be for a Common-weal,  
To have the Villain cover'd with his Zeal?  
Zeal, which for convenience can dispence  
With Plays, provided there's no wit nor sense;  
For Wit's prophane, and Jesuitical,  
And Plotting's Popery, and the Devil and all.  
We then have fitted you with one to day,  
'Tis writ as't were a recantation Play;  
Renouncing all that has pretence to witty,  
T'oblige the Reverend *Brumighams* o' th' City:  
No smutty Scenes, no Iests to move your Laughters,  
Nor Love that so debauches all your Daughters.  
But shou'd the Toryes now, who will desert me  
Because they find no dry bobs on your Party,  
Resolve to hiss as late did Popish Crew,  
By Yea and Nay, shee'll throw her self on you,  
The grand bequest of Whiggs, to whom shee's true.  
Then let 'em rail and hiss and damn their fill,  
Your Verdict will be *Ignoramus* still.

*C. 3: Prologue to The Feign'd Curtizans*

Aphra Behn, *The Feign'd Curtizans or, A Nights Intrigue*, (London: Jacob Tonson, 1679).

The PROLOGUE,

*Spoken by Mrs. Currer.*

The devil take this cursed plotting Age,  
'T has ruin'd all our Plots upon the Stage;  
Suspicions, New Elections, Jealousies,  
Fresh Informations, New discoveries,  
Do so employ the busie fearful Town,  
Our honest calling here is useless grown;  
Each fool turns Politician now, and wears  
A formal face, and talks of State-affairs;  
Makes Acts, Decrees, and a new Modell draws  
For regulation both of Church and Laws;  
Tires out his empty noddle to invent  
What rule and method's best in government;  
But Wit as if 'twere Jesuiticall,  
Is an abomination to ye all:  
To what a wretched pass will poor Plays come,  
This must be damn'd, the Plot is laid in Rome  
'Tis hard—yet—  
Not one amongst ye all I'll undertake,  
Ere thought that we should suffer for Religions sake:  
Who wou'd have thought that wou'd have been th'occasion,  
Of any contest in our hopefull Nation?  
For my own principles, faith, let me tell you  
I'me still of the Religion of my Cully,  
And till these dangerous times they'd none to fix on,  
But now are something in meer contradiction,

And piously pretend, these are not days,  
For keeping Mistresses and seeing Plays.  
Who says this Age a Reformation wants,  
When *Betty Currer's* Lovers all turn Saints?  
In vain alas I flatter, swear, and vow,  
You'l scarce do any thing for Charity now:  
Yet I am handsome still, still young and mad,  
Can wheadle, lie, dissemble, jilt—egad,  
As well and artfully as e're I did,  
Yet not one Conquest can I gain or hope,  
No Prentice, not a Foreman of a Shop,  
So that I want extremely New Supplies;  
Of my last. Coxcomb, faith, these were the Prize;  
And by the tatter'd Ensignes you may know,  
These spoils were of a Victory long ago:  
Who wou'd have thought such hellish times to've seen,  
When I shou'd be neglected at eighteen?  
That Youth and Beauty shou'd be quite undone,  
A Pox upon the Whore of Babylon.



## APPENDIX D (CHAPTER V)

### *D.1: UO Emperor Cast List*

Cast List for University of Oregon production of *The Emperor of the Moon*

*The Emperor of the Moon*. by Aphra Behn. Adapted and directed by J.K. Rogers, Hope Theatre, University of Oregon, January 26 – February 5, 2017.

**Doctor Baliardo** – Aimee Hamilton

**Scaramouch** – Connor French

**Don Cinthio** – Sam Bridgnell

**Elaria** – Samantha Lee

**Don Charmante** – Simon Griffin

**Bellemante** – Lily Smith

**Harlequin** – Mackenzie Utz

**Mopsophil** – Nicolette Zaretsky

**Florinda/Clerk/Kepler** – Dani Rosales

**Pedro/Officer/Galileus** – Christian Mitchell

*D.2: Revised Prologue*

Revised Prologue to *The Emperor of the Moon* by J.K. Rogers, with Dr. Dianne Dugaw  
*The Emperor of the Moon*, by Aphra Behn, dir. J.K. Rogers, Hope Theatre, University of  
Oregon, January 26 – February 5, 2017.

Prologue

CINTHIO

*While Cinthio gives the prologue, Harlequin enters and gives a “translation”*

You noble sirs and gentle ladies all  
Who join our revels now within these walls;  
Be welcomed now with open heart and arms,  
Our goal: to please, and seek yourselves to charm.  
We hope our antics make you laugh and sigh,  
And pleasures find ere Dian flees the sky.  
Our play was writ three hundred years ago  
When theatre was in town the only show;  
Great Aphra this did pen to please her king,  
Another prologue had that set the scene,  
But years have passed, and all traditions age,  
And so new speech is written for our stage:  
Good folk, our story, should you now attend,  
We hope you join us with the ones called “friend,”  
Or “spouse,” or “colleague,” or e’en “pookie pie,”  
We’re glad you’re here, whatever company;  
If friends be absent from this players’ hall,  
Do we beseech you: wait upon that call;  
Don’t post to social media or text,  
Or thus your neighbors you will surely vex.  
Snapchat can wait and so can Instagram;

HARLEQUIN (*ad lib*)

Hi!

There used to be a  
different prologue,  
but it makes no sense  
330 years later.

Please turn off your phones.

Distractions that can cause our players harm.

We players are a temperamental lot,

Distracted thus, our lines are all forgot!

An hour or two, and then our story's done,

Then once again you may turn on your phones.

And last, my friends, some words before I go

'Bout what you'll see, some things that you should know:

There are effects we use on stage this night—

Our play has fog and also flashing lights.

And if this speech with you should disagree,

I only speak the lines, so blame not me!

So sit, dear friends, and I'll return within—

A moment more, and so our play begins.

Seriously.

Please be aware that  
there will be fog and  
strobe lights used

Our director wrote this ...

Bye!

*Exeunt omnes*

*D.3: Emperor Production Credits*

*The Emperor of the Moon*, by Aphra Behn, dir. J.K. Rogers, Hope Theatre, University of Oregon, January 26 – February 5, 2017.

Director – JK Rogers

Stage Manager – Christle O’Neill

Asst. Stage Manager – Victoria Nova

Set Designer – Jerry Hooker

Lighting Designer – Kat Matthews Henggeler

Costume Designer – Shelbi Wilkins

Props Master – Erica Hartman

Large Props Designer – Michael Teague

Sound/Projection Designer – Bradley Branam

Dramaturge – Ben Jones

Fight Choreographer – John Elliot

Dance Choreographer – Lindsey Salfran

Project Advisor – Dr. John Schmor

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